

The work of the

PLANNING

Sub-Committee

Report by
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Well, never a dull moment as so many planning issues descend upon Dover. Just unveiled is the new St James's (DTIZ) scheme that encompasses smaller retail units than the original ASDA project. We have made comments with regard to this scheme, in particular the quality of the build to be delivered as well as landscaping. I think all will be pleased to see the DTIZ scheme move forward with the removal of the number one eyesore in Dover.

Good news, at last, the Buckland Mill development is starting. This is a much overdue scheme that has sadly seen the deterioration of a magnificent building whilst it remained empty.

On the horizon is the highly controversial Western Heights Scheme and we all await more detail, as whilst we must protect our heritage we must not close the door to regeneration opportunities in an ever changing world and must ensure that if any development is permitted that it enhances our rich heritage.

Our Chair and Vice Chair have with the assistance of some Planning Committee members evaluated the "Draft National Planning Framework" and the "Local Government Resource

Review - Proposals for Business Rates Retention".

Full details of our response can be found on our Dover Society website. Our general feeling with the revised planning consultation was that it concentrates very much on "new build" and fails to resolve a major problem in Dover with regard to bringing empty buildings into use. The new planning proposals only give financial incentives to local authorities for "new build". We would like to see section 215 (see below) as a mandatory enforcement by local authorities.

The business rates retention proposals are what many local authorities have sought for some time in that such rates should come direct into the local authority and not central government coffers. This is seen as an incentive to expand businesses. Communities however with a low level business base could be disadvantaged and we have drawn attention to this potential problem.

This brings me on to my favourite planning subject "Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990". This is a tool local authorities are able to use and in the introduction to the act it states "If it appears that

the amenity of part of their area is being adversely affected by the condition of neighbouring land and buildings they may serve notice on the owner requiring that the situation be remedied".

Our local authority (Dover District Council) has regrettably not used this method of enforcement to improve the town of Dover. Having raised this on many occasions over the last four years with DDC it is stated to be too costly - in particular legal costs. I have recently visited one local authority (Hastings) which since 2000 has served 500 such notices; they started with conservation areas/listed buildings and town centre and in 10 years now cover a wider area. The visual improvement to their town is incredible and is reflected in the overall street scene. Over 90% of notices served are actioned without any legal redress. Of the remaining 10% Hastings has not lost one case when court action has been required

and all legal costs have been recovered through the court.

Government guidelines mention the use of Section 215 to assist in regeneration and as a town councillor of Dover Town Council (DTC) I am seeking DTC to press DDC to start using Section 215 in order to enhance the quality of our town. Regeneration is not just the shiny new build but ensuring that existing buildings are also of a high standard.

Hastings also ensures that when notices are served the owners are "named and shamed". Like Dover they have property owners who have a portfolio of properties that are often all in a similar condition and strict action over one property spurs the property owner to improve other eyesore ones.

We have given members assistance on planning matters and again our assistance is giving unbiased views and points individuals in the right direction as outlined in the August magazine. Since the last magazine comments have been made in respect of nine planning applications.



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