

# THE WESTERN DOCKS DEVELOPMENT

*A Report based on information kindly provided by Bill Fawcus and John Gerrard, of the Dover Harbour Board.*

Whilst the main activity of the Dover Harbour Board is the movement of passengers and freight through the port – indeed its Charter decrees that it must be so – it does intend that its Western Docks Development Plan should reunite “The Town and Port of Dover” with its waterfront, should renew the focus of Dover on the source of its existence and should provide residents and visitors alike with the chance to enjoy the town’s tremendous and unique heritage. The Board also believes that the way to achieve this is to open the gates and establish business and leisure opportunities which will draw in the townspeople and attract visitors from near and far.

## THE MARINA SITE

Within the last year the first signs of regeneration have been seen with the establishment of the Dover Marina in the Wellington Dock. The quality of service provided by the Marina, i.e. by Dover, is appreciated by international yachtsmen and women and the fact that it is the closest landfall to the European coastline is a plus in itself. The Board’s figures show that in 1992 a record number of visiting boats from all over Europe – and farther afield – called into Dover and stayed here for 6000+ ‘boat/nights’. There are proposals for very extensive development of the Marina, taking in the Granville Dock and the Tidal Harbour and it is quite likely that a new entrance lock will be built between what was once the North Pier and the present South Pier head.

## JOINT VENTURE

The Board, not in a position to finance all this development on its own, called for a partner with particular expertise to make the most of an exceptional location. The first step was to build on the investment of Dover District Council in the White Cliffs Experience by engaging specialist consultants to examine the prospects, and following this, a firm of Baltimore-based designers was engaged to produce original concept plans. A short-list of three joint venture candidates was selected in the autumn of 1992 and one of these, Pearce Developments, a company specialising in high-quality waterside developments, was selected on the very interesting strength of a remarkable proposal that demonstrated, amongst other things, the flair of their waterside experience.



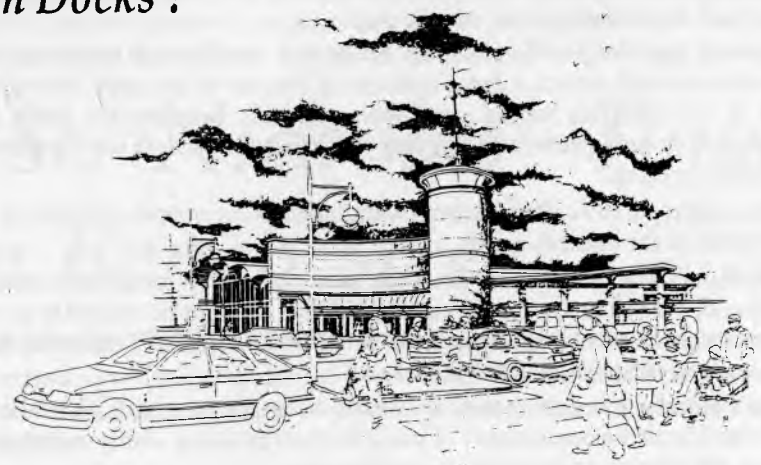
*A series of drawings produced by Pearce Developments, showing the design possibilities within the scheme*

*Changes may be necessary as development proceeds and all the work will require planning approval*

# *An Imaginative Approach to the Development of the Western Docks ?*



Marina Village



Superstore



Esplanade Terrace

## FIRST STAGES

The speculative plan produced by Pearce when they entered the selection process will be refined by discussion with the Board as equal partners and with Dover District Council as the Planning Authority. The consultative process is widely based and will include Kent County Council and elements of central government and EC departments. A planning brief is being prepared and an application for planning permission – thus enabling work to start – will be made as soon as possible.

The plan commences with a superstore on the Snargate Street side of the Wellington Dock, linked to a parade of 'speciality shops' on the same side and overlooking the water. It is understood that access to the site is being sought via a turning off the new York Street/Snargate Street roundabout but one wonders how the Ministry of the Environment would react to such a proposal. Undoubtedly there is a need for enhanced shopping facilities to serve both all those who live on the seaward side of the new A20 and the yachtsmen and women who will need to re-victual their ships during their stay in port.

Much interest has already been shown by British and French operators in a superstore which would attract a large number of visitors to the area throughout the year. It is felt that this would strengthen the links between the town and the waterfront and would provide the driving force that will ensure the completion of this ambitious project.

During the course of 1992 the first steps were taken in the process of opening the Wellington Dock to the general public.

Dover Transport Museum Society has been provided with a temporary home in Cambridge Road, though at the time it was foreseen that it might be necessary to seek new premises within two or three years. If this is necessary the Board will provide all the assistance it can in securing another location.

The world's oldest active sailing ship, the *Maria Asumpta*, has made a home in the marina and it will have the opportunity of using the port as a base whilst undertaking contract work for filming and corporate entertaining.

In 1993 plans are in hand to hold a series of events and activities to strengthen the town's focus on the waterfront and in the autumn a programme of major improvements to the seafront promenade will commence as part of an overall plan for environmental enhancement.

All this work is the beginning of a really exciting and ongoing venture which should lead to development costing very many millions of pounds and to the creation of many new jobs and should give a much-needed boost to our town.

Members should remember that all the drawings we reproduce are speculative and were produced only as a possible design conception.

This is a very exciting project and probably, in this part of the country, it is only the Harbour Board that has the resources and expertise that could set the plan in motion. May the whole enterprise prosper – its principle, if not the detail, merits our whole-hearted and enthusiastic support.