

Planning Committee

Patrick Sherratt

Sadly since my last reporting in the July Newsletter the major planning activities in Dover continue to “drag their heels”.

The much heralded Dover Town Investment Zone (DTIZ) on the St James's site shows no sign of building activity although a recent planning application (DOV/13/00457) which sought “Demolition of existing buildings” was granted consent. Whilst writing this report (late September) it was announced in the local press that Cineworld have signed a contract for a six screen multi-plex cinema with three restaurants, also the build of residential property on the corner of Castle Street and Woolcomber Street (former MFI site) that will certainly enhance the visual aspect of the Castle Street Conservation Area. At the time of planning we congratulated the design of this residential building that is in keeping with the existing buildings in Castle Street. This sounds good news and we wait with baited breath for some sign of activity. Our interpretation of the planning application (as above) is that with this permission the long awaited compulsory purchase orders (CPO's) would be served, with the result of the demolition of Burlington House and other properties required to fulfil the delivery of the proposed development. We have sought the latest from DDC but there is no indication that the issue of CPO's although stated that “work is in progress with our Development Partner and several pre-application meetings have taken place”, in respect to the cinema and residential

area “All legal's completed”. Our Committee is most concerned with regard to the long delay in seeking any CPO and feel responsibility must lay with the Director of Governance at DDC. The regeneration team at DDC gives as much “planning” support, but, when one looks at the speed of CPO's in other towns compared with Dover the question must be asked why so long in Dover? We have always adopted a positive “glass half full” view but with such a long timeframe with no visible action the glass is now rapidly becoming empty. Part of the DTIZ incorporates a new hotel and again no movement on this. The area of land for the DTIZ and that between the River Dour and York Street is a major eyesore and we seek DDC to deliver suitable high quality landscaping within this area to improve the visual aspect of the town in particular as this area links the seafront with the town centre and has a high footfall of tourists particularly from visiting cruise ships.

No further information has been received in respect of the controversial “Western Heights” application and the Dover Society continues to seek English Heritage participation as reported in the last Newsletter.

I was fortunate to be able to speak at the DDC Planning Meeting with regard to the Dover Hospital planning application. Emphasis was made that the hospital did not provide any “Intermediate or step up/step down bed facilities” that the community the size of Dover should expect. From a

planning perspective we sought part of the surplus land that East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust intends to dispose for development is retained for future expansion of facilities at Dover. Sadly, following clarification by the DDC Case Officer, the DDC Planning Committee would not consider this part of the planning condition as it was stated to not be relevant to the application being discussed.



Completed properties opposite Dover Priory station

Since this set back we have been active in seeking "proper facilities at Dover hospital" through the new GP led Consultative Commissioning Group (CCG) that is now responsible for delivering health care within the District. The CCG are, however, not supportive of such facilities and are concentrating on hospital aftercare at Care Homes or home visits. We are far from happy as care homes do not, in general, have the same level of qualified nursing staff and such facilities would not be suitable for younger members of the community. This will result in patients continuing to receive "intermediate, step up/step down" care at William Harvey or QEQM. This we see as bed-blocking at these two hospitals and is a partial cause for patient delays awaiting operations. If you feel strongly about this please write to your GP, with copy to our MP, expressing concern with the lack of intermediate care, step up/step down facilities in Dover.

Several of the properties contacted under Section 215 have, since last winter, completed work, much is only repainting etc. and gives an immediate visual improvement. Feed back is

generally very positive but occasionally met with a different view as posted on a forum website by a leading Dover businessman "The Stasi operating in town, you know those snoopers and snitches that have nothing better to do than take photographs of other people's property".

The Dover Society is always happy to go through the Section 215 procedure with our members, and we are pleased that one of our members who requested guidance has succeeded in a Section 215 notice being served on the Louis Armstrong Public House. The result is the third 215 legal notice served in Dover since the Society started the campaign some 18 months ago with the co-operation of DDC and Dover Town Council (DTC). I mentioned the other two properties served with legal notices in the last Newsletter and I am pleased that, 1 Athol Terrace may well be at court very soon. I see this case as imperative to the future use of Section 215 legislation in Dover just as it has been successful in Hastings where it is considered a valuable regeneration tool.

I would take this opportunity of

thanking DTC (Karen Dry) and DDC (Jim McEwan) in the total support given to the Dover Society in respect of Section 215 action.

We have made attempt to seek a solution to the major eyesore of the former ABC Cinema in Castle Street and are bitterly disappointed in the response from Weatherspoons and as such have sought DDC to take up using Section 215.

We responded to the consultation document from The Department of Transport with options for a new Lower Thames Crossing. We are supportive of the most easterly option but not the "variable" to this option that would see £1.8 billion pounds spent on upgrade of the A229 linking the M2 and M20. We consider this money would be better spent upgrading the A2, particularly from Lydden to Dover in particular as the Department of Transport statistics within the consultative document state that "30% of the existing heavy goods vehicles using the Dartford Crossing are to/from the port of Dover".

Our working group of Derek, Jeremy and myself with Temple Ewell member Ray Newsam, prepared a response to the DDC consultation document "Draft Parks and Amenity Open Space Strategy". Our main comments related to:

Security Fencing: In particular Pencester Gardens where rather than create such a barrier that improve and monitored CCTV be used.

Kearsney Abbey / Russell Gardens / Bushy Ruff: Recognise increased parking needed but concerned that this would be at the expense to part of the

open space. Action should be taken re the state of Bushy Ruff House and terraces.

Connaught Park: Additional car parking should not take existing community area but off the Guston Road area adjacent to former MOD land. Also any major sporting facility should be developed in the same location retaining the community gardens current recreational facilities.

River Dour: We see this as an important "open space amenity" that should be included.

Street Trees: We urge street trees to be planted, particularly where over recent years KCC have removed without replacement.

We continue to seek the proposed development at Dover Priory Station that will include car parking facilities. Delay to this has been mainly due to Network Rail/ South Eastern and following request to our MP the latest we have from DDC is that "active dialogue" is taking part with all parties.

Police/Anti-Social Behaviour: It is felt that we should establish regular "face to face" liaison meetings with Chief Inspector Barlow (Dover District Commander) when issues can be raised. I did mention use the 101 phone service to report incidents. From personal experience I have discovered that such reported incidents end up on the police statistics as from the postal code of the person reporting the incident and not the actual location of the incident. As this can give a misleading overview of an area that has no anti-social problems I suggest 101 is not used.