

*The work of the*

# PLANNING

*Sub-Committee*

Report by  
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The Planning Committee continues to be active with regard to planning applications. Since March we have made comments in respect of six planning applications and the Council have taken into account our comments. In general we are seeking that over-intensification (often back garden development) is controlled as well as the design, in particular where either listed buildings or conservation areas are concerned. Often this may be in respect of materials that are considered suitable within such areas of sensitivity. There is greater understanding of the value of trees and we are challenging applications that require the felling of trees which quite surprisingly often are in respect of trees that have Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) served. They have therefore been considered of importance in saving.

I mention trees above and as urban areas have lost much vegetation with front gardens being surfaced for car parking there is a need to ensure as much greenery as possible is retained. At a recent meeting involving KCC/DDC it was mentioned the planning laws since the end of 2008 have introduced the need to seek planning permission for any paving over of gardens. This is mainly due to flood risk and applications are restricted in regard to the area of land permitted and also that pervious materials are used. Certainly this could assist with a more sympathetic visual appearance as well as removing the pressure of surface

flooding. Let's hope that our council exercise suitable enforcement.

With respect to enforcement, sadly our council is not using Section 215 enforcement which would force owners to "tidy up" buildings that are currently in disrepair. There may be major regeneration plans but very often facelifts at relatively low cost can give a community an immediate improvement.

It is important to have an open dialogue with the planning authority (Dover District Council) and I am pleased that we have this year had two meetings with the Director of Community and Development which we see as important particularly as the much awaited regeneration projects come to fruition and are placed as planning applications. In this respect, as quoted in the local media, we await with interest the new plans for the DTIZ scheme which it is understood will enhance the quality that Dover Town deserves.

The Society has been active in making comments to future land use (Site Allocations Document-Interim), which is a process where land may be "offered up" or "considered" for future use. As this consultation process continues The Dover Society is seen by the local authority as always giving a balanced view.

In addition to the above "routine" activity we have recently assisted two members on matters involving planning/environmental issues. I hasten to add this

is not a replacement for any legal/professional activity but very often we are able to give an unbiased view and point the individual in the right direction where a matter may then be resolved.

Those members who access the DDC website in respect of current applications and decisions will be aware of a new on-line system introduced in March. Like all systems it has its teething problems and we have, at our aforementioned meetings with the Director of Community and

Development, highlighted certain areas. I am pleased that as "the dentist" he has taken on board our comments and I hope some of these small problems will be resolved.

We are still watching the Whitfield Urban Expansion scheme with particular reference to the comments that The Dover Society has made to the Planning Authority which were previously summarised in the Planning Report in the March edition of our newsletter.

## **Regeneration ...** Jeremy Cope

Many matters have been put on hold by the recent elections. The message has been wait until the results are in and then start lobbying again. However one thing is now becoming even clearer, the cuts are here and there is very little in the way of resources to enforce standards and improve what is run down and neglected. Lobbying for improvements was always difficult but now it will require much more determination and an ability not to be put off by disappointments.

Matters we are pursuing: the ARP post meeting was positive with the KCC suggesting that we adopt the post. Bodies such as the Society can attract funds in a way not open to local authorities. Subsequently the proposal was that the Society lease the property but this is more complex with problems of insurance and control. Town Centre planters show some improvement but a long way to go - the vandals, no surprise, show no sign of improvement. A letter has gone off to KCC Rights of Way Unit on our ideas for improving the walk from Bleriot Memorial to Langdon Cliffs. No reply has arrived yet and I suspect a hastener will follow shortly. At a recent meeting with DDC the message on neglected properties, particularly listed buildings and conservation areas, is that there are very limited resources within the Council. It seems that the only way things will get done is by lobbying over each neglected property of and just keep on badgering them.

### **New Ideas**

Can we /should we adopt Connaught Park Pond? It is need of repair and DDC does not have the money. Can we attract the funds required including matched funding? The amount required is anything between £20,000 and £75,000 depending on what is done. The Lindemann Plaque on the sea front (all those shells sent across to Dover from the gun emplacements at Calais) needs maintenance. Again money is needed.

And those toilets - once this article is finished its time to pick up my pen again.