

The Factory Shops Inquiry

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The oral battle over the future of the planned £50 million complex of factory shops on the White Cliffs Business Park at Whitfield is set to resume in September when Planning Inspector Nicholas Hammans will continue to take evidence and hear submissions about the venture.

The planning inquiry at the Council's offices at Whitfield opened in June when Keith Lindblom Q.C., for Fairclough Homes and other companies, argued that forty-five factory shops at Whitfield would be advantageous for Kent, for the district and for Dover. He is asking the Inspector to recommend the Secretary of State to overturn the planning refusal by Dover District Council to allow the factory shop complex.

The Dover Society, Dover Chamber of Commerce, Kent County Council and others are backing the Council's opposition to the project. Keith Lindblom submitted: "This is the right scheme in the right place at the right time."

But this was countered by a witness, Dover solicitor Peter Sherred who, in his evidence, responded: "This is the right scheme for Dover, at the right time, but in the wrong place, and the wrong scale for Dover."

Dover District Council was represented at the inquiry by Mr Richard Rundell who called four expert witnesses. Their evidence was being backed up by Mr Sherred and by Mr Ron Dryden, both former Presidents of Dover Chamber of Commerce,

who told of the parlous state of the town centre economy in Dover.

Evidence was given on behalf of the backers of the scheme that it was likely the forty-five shops on fifteen acres would attract something like 1.75 million visitors a year to the area, would provide 350 extra jobs and the infrastructure to unlock phase two of the business park for other job-creating developments.

On the eve of the opening of the planning inquiry it was revealed that Dover Harbour Board had submitted a planning application for a smaller range of factory shops in the existing nest of buildings in Cambridge Road, backing onto the Wellington Dock. Dover Council's chief planning officer Mike Dawson suggested that, although that scheme had not yet gone before the planning committee, he thought it a far better location, as it would be an edge-of-town development.

When the planning inquiry eventually ends, and the Inspector has made his recommendations, the Secretary of State will have to decide how much impact – for good or ill – the Whitfield project would have on Dover town centre. >

But as Mr Sherred told the Inspector: "Despite all the fine arguments being put forward at this inquiry, the majority of those here today will not have to bear the consequences of the eventual decision. It is we who are left behind who will have to live with the consequences."

*A Factory Outlet Shopping Centre (FOSC), such as that proposed for

Whitfield, would sell surplus stock from manufacturers with a limited range of mainly fashion and out-of-season/over-production and/or discontinued lines of household table top goods. It is claimed that the same products would not be available at town centre shops and that they would be sold at 25% to 75% of normal retail prices.



Defence of Dover Castle

----- AUTUMN 1940 — SPRING 1941 -----

Mrs Wendy Atherton, wife of our President, Brigadier Maurice Atherton is engaged in writing a scholarly book on "The Defence of Dover Castle". Because this may prove to be indigestible without some lighter anecdotes, Mrs Atherton would welcome any material in the way of factual accounts by any members of the Dover Society who may be able to help with contributions. She has already accepted the following piece.

FRANCE FELL. "We will never surrender" Churchill told Hitler, "We will fight on the beaches..."

The grapevine had it that when (not if) the Germans landed, the first line of defence would be at the River Stour at Canterbury with the second major line at the River Medway. The civilian population of Kent would be overrun by the Blitzkrieg and would perish in the invasion or would surrender but, although the Castle might be besieged by the Germans (as it had been by the French long ago) it would never surrender: the heroic garrison would rather die.

I, a young airman from RAF Hawkinge, arrived at Dover Castle in the autumn of 1940, as did a whole motley collection of volunteers from the tattered remnants of the B.E.F. and other units. We mounted a twenty-four hour watch along the battlements. We had no weapons. Between times we attended lectures on military tactics and stripping and cleaning arms (working from diagrams) and on the use

of grenades (working with one dummy grenade) remembering always to remove the pin with our teeth whilst keeping the grip most firmly depressed. We were promised real grenades and real rifles at any moment — they never arrived.

The twenty-four hour watches continued and when the winter snows fell we were instructed to make snowballs and practise lobbing them over the ramparts as if they were grenades. For arms we could go to the Keep and remove from the walls the weapons of olden times, battleaxes, lances, swords and shields.

So Dover Castle was defended by intrepid volunteers with snowballs and ancient arms against Stuka bombers and the threatened Blitzkrieg until Spring 1941 when it became clear that the German invasion was but a myth and we could return to our units.

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