

Planning Committee

Patrick Sherratt

Dover Western Docks Revival (DWDR)

The new "Port of Call" Cruise Terminal within the Western Docks has been utilized on several occasions. As previously mentioned, this facility now enables three large cruise ships to visit Dover at the same time. We look forward to seeing the cruise ship business increase next year with this new berth.

Of concern is the news that Geest, moved from Portsmouth to Dover, are returning to Portsmouth from January following the Port of Portsmouth, owned by City of Portsmouth Council, investing £15m on improving facilities to handle the larger Geest ships. 70% of the UK banana business that enters the UK is shipped by Geest. This loss may well affect the viability of the DWDR, and questions must be asked why Dover Harbour Board did not secure a longer contract with Geest bearing in mind their traffic is of significant value to the justification of the new cargo handling facilities.

DTIZ (St James Development)

Nine units (4 retail and 5 catering) are still empty. The latest "new" outlet is O2 phones that has relocated from Biggin Street creating another town centre empty shop.

During the planning process we made comment in respect to the continual reduction in landscaping. The small amount of landscaping is sadly being neglected and this has been taken up with DDC who should look at the quality of landscaping maintenance at the Ashford Outlet Centre. The visual quality is needed to enhance the decline in Dover town.

Castle Street/Biggin Street

The application in respect to 13 Castle Street was decided at DDC Planning Committee with the various comments from local residents ignored. Permission was granted for a five bedroom property; note this fails to provide any living areas as all rooms are bedrooms. DDC Private Sector Housing comment was suitable for an HMO not exceeding 5 people without any further planning application. Of interest is the property is on the market as a 5-bed property with a local estate agent who promotes investment with conversions to HMO's.

We continue to support change of use of upper floors in Biggin Street from business to residential provided the residential is of quality.

Conservation Areas

Derek is leading with the Conservation Area Appraisals (CPA's). Dour Street CPA has been completed and is awaiting DDC Cabinet approval although prior to this it is "decided" by the Leader of Councils "DDC Leader Forum". This not being a cross party forum and consists of Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs of Planning, Governance, Regulatory and spokesperson for scrutiny plus DDC CEO and Directors as well as four DDC Officers, the activities of this Forum are not subject to minutes of meetings.

I raise this as the Dour Street CPA has not been totally accepted by the Leader Forum. Of concern is when the Principal Heritage Officer proposed the extension of the boundary to the Waterloo Crescent Conservation Area to include Granville

Gardens and gardens between the Gateway flats and Marine Parade. The DDC Cabinet rejected her proposal for this as to do so would restrict future developments.

Sadly, it is known from community functions within Castle Ward that at least one DDC Cabinet Member is on record as saying if he had his way he would get rid of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings as they are a hindrance to development. The Leader Forum mainly consists of Councillors representing rural areas of the District. The Town Centre CPA is nearing completion.

Section 215 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Enforcement

There seems little action by DDC on our original list and this has been raised with the CEO of DDC as many hours spent by The Dover Society that now seem to be ignored by the DDC Planning Enforcement Manager. No work will continue with this important regeneration tool until a positive response from DDC.

Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO's) and deprivation levels in Dover

As DDC were reluctant to provide information asked for by Graham he then sought to obtain under Freedom of Information (FIO). Our concerns were that HMO's were not being monitored by inspection and lack of recording anti-social behaviour etc. The FOI response indicated approx. 15 inspections per year, with 41 HMO's (and rising) this equates to an inspection approximately every three years. During the last three years stated no issues or complaints, no licences revoked other than where change of ownership. No mention of police issues.

I think this fairly reflects the lack of control on HMO's in Dover. There is no problem with HMO's operated by bona-fide

organizations, e.g. Porchlight, but privately-run establishments do have problems.

Thanet Council have introduced restrictions in granting HMO's and it is possibly why Dover as an adjacent authority is increasing. Many Local Authorities are not granting HMO's because of the associated problems.

Did you know that in 2010 Dover had two of its six wards in the top 20% of deprived wards in England? The 2010 DDC Core Strategy document sought "Have no areas falling within the 20% of those most deprived in England". Well in 2019 ALL SIX wards are now in the top 20% of deprived wards in England. Much of this has been the continued granting of studio/one bed flats that do not even deliver the guidelines set by DDC in 2006 but not legally adopted.

Another contributing factor is DDC must deliver Government targets for new build properties, for the District currently set at 629 per year. In the 2010 Core Strategy the highest delivery area was "Dover", however in effect this is actually Whitfield Urban Development. Whitfield has not been a success and Local Authorities seek to reduce the delivery gap by what is called "Windfall" for small developments not previously identified in the Core Strategy and normally amounts on average to 20% of targets. Windfall includes buildings converted and each converted unit (flat) is counted as a property so six flats deliver six windfall units.

I raise this as being sceptical. Is DDC using such high level of small poor-quality conversions to attempt to deliver Government targets? This is possibly true based on a recent application that sought to increase from permitted nine flats to sixteen flats and the DDC Case Officers comments "The site is located within the settlement confines of Dover, which is

identified as the major focus for development in the District, suitable for the largest scale developments, The principle of the development is therefore supported”.

Another cause of the downward spiral is other Local Authorities placing their tenants in coastal areas. Of surprise was Shepway Council purchasing and locating tenants to Dover. It is known one property in Leyburne Rd is owned by Oportunitas Ltd registered at Shepway Council Offices ‘address’ and consist of five Shepway councillors as Directors. It has been established 125 households have already been placed in Dover from Shepway. If the Leyburne Road property is an example of the type of residents, then are Shepway relocating their “difficult” tenants?

To conclude on a positive note. The DDC development on the former William Muge House and Snellgrove House sites in Harold Street//Leyburne Rd has commenced and DDC are to be congratulated on this mixed housing scheme that will deliver quality to the area and solve some of the housing issues. Also great to see some funding from Coastal Communities and High Street initiatives and hope DDC spend this money well for Dover.

My health has deteriorated over recent weeks and I hope to continue as Chair of the Society Planning Committee and continue the debate on the above issues, however, when Graham takes over, I am sure he will continue our fight for Dover.

Refurbishment Committee

— Mike McFarnell —

Since the last report the committee has monitored the quality and appearance to the town including run down premises and empty shops. The Elli opened to replace Burger Bros in the Market Square. The Market Kitchen is scheduled to open and replace Dickens Corner. It was sad after so many years of trading Allan Hughes Menswear closed in Canon Street. Work was undertaken by Kent County Council to repair and replace paving stones in Biggin Street. St James Retail and Leisure Centre sponsored the flower baskets on the bollards in Castle Street, which supplemented the floral displays in the High Street by the Town and District Council.

In March 2020 Dover will receive £3,000,000 from the Coastal Community Fund for work on the Market Square area.

Heritage Lottery Funding has been received for the town hall. The new pier is now open and early next year the new marina is scheduled to open.

A meeting with the police takes place twice a year. Dover has a Town Beat policeman PC46010525 James Chenery

Other areas covered are; litter and recycling, the River Dour, Cowgate Cemetery, tourism, highways and pathways.

All the above is important but membership involvement is vital. This can be done without joining a committee. On the inside front page of the newsletter or on the website are contact details: Please share your views and ideas.