

The work of the

PLANNING

Sub-Committee

Reported by JEREMY COPE, Chairman

CARS, CYCLES, PEDESTRIANS ET AL

An Integrated Transport Policy (ITP) is now a fashionable subject in many quarters. Do we face being overwhelmed by the number of cars on our roads particularly with a projected increase in Kent of 139% over the next 20 years? In general terms the Planning sub committee thinks so and that the growth has a nightmare element to it. However at the same time we recognise that we all both want the convenience of motor cars and recognise their necessity in maintaining our standard of living. It is against this background that we have been pitching in with our "greenish" but I hope, sensible views on transport matters.

Following on from last issue's report our views on an ITP have been submitted to the Government and copied to our MP and DDC. We believe in greater car sharing and more alternatives including better public transport and cycle lanes. We want more effective use made of motor transport so that we may hand on a safer, less polluted world to our children and grandchildren.

DDC is now considering taking over the control of on-street parking from the police. Changes in legislation mean that they may do so and keep any revenue from parking fees and penalties. At present the Police lack the resources to properly enforce regulations which results in misery for both car users and the public in general. John Clayton and Bob Kersey came to explain DDC's thinking and to get our views. It was a very interesting exchange with our overall conclusion in favour of DDC taking over enforcement of parking regulations but as part of making local transport work better. Oh dear! there we go again, an ITP.

LISTED BUILDINGS AND PRESERVING THE BEST OF OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

In the last issue I reported on our support for the demolition of the ugly link corridor at the Admiralty Pier. The application for permission to demolish the corridor has been withdrawn which perhaps shows that it is as difficult to get rid of what is old but ugly as to protect what is good.

A battle now looms with a demand for several telecommunication towers to be erected to service mobile phones. Should you want to see what the problem is about, look at the telecommunication tower next to DDC's offices at Whitfield. The problem is made much worse because telephone companies want to place masts in the highest and most visibly intrusive situations to achieve the maximum coverage for their customers. Dover's topography probably requires more masts than flatter areas. We have objected to the current proposal to erect a 25 metre mast above River in a designated area of outstanding natural beauty and close to a SSSI. A resubmission of an application for a mast on the Western Heights has been made. Both masts are seen in the same setting as ancient monuments or listed buildings. Government policy is to encourage phone companies to cover the countryside with these masts but for Dover the impact is greater than for most areas. We may well have to accept some masts but can we please have the maximum amount of mast sharing to give us the minimum numbers of towers which incidentally coincides with DDC policy. What about better designs that mean we do not have to put up with the down right ugly!

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

I was more than happy to hear a report that the Society had been described as a nuisance for being concerned about the design of a building. I can only feel that this is a sign of success. As a committee we are happy to accept change but please no more Burlington Houses.

An application was recently made to demolish Marine Court and replace it with

a 95 bedroom Hotel. This is one of our foremost first impressions sites for visitors. Whilst the front facing the sea had been given careful thought, the rear facing onto Townwall Street had been ignored. This is the side seen by most people and arguably as important. The application has been withdrawn and I can only hope we shall get a new proposal that does justice to the site.

The old Castlemount School site is currently being redeveloped with high quality houses but I had previously reported our opposition to the addition of flats to this development on the grounds that they did not harmonise with the surrounding buildings including the listed Victoria Park. The application has now been resubmitted with an improved design and whilst not entirely happy we have withdrawn our objections subject to a permanent tree screen and better traffic management in Taswell Street.

English Heritage's proposed Castle car park is a thoughtful design with plenty of tree cover which should reduce the visual impact on the surrounding countryside to a

minimum. However the road safety aspect must be addressed. Without changes the increased traffic poses dangers for the Sea Cadets HQ and to the neighbouring sheltered housing on Upper Road. The location will not help to bring castle visitors into Dover and this also needs to be addressed.

We welcome the acquisition of Old Park Barracks by Dover Harbour Board but had reservations about the recent outline planning application. The road access needs further thought to safeguard domestic property from 24 hour traffic noise. A direct link to the A256 junction may provide a solution. Any developments near the edge of the escarpment overlooking Dover must be screened by trees. We have more than enough buildings that spoil the skyline. Oh by the way Dover Harbour Board, how about a super gesture for the Millennium. Why not dedicate the tree-lined slopes of Old Park for the use of the townspeople?

A final reminder. If any reader has views or comments on planning matters please do let me know.

THE LOCAL PLAN KEN WRAIGHT & JACK WOOLFORD

The Dover Society continues to watch and to comment on successive versions of the Dover District Local Plan. As always we try to balance our environmental priorities with Dover's economic needs.

In our current submission, with what was the Farthingloe Camp for Channel Tunnel workers in mind, we urge that Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty should have overriding precedence over development proposals, and similarly that the White Cliffs Business Park should have development priority over other possible sites. In case there should be another Bronze Age Boat awaiting discovery we say that development sites "must", not "may", have archaeological investigation, just as we assert that the destruction of hedgerows "must", not "may", cause ecological damage.

We maintain that Kent is not self-sufficient in water supply, query the assertion that the infrastructure for the import of water exists, and advocate both metering and stricter licensing of abstraction by water authorities. We query the omission of the old Dover Harbour Station and the Slipway from the list of buildings meriting preservation, and we query Dover's need for more high quality office development at the Western Docks. We also correct proof reading slips and point out that "tourist accommodation" and "residential development" are not synonymous.

Basically, however, our comments merely underline and attempt to strengthen Dover District Council's increasing commitment to environmental concern, which we endorse and applaud. We do not envisage appearing as Counsel for the Prosecution at the ensuing Public Inquiry.