

The work of the

PLANNING

Sub-Committee

Reported by JACK WOOLFORD, Chairman

To be moved from the Chairmanship of the Society to that of the Planning Committee is a promotion from the bird's eye view to the nitty gritty. Having occasionally attended planning meetings down the years I have been more and more impressed by the organisation and atmosphere evolved by my predecessors Ken Wraight, Adrian Galley, Lawrence Gage and, over the last year, Jeremy Cope. A small committee can be less formal and even more sociable than a large one, but none the less disciplined, and the division of labour which has evolved, so that every member has a specific area of responsibility, is admirable. The key role is that of the Secretary, Sybil Standing, who scrutinises every planning application submitted to the District Council (and attends every meeting of the Town Council Planning Committee) and allots responsibility for the necessary scrutiny (at the Planning Office) of those relevant to our concerns, usually to two members, so that more than one opinion may be heard. Consensus usually - though not always quickly - follows discussion and the resulting communications not only command the respect of the various parliamentary, county, district and parish councils, etc. which receive them but are frequently influential, if not decisive.

It is important, however, to recall that all Committee decisions have to be endorsed by the full Dover Society committee: and this does not always happen. A chairman's lot is always an interesting one, and meetings without controversy would be very dull. For example, the suggestion that Alkham Valley might be defended from traffic by diverting A2 from a point East of the current Coldred turning and joining the A256 north of Whitfield, controverted the new orthodoxy that road building merely generates new

traffic, and when the "Dover Express" publicised the idea, a Society member wrote expressing "horror and disgust". Neighbouring amenity societies and councils were sceptical and although the idea was considered by the Highways Agency, the deletion of the Denton Bypass from KCC's list of funded schemes at least to the end of 2000 appears to have settled the controversy.

Another divisive issue for a time was a consideration of the ways by which traffic calming might better be achieved, either by physical constraints or by "persuasive" road signs, administered either by the police or by the local authority. Unanimity in favour of local enforcement, provided that the signs are overlooked by recording cameras and offenders immediately identified and punished, has now been achieved. On the other hand a suggestion that Marine Court be saved from demolition by listing was decisively defeated, although our sharp eye will remain on the proposed new hotel building.

Contrariwise, there is no dispute that four three-storey houses on the site of the Apostolic Church is at least one, if not two, too many, and none that whilst MFI should not move to Whittfield, possible alternative sites, eg Poulton Close or the derelict market on London Road, would, as is desirable, keep the retail facility in the town centre. It is also totally agreed that the return of Woolworths to the former GPO in Biggin Street, is indeed welcome, provided that "partial demolition" leaves the facades and the main structure intact.

Meanwhile the Society heartily commends to Dover District Council and to Dover Harbour Board the concept of a Camden Crescent fully restored to housing, perhaps to former design, perhaps to a complementary modern style. Not only would this be environmentally improving, it would be financially viable.

We have failed to save the Citadel/Drop Redoubt from razor-fencing. English Heritage has agreed that safety is paramount. Everyone agrees that the priceless asset of the decaying Western fortifications is neglected, but, alas, there are no available resources.