

Planning Committee

Patrick Sherratt

The Planning Committee continues to respond to planning applications, in particular those affecting Conservation Areas and Listed buildings.

Much has been mentioned with regard to the car rental site in Maison Dieu Rd. Members may recall that this site was in a derelict condition having been used for many years by Kenning Car Hire. When the Planning Application was submitted in 2010 it was the Committee's view that the proposed plans and continuation of a car hire/rental business would actually enhance the site. Although the office was of a modern design it was in fact replacing a modern and dilapidating building, therefore, the Society made no objection.

Within one year there was evidence that the business was not just cars but HGV (lorries) and vans that were being sold as well as for rental. DDC were informed that there was a possibility of a breach of planning as well as no approval for signage within a conservation area. No action was taken by DDC. At a later date a "High Pressure Washing facility" was installed. This was for washing all types of vehicle including large HGV lorries. The spray from this industrial type machine resulted in excessive spray on the Grade II listed building behind the machine. The owner of the listed property raised this with DDC.

Subsequently a retrospective application was submitted. The DDC Planning Case Officer recommended refusal of the application and his lengthy report drew attention to the importance of protecting important heritage assets. Within the report he drew attention to the fact the design of

buildings as well as the problem of spray was due to large vehicles being washed. On the 28th August the application came to DDC Planning Committee where the Planning Officers recommendation for refusal was overruled. Sadly some of the DDC Councillors comments left much to be desired with "rain has chemicals (acid rain) so cannot see the problem with spray on the listed building", another Councillor could not hear any noise when he was in the public house, the fact that it is behind the listed building as well as being inside a noisy pub environment was not considered. The chair of DDC Planning Committee made every attempt to draw his members to the importance of the design of buildings in Conservation Areas but was ignored by all with the exception of one Councillor (Cllr J Cronk).

It is sad that the Planning Committee failed to impose any restriction on HGV/Large vehicles as suggested by the Planning Case Officer. This could have been a satisfactory solution.

The Society expressed its concern in an open letter to the Leader of DDC and was well reported in the press. Our MP has also shown his support for Society comments "I agree with you and the Dover Society. I was really shocked by this. I just don't understand the decision of the (DDC) Planning Committee".

Section 215 activities. It is now nearly three years since we initiated this important aspect of the 1990 Planning Act with full support from both Dover Town Council and Dover District Council. During this time over 70 properties within Dover have

responded by improving the visual maintenance of properties. DDC are continuing the process of working through the list to ensure remaining buildings comply. It is interesting to see also the number of owners who have also improved their buildings although not contacted under Section 215. This is exactly the same as is occurring in Hastings where for every one with Section 215 action two others improve.

The area of main concern in Dover is Bench Street and the buildings near the underpass. Three "legal" notices have been issued and it is to be hoped that we shall soon see some visual improvements to this area that is such an important thoroughfare for tourists (as well as residents) to and from the town centre and sea front.

Within this area DDC have revealed plans for the car park on the site when Centurion House is demolished. I am delighted that the various comments we made to DDC re landscaping has been taken on board with trees and the use of a tromp-l'oeil façade incorporated in the design.

As I write this report in early September it is sad to see the demolition of the former Cinema in Castle Street. The building is not listed or within the Castle Street Conservation Area. It is sad that someone did not seek some twenty years ago such listing when the interior was complete. A similar building in Tooting with Theodore Komisarjevsky interior is a Grade I listed building. Only the Castle is Grade I in Dover. So sadly another heritage asset is lost and we wait to see what the new owner intends to do with the site.

This now takes me to the DTIZ development. Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) was issued to landowners who have resisted selling land on this site

(Burlington House being the major obstacle). The CPO Process requires a Ministerial decision and I am pleased that this will take place from the 30th September; with a positive result we could at long last see the demolition of Burlington House and some building activity. Despite negative vibes from some quarters that seem determined to see DTIZ fail the current situation is positive with over 50% of the square meterage of the development either signed up or "under offer".

The Dover Society was asked to speak at the DDC Scrutiny Committee that was convened on the 23rd June following a public petition with regard to the delay of the DTIZ project. I emphasized how the St James's site (where DTIZ is to be built) had for so many years been left dormant with regard to making it attractive with appropriate landscaping. It is recognized that the Council is dependent on working with a commercial partner and inevitably there can be delays in particular during times of national recession. With such a lengthy time in delivery it was this type of neglect that caused residents to be annoyed and frustrated. My recorded comment to the Committee was, "To learn for the future that any major development sites must be suitably landscaped to enhance the town's visual appearance:- possibly jointly financed by Dover Town Council". If any member would like a full copy of my presentation do contact me.

What will the new name of Buckland Hospital be? By the time this newsletter is circulated I expect a decision will have been made. One of our Planning Committee members has heard that this spanking new building will have the boilers from the old hospital and that these are scheduled to be moved in February/March...will be cold in the new hospital if proven correct. We have been advised by the Clinical

Commissioning Group that our pressure on retaining the adjacent land for any future "Intermediate Care" facility has been partially successful. The latest statement by the Health Minister suggesting more local care bed facilities to ease the main hospitals, (a point we have continually made to the Health Authority), may see some movement in delivering the facility that Dover deserves.

The original site for the hospital was to be in central Dover; however, this was rejected

as the site is at risk of flooding. This is very sad for Dover as it would have been close to bus services from across the district as well as assisting with town centre regeneration. With Dover Harbour Board about to start on the Western Docks Cargo terminal Alan Sencicle presented a flood alleviation plan that could be incorporated within the Wellington Dock part of the scheme. I have, therefore, written to the Chief Executive at DHB with copies to appropriate Ministers, requesting giving serious thought to Alan's paper.

River Dour Partnership

Ray Newsam

Work has continued on our plans for the river, with much being read and written but not much practical improvement actually happening yet! This is the nature of what we are hoping to achieve in that any work on the river has to go through approved processes including environmental and flood impacts but we hope by the time of our next report there will be lots to report with our ongoing planning coming to fruition with some exciting projects. We have been keeping a watch on the river and where necessary contacting the Environment Agency about pollution reports, monitoring planning applications affecting the river, and watching developments such as the demolition of the cinema in Castle St where the river runs under the site.

Much of our time over the last few months has been spent meeting various bodies with an interest in the river, including parish councils and the town council where Jeremy Cope addressed a full meeting of the council in September. Our last partnership meeting in July was

preceded by a site visit to the Buckland Mill development, with our host being Alert Reipma from the Homes and Communities Agency who gave a talk to the society on the development earlier in the year. We were all interested to see in real life the developments that we had seen on screen.

Our meeting later in the day was hosted at the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club, and included a talk by Kevin Charles of DDC on the exciting new project at Kearsney parks – if not mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter you can find out more and sign up to receive news at <http://kearsneyparks.co.uk/Home.aspx>

Our volunteers have continued with their monthly river clean-ups over the summer, looking grand in their new safety gear supplied by our You Decide grant obtained last autumn. We now also have banners to display at our events and work parties, and volunteer leaflets giving more detail of what we are trying to achieve and how to get in touch – if anyone knows a place that