

The work of the

PLANNING

Sub-Committee

Report by
PATRICK SHERRAIT

At the time of preparing this report (mid January) one of the latest planning applications with Dover District Council is a revised application in respect of developments at Farthingloe and Western Heights. We are pleased the revised application removes the controversial 54 houses proposed within the "Citadel" area, as well as some adjustments to the hotel location, thereby, reducing its visibility within this important heritage site.

Western Heights, with its important Napoleonic fortifications, has been totally neglected by English Heritage and only with the stalwart dedication of the volunteers from the Western Heights Preservation Society has the decline and erosion of the drop redoubt been checked. However, in general the area is in decline and only major investment would see any reversal. In this connection the developer's submission includes a £5m contribution for a Heritage Package that would be set up as a separate Trust. We welcome such initiative, however, this sum must be guaranteed as well as the knowledge that English Heritage supports the scheme. To date English Heritage appear to be prepared to see the site deteriorate. With this in mind prior to any planning decision we have suggested a Public meeting with the developer, English Heritage and Natural England to ensure that if planning permission is approved that

there is a clear deliverable plan for the heritage package and that the Farthingloe element falls within AONB guidelines.

There is plenty of activity with the press announcement of the new hospital. At present there is no actual planning application but the Health Authority has submitted a scoping report. Whilst not open to public comment we took the opportunity to make comments to Dover District Council. The hospital plan falls short of the facilities that had been offered in 2008 and as such we are concerned that if at a later date additional facilities could be provided, care beds for example, the hospital must have room for expansion. The scoping Document makes it clear that the Health Authority seek to dispose of any surplus land that would preclude any future expansion. Neither the Health Authority nor the Council has made any response and we shall continue to seek assurance that such land disposal should not occur.

Recently placed for public comment is the District Councils Land Allocations Pre-Submission Local Plan. This is in fact the document that identifies and allocates specific sites that are suitable for employment; retail and housing development in order to meet the Core Strategy's requirements and cover the period to 2026. We shall be examining this and making a suitable response.

Section 215 activity is as reported in the November Newsletter; however, one actual 215 Notice has been served on 1 Athol Terrace. The scaffolding has been removed from The Old Post Office/Labour Exchange in King Street as well as 7 Castle Street. When in Dover do walk past these buildings to see the restoration that has been undertaken in particular the façade of the King Street building. Congratulations to both owners. We hope that both DDC and DTC continue to support our joint activity with the use of Section 215 as a regeneration tool for Dover.

We are still concerned as to the former ABC Cinema in Castle Street and I have written personally to the Chairman of Wetherspoons who currently own the building and look forward to interesting dialogue that hopefully will see improvements forthcoming.

We have supported the DDC document *"Shop Fronts and Signage within Conservation Areas"* that will improve the visual aspect of properties in these designated areas. We will always remind the statutory authority of this document when deciding applications within Conservation Areas.

RIVER DOUR

Jeremy Cope

In October the Dour Steering Group held its half year meeting at which views, news and comment are exchanged. The wet weather was a major point of discussion, with the consequent flood risk a matter upon which the Environment Agency places greatest importance. It is clear from its representatives that the river's environment matters to them a great deal and within their limited resources they do all that is possible. A point of contention is Chris Arthur's concern about the heavy silting at the River Millpond. The Agency does not see this as a problem – as far as they are concerned the river does not flow through the pond and therefore does not pose a potential flood danger. Chris disagrees and cites examples of flood risk and no doubt will continue to press the point. To dredge the pond of silt would be a matter of substantial cost!

White Cliffs Countryside Project continues with its volunteer team in its work of litter clearance during the period April to November (the winter period is fish breeding and work in the river is forbidden). Volunteers collected the usual large haul of rubbish, a tribute to their efforts. However we face a potential problem in that the District Council will no longer specifically fund the Project in this work. Dover Town Council have indicated that they will not fund the Project directly either. We must try and find an answer that allows the volunteer team to continue but any scheme must, as now, have proper leadership with insurance and equipment able to keep the volunteers safe and effective. The river does not look dangerous to work in but there are threats, from quicksand patches and water borne disease as examples. We are now seeking a meeting of the Group and local councils to try and find a resolution.