

Planning Committee

Patrick Sherratt

Since my last report in the November Newsletter (written in September) it is pleasing to see a major step forward with the Dover Town Investment Zone (DTIZ).

Revised plans for the DTIZ incorporating a multi-plex cinema and minor adjustments to some of the retail units were approved in December. Our Planning Committee has, as last reported, been concerned as to the way the legal aspects have been handled by DDC in respect to Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO). It is therefore most pleasing to see that DDC has accepted the appointment of a CPO Team that will be driven by the Developer in conjunction with DDC Officers. I have no doubt that this will ensure any purchase of land will be achieved much quicker and if any CPO action is undertaken that it will be executed faster with the required result of the demolition of the major eye-sore of Burlington House.

The "anchor store" has signed agreements and, as announced in the press, has Marks and Spencer. We understand that the existing M&S would have closed in 2016 as their lease expires with the consequential result of no M&S presence in Dover. M&S have stated that the DTIZ unit will be "food only" and this has led to many residents expressing concern with the loss of the clothing department. We shall be contacting M&S in an attempt for them to continue to offer clothing, especially as the unit that they will occupy has a

mezzanine area that was introduced at planning stage for future expansion. At our Executive Meeting it has been suggested that as many write to M&S requesting reconsideration to the food only decision.

Write to:

Marc Bolland
Chief Executive
Marks and Spencer Group plc
Waterside House
35 North Wharf Road
London
W2 1NW

It is anticipated that the Developer will shortly be announcing details of other "brand names" that will be occupying other retail units within the DTIZ. As reported in the last Newsletter we continue to seek landscaping between the River Dour and York Street as when the DTIZ is complete this area will remain a major eye-sore.

Your Chairman, Vice Chairman and I held our regular meeting with DDC Officers and sought the latest situation on the Farthingloe/Western Heights development and understand that legal agreements are at a conclusion stage. When Planning Application comments were sought we expressed concern that a sustainable heritage package must be in place. At our meeting we were given the impression that this is moving forward with a possible "Trust" with the support of English Heritage. A £1 million "up front" payment by the Developer (eventually a total package of £5 million) and following the

success of the Betteshanger scheme could also gain Heritage Lottery Funding. We all recognize the lack of support by English Heritage to this important heritage site and it must be recognized if it was not for the tremendous work put in by volunteer members of The Western Heights Preservation Society that the decline in the Drop Redoubt and surrounding area would be far worse than at present. The Drop Redoubt is on the English Heritage "At Risk Register".

I anticipate that the much heralded Dover Priory station scheme may be at planning by the time this article is printed. At the time of writing (January 2014) it is anticipated Network Rail will shortly submit a full planning application having secured a funding grant of £3.5 million. Currently without adequate parking at Dover Priory many commuters drive to Ashford. The parking will enable the true potential for expansion of commuter business from Dover.

So with a "glass half full" attitude there is hope to see some major developments coming to fruition. This brings me to the need to continually seek properties that are in disrepair to bring up to standard if the visual aspect of Dover is to improve. The Dover Society in partnership with Dover Town Council and Dover District Council has been identifying properties and I have reported in some detail in previous reports how Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 has been used. It is now two years since we first started this partnership in the phase 1 area (Town

Centre) where 70 properties were identified, as at December 2013 66% (46 properties) have either completed work or work is underway, a clear indication of the success. It is one year since the Phase 2 (part of Folkestone Road) started where 38 properties have been identified. So far 26% (10 properties) have either completed or work is underway. As with the experience gained from Hastings as soon as properties improve it is amazing how many owners in adjacent properties not identified under Section 215 then also carry out maintenance further enhancing the visual aspect.

In conclusion of Section 215 I am pleased to report that the third "Legal" notice has been served by DDC and this is on the former ABC Cinema in Castle Street owned by J.D.Wetherspoon.

We have also made comment to Dept. of Transport with regard to the provision of a third Thames Crossing supporting the most easterly option. We also took the opportunity to express the need to upgrade the A2 from Lydden, in particular a Whitfield bypass as proposed developments will put pressure on the existing A2 through Whitfield.

Finally we continue to seek assurance that land be protected adjacent to the new Buckland Polyclinic/Hospital in Coombe Valley Rd. As there are currently no "care bed" facilities being provided it is essential land is retained on the existing hospital site for any future provision that could include such facilities.

