

FROM CAR PARK TO COOLING PLANT

At the start of the New Year I said that the aim of the Society's Planning Committee was not just to try to achieve satisfactory design and developments for the town but the absolute best possible. We have had a number of opportunities to comment on some very major projects already this year and have maintained our commitment to that objective.

The Channel Tunnel 'cooling plant' has been featured greatly in the local media recently. The plans to construct huge 'industrial type' buildings on an enlarged platform below Shakespeare Cliff will, by now, be familiar to most members although the fact that it was the Dover Society who brought it to everyone's attention may well be less widely known. After having studied the very lengthy submissions, the Planning Committee was in no doubt that we should object in the strongest terms to such a scheme which paid little or no regard to the heritage coastline upon which the buildings were to be sited, let alone the noise that would be generated. Inevitably the plans were approved by the local Council, indeed the Society never questioned that there was a demonstrated need for the plant, but we have since reiterated our initial concerns that the design of the buildings should be sympathetic with their surroundings - approval for the detailed treatment of the buildings has not yet been sought by the Tunnel builders so watch this space!

Another building whose detailed external appearance has yet to be decided is the proposed multistorey car park at Russell Street. Multistorey car parks are unfortunately buildings that every town needs but that nobody wants. However, with the opening of the White Cliffs Experience scheduled for Spring 1991 and the influx of visitors that are expected this need becomes all the more pressing. When I visit a town and become 'a visitor' the first and last impression I get of the town is that of the car park - I remember there is a particularly nasty one at Winchester for example - so clearly the need to have a pleasant car park is extremely important. With this in mind the Planning Committee has said that the proposed building should not merely sit comfortably in the area but should significantly improve it, the general feel of the building should be pleasant, the height should be kept to a minimum and lighting, security and ease of access should all be carefully considered.

Space does not permit me to outline the many, many other plans we have inspected, discussed and commented upon but suffice to say that the small army of beavers who gnaw their way through piles of architects' drawings receive their reward when plans are approved which show the hallmarks of well-thought-out, sympathetic design.

*Adrian Galley
Chairman - Planning Committee*