

The work of the

PLANNING

Sub-Committee

Reported by JACK WOOLFORD, Chairman

We obviously lament the closures of Courts Furniture, Kent Photos and Benson Shoes, and the need to re-sell Snoops, following on the withdrawal of Wetherspoon's rather surprising proposal to supplement the Eight Bells, the more so because all are prime sites in the very heart of the Town Centre.

We also lament the continuing silence of Gillcrest Homes on the details of their plans to replace Buckland Paper Mill with affordable and private housing, work units, a play area and community facilities.

On the other hand, should we welcome Danish Netto's takeover of the Co-op and prospective takeover of B&Q (which will regrettably move to Whitfield)? Netto is another discount food purveyor, to compete not only with Somerfield and Aldi but also with the proposed new Asda in the mooted St James DTIZ development. Netto's proposed three non-food shop sites will also compete with existing retailers and Tesco is adding a storey and an extension. Dover's Town Centre is up against it.

Are there any counter considerations? With £800 in prospect from the Dover District Council's Regeneration Unit (for former mining areas) it is now much more likely that Biggin Street will get its seven Town Centre trees (*please see enclosed appeal to Society Members!*) and the outlook for the conservation and improvement of the River Dour is now positive indeed. The Riverside Walk is being signposted by WCCP, three of the four new factory sites at Whitfield have already been taken and there may be jobs for Dovorians at the four new industrial sites at Tilmanstone.

If the Chamber of Commerce's proposal for a 5 Star Hotel and Conference Centre on the Western Heights, which also guaranteed the conservation of the Drop Redoubt as another major tourist attraction, materialises, and if we get the High Speed Rail connection (putting Dover into the London Commuter Belt which would encourage high quality housing) then Dover could re-flourish and even find resources to tackle the Townwall Street congestion problem. Don't, however, count on it.

