

Planning Committee

Patrick Sherratt

Chairman Planning Committee

My opening comment in the last newsletter was looking forward to a warm and pleasant summer. Well I do hope you all survived the hottest summer for many years. Gardens a little parched and lawns disappearing, however, the rain cometh and amazing how all recovers, a wonderful thing is nature.

The Planning Committee has made comments on over 20 planning applications since the last report. Additionally, we have responded to transport consultations as well as enforcement activity. This is all to ensure the objective to improve both the visual and socio-economic profile of Dover.

Road and Transport infrastructure

In July Highways England sought public response on "Solution to Operation Stack". Amongst our comments we raised the issue of traffic using the A2 when TAP or Stack is active on the A20/M20 resulting in town congestion as HGV's avoid controls using the A259. A need for police to stop traffic leaving the A2 at Lydden passing through Temple Ewell and Whitfield Hill.

We have again pressed for the A2 to be dual-carriageway from Lydden to the docks with an "Eastern Bypass" around Whitfield.

The Third Thames Crossing scheme. This indicated Statutory Consultation in 2018 but to date still nothing received.

Dover Western Docks Revival (DWDR)

Work continues with the Eastern Breakwater (new pier) taking shape. Recently announced that Solent Marine Ltd awarded contract for "fitting out" the new marina with completion anticipated to be end of 2019. New CEO appointed, Doug Bannister.

A new Marina Control building, complimenting the Sea Sports Centre design, now under construction.

Dover Leisure Centre

Construction continues and 2019 opening still anticipated. Of note is the pool will have a specialist disabled pool entry facility.

DTIZ (St James Development)

Shop units opening in stages. As at time of this report still four retail units available to let and, more worrying, no less than seven "catering" units. As previously reported ten of the retail units are town centre relocations now making the town a very sad place.

Greggs has been closed since mid-August due to "construction" problems. Earlier the Cinema had a short period of closure due to "electrical" problems. It is hoped that these are not problems that could be in other areas of the site, bearing in mind the tight budget the developer had for this project that has seen a reduction of visual quality.

Charging for car parking has still to be introduced and many employees and town

centre workers are using the car park rather than the practice of on-street parking in the area. In this connection we have asked DDC to conduct an on-street parking survey once car parking charges apply in the DTIZ car park.

Castle Street/Biggin Street

We continue to comment on Change of Use to properties within Castle Street and Biggin Street Conservation Areas. Of major problem is the high density of poor designed flats with some below the Conversion to Flats Guidelines that DDC has failed to adopt despite being a document produced in 2006.

It has been our desire to see these guidelines adopted by DDC, however, both the CEO of DDC and Leader of the Council have refused to request, supporting the DDC officers view not to adopt until the next DDC Local Plan. This is not due at the earliest until 2021 and in the meantime tiny flats are delivered with parallel socio-economic problems.

Conservation Areas

Between the Refurbishment Committee and Planning Committee we continue to ensure that objectives of Conservation Areas are observed by DDC.

Section 215 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Enforcement

Three Section 215 notices have recently been issued. All are within the area close to the DTIZ and supports properties/eyesores contained in our initial list to DDC in 2011. The three notices are in respect of the Grade II listed Castle Inn in Russell Street, land to east side of King Street at junction of Flying Horse Lane and repair to 8 King Street.

In 2015 the Society expressed concern when a traditional shop front was removed

from 15 High Street that is a Grade II listed property within the Dover College Conservation Area opposite the Town Hall. DDC issued an enforcement notice to the owners who have appealed to Planning Inspectorate. We have made comment to the Inspectorate that a replacement window should be fitted that "is of a suitable design for both business and heritage objectives".

Several members have asked how Section 215 works and I have produced a "layman's" guide and hope our Newsletter Editor will be able to include as a separate topic in a future newsletter.

Farthingloe and Western Heights

Awaiting a revised Planning Application.

The Citadel owned by the Home Office is to be sold. The important heritage of this site prompted us to seek English Heritage to purchase. However, as a conservation charity with over 400 other highly significant heritage assets they have advised they would be unable to take the Citadel on unless the Home Office was prepared to donate the site together with a dowry for its upkeep.

Failure to develop brownfield sites in Dover

At the time of writing this report details of the first stage of Connaught Barracks development has been submitted. This relates to 64 dwellings on the former Officers site. At "Outline" application in 2015 we emphasized the importance of design and materials for this important site.

Still awaiting details of the "Westmount" site that when enquiring with DDC for the last five years always told "application imminent". Sadly, no such application from the developer and is another example

of land banking that the Government must implement penalties to developers who adopt this policy preventing the delivery of much needed housing stock.

Former St Mary's Residential Home

This Grade II listed building within the Dover Castle Conservation Area has just submitted a planning application to change use to a Bed and Breakfast establishment with 42/43 rooms with double occupancy. There have been over recent years a decline in B&B businesses due to the advent of Budget Hotels (Travelodge/Premier Inn). Our concern is this will not be used for overnight holiday residents but short-term use by London Borough tenants or if future UK border checks are returned to Dover will, as in the 1990's in Folkestone Road, be used as temporary immigrant facility.

As a residential facility the rooms were single occupancy. The rooms vary in size but on average are 16 to 18 sq. m. This is above the minimum size for B&B use but well below guidelines for property conversions where a Studio Flat is required to have a minimum of 30 sq. m, a one-bedroom flat 40 sq. m and a two-bed flat 50 sq. m.

We have suggested the property would be ideal for conversion to flats if there is no residential provider to continue existing use. Several objections have been made and as such will be decided at a future DDC Planning Committee meeting.

There is also a shortage of Residential Care facilities in Dover and many have expressed concern that the building should continue to be used for such a facility.

COWGATE CEMETERY

Jeremy Cope

I never ceased to be amazed at the speed with which grass and plants grow. It is almost as if the residents give orders about the rate of plant growth. Whilst it keeps us busy the cemetery does really look lovely with fine views across the town to the Castle. We welcomed Ted Elliott to the team. He fits in well with the humour at our tea breaks.

If anyone else would like to join our happy band do please phone me on 01304 211348 or email me on jeremycope@willersley.plus.com Working sessions are usually the first Thursday and second Saturday in the month 9.00 am to noon but dependent on weather and members social commitments. Dates for the month ahead will be on the website but it would be best for any new volunteers to contact me first.



Headstone of Stephen Booker Pain at Cowgate