

## *Response of members to Question "B" 21*

Many people wrote in general terms and others mentioned specific issues or made definite suggestions. Some were optimistic, some pessimistic, some critical, some full of praise. Among the replies lies a wealth of opinion and innovative ideas.

### **Overall Planning**

Many members felt there should be an overall plan for Dover, some called it a co-ordinated plan or a master plan,

“so that the people of Dover can see what is being done, what is awaiting planning permission and what is being considered”.

*Jean Harland*

Everybody accepted that changes are coming and members felt that the people of Dover wanted to be involved in the planning. Most people felt that the changes would benefit the town.

This view is summed up by David Shaw, M.P

“Dover and Dover’s people will benefit from proposals that will enhance our environment, develop new businesses to provide employment and will enable us to broaden our available facilities. The most significant changes in the next decade, which will result in benefit to Dover, will be from the developments in Dover Port which will change the current focus of our area. These changes will also give a significant boost to enhancing the favourable and reducing the unfavourable perceptions people have about our area. The White Cliffs Business Park, hotel, leisure and other developments will all result in considerable uplift to our area which will be of tremendous benefit to all our citizens. It will be for the Dover Society and others involved in the planning process to ensure that these changes aesthetically improve our area as well as enhance its economic prospects.”

Many members felt that planning is crucial and criticised policies so far.

“Town planning needs major alteration. The present policy of ad hoc site-by-site approval has been a disaster. An illustration of this is the suggested building of a multi-storey car park in the Russell Street area. This whole area should be re-developed as a whole, starting with the removal of the bus garage to the business park, where it properly belongs. This is one of the last opportunities to make a success of this mid-town area, and it really is not good enough to spoil it for ever by piecemeal bit-at-a-time building.

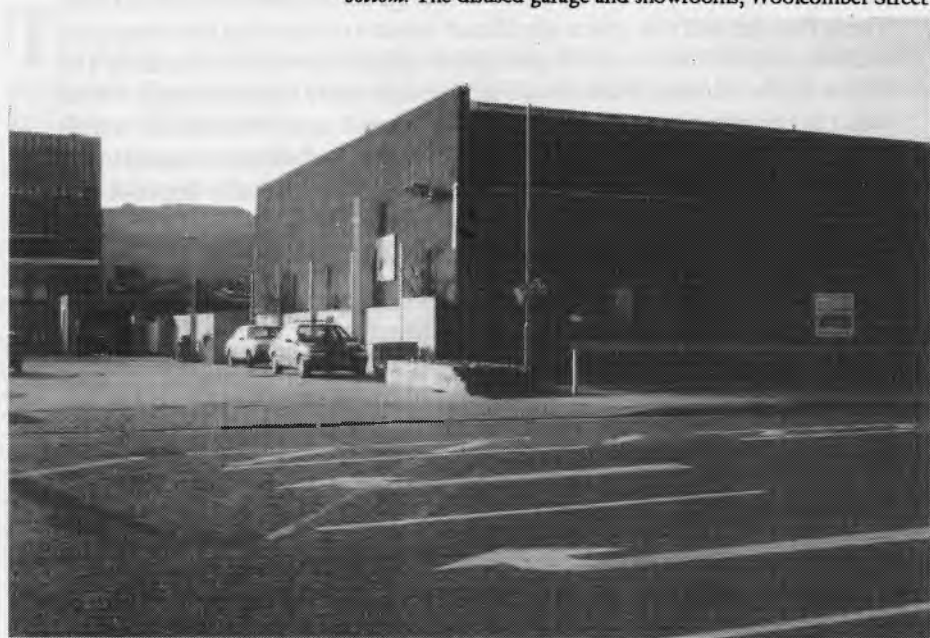
*Ivan Green*

These views were echoed by other members; several people mentioned the re-siting of the bus garage; many members were concerned about the development of the area bounded by Townwall Street, Russell Street and Woolcomber Street.



*top:* The unused parking lot at the rear of the defunct car showrooms

*bottom:* The disused garage and showrooms, Woolcomber Street



“The successful and harmonious re-planning of the whole area between Russell Street and Woolcomber Street into a business quarter with parking, could, if forthcoming, be a very major uplift. Such a plan should be in conjunction with the Harbour Board plans for the Western Docks and the Sea Front.”

*Leo Wright*

“The positive development of the area bounded by Townwall Street, Castle Street and Woolcomber Street into an attractive, lively area . . .”

*Jeremy and Sheila Cope*

“One matter which I think is very important from the town’s point of view is the siting of the bus garage in Russell Street. This has been a contentious matter for years and the opportunity should now be taken to move it out of the town centre.”

*Peter Johnson, Vice-President*

## Traffic Flow and Parking

Many people expressed the view that overall plans should, from the outset, include careful consideration of traffic flow and parking. Ivan Green had most to say on this issue, raising the following points:

“With the easing of traffic brought about by the new roads, double no-parking lines should be limited to areas where they really are essential.

The town at present has very limited parking for customers’ cars, and the authorities use this to raise large sums of money. These parks ought to be used primarily to entice customers to our town shops, rather than as a money-making project.

These and other similar measures ought to be brought in to encourage motorists (and town shops need them) to come into town rather than go to big stores out of town where they are welcomed and parking is plentiful and free.

All lorries should be banned from the town centre unless they are actually delivering goods in the town centre area.

All heavy goods vehicles should be banned from parking or even entering residential areas, unless they have approved business in them. The present lack of control results in residential areas being spoilt by such use, and some lorry drivers even take their vehicles to their homes for tea. This measure would require the allocation of places where commercial vehicles could properly be parked.”

*Ivan Green*

## Extreme Measures?

Some members felt that now was the time to suggest major alterations to sections of the town considered to be eyesores or the results of bad planning. One of the areas most discussed was the area bounded by Townwall Street/York Street/Castle Street

24 and Woolcomber Street. Within this area the re-siting of the bus garage was the issue most mentioned. There were several suggestions that Burlington House could be demolished or reduced in height, as it spoils the view of either the Western Heights or the Castle from wherever one stands in Dover.

Some members suggested the re-siting of the bus station in Pencester Road. Others suggested that good use could be made of the redundant telephone exchange site at the back of the old Leo's site, now being re-developed with five retail outlets.

For future consideration was the suggestion that the Market Square would be improved by the demolition of the block of buildings in front of the White Cliffs Experience, leaving space to form open lawns, flower beds and seating areas.

## Impact

The majority of members welcomed the coming of Impact to Dover and approved the work completed and that planned for 1994, notably the improvement of the Riverside Walk, the approaches to Priory Station and the entrance to the Grand Shaft.

The Impact project was seen as a valuable asset to Dover at this juncture of its development.

“Impact will help to improve the image of Dover and this is very important in attracting people (and hence money and business)” *May Jones*

*A report on Impact, contributed by Julian Owen, is on page 30.*

## White Cliffs Business Park

The development of White Cliffs Business Park was seen as essential to the town because it would bring more jobs to Dover. In this respect it should have priority and be advertised nation-wide.

## Western Docks Development

Almost unanimously, members were in favour of the Western Docks development seeing it as a great advantage to the future development of the town.

- excellent
- visible from the new A20, an asset to the town
- a great boost to Dover
- will benefit the town
- encourage the docks development plus superstore
- press on with the Western Docks development

## The Farthingloe Site

Members were divided on the future of the Farthingloe site. Some agreed with Ivan Green who said:-

- “The Farthingloe site should be put back permanently to farming use. It is a beautiful valley which forms a fine entrance corridor to the town.”



How Burlington House obstructs the view of both the Castle and the Western Heights



26 Others suggested various uses including:

- a sort of motel development, which would boost the farm shop opposite. Walks could be offered over the hills.
- a caravan park.
- a holiday camp.

## Shopping

This was the most mentioned topic in the questionnaire answers. The people of Dover want more and better shops and Society members welcomed this opportunity to say so.

- I feel that Dover needs a department store to attract tourists and to encourage people to shop locally.
- Better shopping facilities. I am often asked by strangers for direction to the shops and I feel apologetic at the lack of good quality shops.
- I think the District Council should go all out to try to entice Ricemans/Debenhams for instance, to come and open a business in the town. We desperately need better, bigger shops.
- A really good department store, i.e. Ricemans, so that people would do their shopping here and not have to go to Canterbury.
- A department store such as Debenhams is badly needed to encourage visitors into the town.
- Take steps to improve shops in the town centre – reduction in rents/rates.
- The town centre **MUST** be improved to attract tourists, otherwise Dover will die.

## Hotels

A few members mentioned hotels.

- more higher-standard hotel accommodation.
- New hotels would encourage more tourists to stop over.
- A new hotel offering really good food and service is urgently needed on the seafront.

## Advertising

- More street signs to town attractions.
- Plenty of signs in French and German.
- Advertise the Business Park, emphasising the location.
- Signs to mark historic sites and treasures, e.g. Shakespeare Cliff, the Castle, Drop Redoubt, the Painted House, the Grand Shaft, the site of the discovery of the Bronze Age Boat, etc.

## Other Suggestions

- An on-going policy to make the town more attractive, especially the Market Square and main shopping thoroughfares.
- Encourage greater contact with French ports.
- Encourage more people to live in the town centre, particularly in flats over shops.
- Put a halt to converting private houses to office accommodation and the taking over of shops by banks, building societies and charity shops.
- Create groups of small buildings offering inexpensive office accommodation rented out by the month for small and new enterprises.

## New Attractions

Many members devoted a large proportion of their answers to suggestions for improving the town and introducing new activities and entertainment. These were many and varied and included:

- The development of entertainment and activities especially in the evening, e.g. bowling alleys, skating, bandstand, pop music for youngsters.
- A decent theatre where entertainment of good calibre can be enjoyed by locals and visitors, (concerts, plays).
- A dry ski run.
- An indoor skating rink.
- A major face-lift to Connaught Park to make it a tourist attraction. (e.g. like the gardens at Ventnor, I.O.W.
- Places/hotels/restaurants on the seafront with sea views and places to sit out in summer. Dover lacks this facility as a seaside town.
- Associated with Western Docks development – Maritime Museum considered essential for a town like Dover – Cruise Terminal acclaimed as a must for this development – shopping mall with good boutiques.

*Mike McFarlane* of the Hoteliers Group says:

“The Hoteliers have for many years campaigned for evening entertainment for their guests. (a theatre, ten-pin bowling, ice rink, etc.)

If the facility could be added to the Sports Centre, the existing management structure would reduce the total running costs. Perhaps a grant could be obtained from the National Lottery, which is supposed to support sport and the theatre or, within the new development in the Western Docks, a management structure may emerge to give another venue.”

## 28 Two Bright Ideas

**Connaught Park.** "At present the park is scenic and underused. (There is no reason why Dover could not be nearly as well-known for its Park as for its Castle.

The top entrance needs to be emphasised and enhanced – in fact it should be rather grand and conspicuous. Thousands of Castle visitors – among others – would find it easy to use the top gate. From there the park would be enjoyed going *down*, leading visitors to the town.

Coach/Tour Companies could include the Park in some Castle itineraries. A splendid Tea Terrace could be built (eventually) on the old greenhouse site – with wonderful views if the cemetery was screened. The Park could be developed gradually using the *Botanical Gardens* at *Ventnor, I.O.W.* (also on sloping ground) as a model. As in the case of Ventnor, there should never be an entrance charge. The scheme needs sponsors and volunteers – in large numbers – e.g. companies, organisations, educational establishments, clubs, groups, private individuals, etc; to be responsible for areas of varying size.

And this is only the beginning!"

*June Dyer, Dover Society Member*

### Town Centre Management

*Mike McFarlane writes:*

"There are eight regions in England plus Scotland and Wales. I believe we should have ten sales persons selling Dover (Example: Midland Region with big towns, Birmingham, Coventry, Nottingham, etc.) The sales person would be expected to organise twenty coaches to visit Dover, including The White Cliffs Experience.

If all ten achieved their target, 500,000 would visit the White Cliffs Experience – that is 200,000 more than the target. These sales persons could also sell accommodation space in the Hotels and Guest Houses – even empty shop space.

If a basic salary of £8,000 was given, with the expectation that the sales person would triple that salary through commission I believe Dover would see a dramatic change. It would be sensible to experiment with one sales person (MIDLAND REGION) building up over a couple of years."

## Making Dover a Tourist Town

What emerges from all the suggestions and discussions about Dover's future is the fact that we want people to see Dover not only as a port, which may have been the case up to now, but also as a tourist town.

In selling Dover to the tourist market we are, I think, trying to attract a new clientele. No longer are we aiming just at ferry-travellers, hoping they will stay a night or two on their way to or from the Continent, although they will still constitute a



percentage of our visitors. In addition, Dover wants visitors who will make the town their base for a Kent holiday, staying a long weekend or a week or more, who will see the town as an ideal place to start their sight-seeing. The town itself has enough attractions to occupy a day or two, with historic Castle, Drop Redoubt, Grand Shaft and Roman Painted House and more recent Museum, White Cliffs Experience and Dover Gaol. Dover should make the most of its assets. It can also offer country walks, organised by the White Cliffs Countryside Project. The surrounding areas offer other castles (Deal, Walmer, Richborough, Leeds); country gardens (the Pines, Northbourne); golf courses (Kingsdown, Cinque Ports, Princes, Royal St. Georges, Broome Park, Canterbury); and seaside towns from Deal to Margate and Folkestone to Rye. Also there are the day-trippers. Some will have their trip made easier by the new A20/M20. Some will come from abroad, mainly from Calais. All these visitors will also want leisure facilities within the town, like some of those suggested by our members; theatre, bandstand, skating rink, bowling alley, attractive gardens, places to sit and watch the sea and the harbour traffic, attractive shops and a wide range of hotels, restaurants and guest houses to suit all pockets.

In their answers to the questionnaires some members suggested ways of attracting visitors. These included good signposting, more advertising, along the A20 route, holiday packages which include offers of visits to the town's attractions, shuttle buses to out-lying sites (e.g. Castle, Grand Shaft) and train/trolleys trailers for town tours.

## More Jobs

There must also be a continuing campaign to make the town more attractive and an on-going policy to attract more business to the town and create new jobs. These plans must all be in conjunction with the development of the Western Docks and of the White Cliffs Business Park.

*Jonathan Sloggett*, in a lengthy answer to Question B, states:

“If the town is to grow and develop it needs a sustainable long-term basis for economic demand; in other words, it needs jobs. I am not sure where the jobs will be obtained. Many organisations concerned with the welfare of the town have been seeking to develop employment for some time. The District Council has had a modest success with the White Cliffs Experience. . . . .

I suspect that the best way to try to develop employment in Dover is to exploit the town's position virtually at the crossroads of Europe, close to the Channel tunnel with efficient ferry services of its own, etc. and to market the area to industry which wants to be in England but close to Europe.”

In conclusion, if, as seems likely, new jobs in Dover are to be found mainly in the development of three areas, the Western Docks, the White Cliffs Business Park and in tourism, then the sooner all these projects get under way the better it will be for Dover.