

The work of the

# PLANNING

Sub-Committee

Reported by JEREMY COPE, Chairman

THE COMMITTEE'S POLICY is to do its utmost, usually by praise or criticism, to persuade the Council and citizens of Dover to recognise the very considerable assets and natural beauties of the location. This is not simply a matter of aesthetics. At a time when over 1,000 job losses have been projected by the ferry operators there is an even greater need to attract new employment to this area. Like all district councils, Dover's is strapped for cash and this places even greater demands on the skills and inventiveness of its officers and councillors.

With this in mind the committee was dismayed when it recently heard that the District Council had granted permission for the development of the Farthingloe Channel Tunnel workers' site. With such large unemployment problems facing the town members may ask why we seek to oppose such a proposal. For the following reasons we believe that this site does not provide an answer and in the long run is likely to work against the enhancement of employment prospects.

1. It is not needed. We already have two sites: one in the White Cliffs Business Park and one in the Old Park Barracks, neither of which has been successful in attracting major developers. One half-finished scheme is understandable, two perhaps demonstrate optimism but three must provoke serious doubts in the minds of potential developers as to what is wrong with this town
2. The site is within a designated area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB). Even if you discount people's feel-

ings, there is significant economic value in having a picturesque landscape as a means of encouraging new people to the area.

3. The draft local plan recognises that the scheme is neither desirable nor necessary and the legal constraints associated with any development in an AONB are likely to be significant.
4. Why have a business park which enjoys relatively poor road access. Would its development necessitate widening the Folkestone Road (B2011) and who would pay for it all?
5. Our understanding is that when the original permission to develop this site for quarters was granted to Euro-tunnel they would have to reinstate the area to its original condition at the completion of the works. Like so many other matters associated with Euro-tunnel it now seems that they are being allowed to get off the hook and escape their responsibilities.

Of course the committee wishes to do its utmost to secure jobs in Dover, but could our planners and councillors please ensure that they do so in an imaginative and structured way and in accordance with previously agreed plans?

## GENERAL PLANNING MATTERS

The committee has opposed a number of smaller planning applications, often not because the development itself is questioned but because the quality and aesthetics of what is proposed is unacceptable. Why should the people of Dover have to accept anything that is second rate? A little more care and thought could add

8 significantly to the economic value of the developments whilst at the same time pleasing the eye. We do, of course, look out for things to praise and for example have recently written in support of the elegant replacement of railings proposed at No. 3 Castle Street, Dover.

#### **BURLINGTON HOUSE**

This dreadful eyesore has been the subject of yet another recent planning application to convert it from offices into flats. It is difficult to imagine that anyone would want to pay good money to live in such a dreadful place, however changed. We continue to oppose any development of this block and look forward to its eventual conversion into hard-core!

#### **SECURITY SHUTTERS**

If used extensively at night these can have the effect of making a town centre seem characterless and unfriendly.

Visitors are likely to draw the conclusion that it is a lawless place and as such to be avoided. Sadly, however, the inescapable fact is that windows are regularly broken at night and shopkeepers feel threatened. Whilst the installation of CCTV has had a major and beneficial effect on shop security this problem seems set to continue and if any members have ideas of resolving this problem satisfactorily we would be pleased to hear from them.

#### **PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT**

The sub-committee members are only too painfully aware that in the main they are a bunch of amateurs who wish to deal positively and constructively with planning applications. For this reason the sub-committee needs all the professional help it can get. If there are any suitable qualified members out there who would like to offer their services we should be delighted to hear from them.

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## *St. Martin's Emmaus at Archcliffe Fort*

THE ST. MARTIN'S EMMAUS CENTRE at Archcliffe Fort, Dover continues to grow – with the support of the Dover Society. The trustees of St. Martin's Emmaus report fund-raising is more than half-way towards the revised target of £400,000. Revised – downwards – as a result of Bernard Edwards of Reeves and Neylan persuading the tax collector that £50,000 in VAT should not have been paid.

Trustees' chairman, chartered accountant Francis Watts, says they have received or been promised a total of £213,000, leaving £187,000 still to be raised.

In September four new rooms in the small accommodation block were handed over by the builders, so the centre is now able to accommodate six resident "Companions" and there's also a small room kept for those who just turn up but are not able to be provided with a permanent home.

Contracts are being placed for the repair of the roof and outside walls of the main block – the biggest single commitment of about £67,000 – where it is planned to bring on stream three or four rooms at a time. Eventually the trustees expect to accommodate twenty-five Companions.

The shop at Archcliffe Fort is now selling items that the Companions have collected and repaired. Items are still required for the shop and many members of the Dover Society have supported the centre with gifts of unwanted items that can be sold to make the centre self-supporting.

The community at Archcliffe can be contacted with offers of help or unwanted items, on Dover 204550 where the co-ordinator Kendall Beasley will arrange collection.

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