

Report of the work of the Planning Sub-Committee

LAWRENCE GAGE, *Chairman*

Dover District Local Plan – Consultative Draft

The Draft Plan

As the Local Plan will form the basis of all planning decisions for the next decade or so, the sub-committee considered the implications of the draft plan very carefully and submitted a detailed response to the District Council.

In general, the Dover Society supports the main thrust of the plan which aims to achieve further economic activity in the town within the context of sustainable development. However, the sub-committee was somewhat critical of the way the plan tends to concentrate on the negative aspects of Dover and consequent restrictive policies, rather than identifying the strengths of the town and developing policies to take advantage of these. In particular we consider the plan fails to recognise and fully develop the potential of Dover's proximity to the Continent, its superb setting, the quality and potential of its existing buildings and the value of the parks and gardens.

Whilst supporting most of what is contained in the plan, the committee is concerned with what it considers to be a number of crucial omissions. The plan is lacking in any discussion of Dover's rôle in the next Millennium – of possible options the town could work towards. There is no review of traffic circulation, something the Society considers is long overdue, nor is there an overall parking strategy, nor is there a policy for the Western Heights. At a more detailed level, it was considered that the design guidance being proposed would be too restrictive and the committee could not fully support the plans for Old Park and disagreed with the desirability of developing the Connaught Pumping Station site.

The sub-committee has invited the new Chairman of the Council Planning Committee to discuss the issues and look forward to contributing further to the final plan.

The St. James Area Masterplan

Some members will have seen the exhibition of the plans for the St. James area (including the Russell Street car park site) and I am pleased to report that Dover Society members were thick on the ground at the public meeting held on 17 October when the Council explained its proposals. It was stressed that the masterplan represented long-term intentions rather than immediate reality. Having pressed for such a masterplan for several years, the sub-committee was delighted that at last a study and statement of intentions for this most important, yet sadly wasted, site had been made.

The proposals, as far as they go, are welcomed by the Society, but there is some disappointment that the plan lacks a strong idea and does not go far enough and does not propose the demolition of Burlington House, dubbed 'Dover's eyesore' – something which surely would be strongly supported by the vast majority of Dovorians.

Replacement Filling Station, Townwall Street

The Dover Society was not in favour of this application as a new filling station on this visually important site at Dover's front door will preclude its use for a landmark project on what the masterplan identifies as an opportunity site. However, the replacement filling station has been approved, the previous one demolished, and the new one will be built just as soon as archaeological work has been carried out. Who knows? – they might find

another bronze age boat, as the site is on the same bronze age waterfront!

New Pub, Guston Roundabout

This has been approved. Oh dear – as this is the first building (apart from the port buildings themselves) that millions of visitors will see on English soil, what a shame they will not see an example of quality modern design representing a forward-looking nation. Instead they will see phoney nostalgia – a 20th century 'Ye Olde Worlde Pub' – pure Disneyland.

Access to Langdon Cliffs

The Society was alarmed at the possibility of access to the Cliffs being restricted and made its views known. It now seems that a satisfactory compromise between the need for security and access may have been arrived at. It is understood that the proposed gates will not be closed until dusk and that fifty parking spaces will be provided outside the gates, allowing pedestrian access to the Cliffs at all times.

Old Park

Currently there is a planning application for this large, spectacularly situated site to be developed as a commercial, industrial and warehousing estate. The Planning sub-Committee fears that if such a proposal is approved, it could seriously affect the viability and success of the District Council's own adjoining White Cliffs Business Park.

The sub-committee believes the site should be developed with a high profile use and have prepared a comprehensive report arguing that the site is ideally suited for a regional 'Sports Academy', as recently proposed by the government, together with a regional Ice

Sports Centre, the need for which has been clearly established locally. 123

Extension to River Church

It was considered that the proposed extension was acceptable on planning grounds and no representation was made.

Castle Hill

We are informed that it is the intention of the Department of Transport to construct central traffic islands at points along Castle Hill and to install a much higher level of lighting in the area. Apparently this road is a major accident black spot and these measures are necessary on grounds of safety. There is some concern that the leafy attractiveness of the current state of the road will be lost and it is hoped that the new installations will be as sympathetic as possible, so as to minimise their disruptive visual impact.

Dover Millennium Project

Despite the disappointment that the Dover Society initiative for a major project in Dover was not selected by the Millennium Commission, the ideas behind it have not been shelved. At present the Harbour Board, the District Council and others are working on individual applications to different lottery distributors for some of the elements of the 'grand project'. The Dover Society intends to apply to the Millennium Fund for a project to regenerate the Western Heights as a managed nature reserve and to build a New Millennium Pharos there, beaming its light across the Channel. The project has the support of English Heritage and English Nature.

If all the separate applications being made by the different groups to the lottery funds are successful, it is possible that the end result will not be far short of the previous 'grand project' – but only time will tell!

SOCIETY BADGES

The Treasurer holds the stock of these and they are readily available – just contact her at 77 Castle Avenue, CT16 1EZ or 01304 206579.

The very good looking badge was designed around the crest, logo, call it what you will, designed by Philomena Kennedy. The design is in "gold" on a white enamelled background and is edged around with a thin gold line.

Make sure you have one and always wear it with pride!