

# Planning Committee

**Patrick Sherratt**

By the time this report is published in March the weather may have turned to a more seasonal note. This winter we had so much rain and I am sure with climate change our weather cycles will alter.

Anyway, a very happy New Year to all.

Two members of the Planning Committee have resigned, and my thanks go to Beverly Hall who has contributed to the Committee for just under seven years, Adeline Reidy has also resigned, having served for just over one year.

With two vacancies on the Planning Committee, if you are interested in joining us kindly contact Graham or myself.

## **Dover Western Docks Revival (DWDR):**

We all wait to see if Phase 3B is delivered. In DHB's latest DWDR Newsletter it states "Designated as a port-centric hub this aspect of the DWDR development involves the reclamation of the two marinas, Tidal Basin and Granville Dock, along with the Wick Channel. Programing will not be determined until post Brexit on October 31st 2019". As mentioned in my report in

the November Newsletter, Geest have moved their operations back to Portsmouth and the commercial/financial viability of Phase 3B is possibly under review. On the positive side, new general cargo has been secured and recently Stage 3A, the paving area around the clock tower and along the new Marina Curve, with the objective to have completion later this year when the new marina is expected to open. Heritage assets, listed items removed from the former Prince of Wales Pier, will be incorporated in this scheme.

There is no information in respect to the proposed retail/catering/hotel development originally mentioned to be built on the Marina Curve, this will possibly be in conjunction with a developer and the delay could be difficulty in finding a developer, based on the current economic profile of Dover.

The programme of Cruise Ships visiting Dover has just been announced with 101 scheduled ship visits. The new Berth 4 in the DWDR has only two ship visits. We wish the 2020 season well.



*3 Cruise Ships, Courtesy of DHB*

**DTIZ (St James Development):** For more than one year, nine units (4 retail and 5 catering) have been empty. I have sought DDC help to ensure the owner (Legal and General) comply with the landscaping maintenance, as already many of the green areas are bereft of the plants that were part of the planning condition of this development.

St James shopping centre is currently running a competition for small businesses, with a prize of one of the empty units free for a limited time. We wish all participants good luck in this competition.

The socio-economic profile of Dover does not assist in attracting new business investment and a well-maintained site is of paramount importance if new business is to be drawn here.

**Castle Street/Biggin Street:** We continue to support change of use of upper floors in Biggin Street and Castle Street from business to residential, provided the residential property is of good quality and delivers above the minimum *Conversion to Flats* guidelines prepared, but not adopted, by Dover District Council. We do, however, object to HMO applications as there are too many such in Dover. Currently with permission to house 492 people in 43 properties, Dover now has more HMO residents than either the higher populated Margate or Ramsgate, with Margate housing 219 and Ramsgate 186.

Reports have indicated the high number of HMOs in Thanet that have experienced anti-social activities, with Thanet District Council adopting a stricter control. Has this led to the recent increase in applications for HMOs in Dover?

I would emphasize there is no objection to

well-run establishments such as Porchlight and Outreach and the only concern is with establishments not controlled by such organisations.

**Conservation Areas:** Derek's team have completed the draft appraisal for Dover Town Centre Conservation Area. The prepared Dour Street Appraisal is still awaiting DDC Cabinet approval.

**Dover Grammar School for Boys. (DGSB) Planning Application KCC/DO/01955/2019t:** This application was in respect to the construction of a new school on ground below the existing school, with demolition of the current building.

In my nine years as Chair of the Society Planning Committee, this has been one of the most difficult discussions as several Society members, mainly older and ex pupils of DGSB, naturally have fond memories of the existing school and its unique design. However, the building is not a listed building, a factor that would carry weight in any planning decision. Furthermore, the building is in poor repair, possibly due to lack of maintenance by KCC. One of our Committee members is a retired teacher and drew attention to the current facilities that are not fit for current educational requirements. We also took into account that the Old Pharosians' Association (Members are former pupils and staff of DGSB) supported the application.

We were greatly concerned that, if planning application was refused, the school would be built at "Dover New Town" (Whitfield) and another important facility lost to Dover. If this occurred KCC would dispose of the land at profit, as was the case on surplus land at Buckland Hospital, where a profit of £1million to KCC was

placed in general funds for the county rather than benefitting Dover.

Of interest the two KCC Councillors for Dover (Cllr Collor and Cllr Beresford) made no written comments in respect of this important application.

Planning consent was granted with a condition of seeking Historic England's (HE) assessment for listed building status. The HE report concludes *"While certainly of local interest, Dover Grammar School for Boys does not have sufficient claims to special architectural interest to meet the criteria for listing"*.

Personally, I was deeply concerned whether full transparency took place as we, as well as other people making written comments, were not advised of the planning meeting when the application was to be discussed at KCC and a planning decision made. Therefore, I contacted the Leader of KCC (Cllr Gough), suggesting the matter be called to scrutiny. Whilst being acknowledged, I received no actual response. Further correspondence, copied to the Leader of Opposition (Cllr Bird) at KCC, resulted in Cllr Bird referring the matter to the Monitoring Officer at KCC with a copy to the Chair of Scrutiny (Cllr Booth). Cllr Gough then eventually replied, having referred the matter to KCC Head of Planning Applications who states, *"the planning application was considered and publicized in accordance with the legislative requirements"*.

As the failure to notify the date of the planning meeting had not been resolved, further correspondence to Cllr Gough brought the response, *"In light of your comments, however, I have asked the Head of Planning Applications to revise the acknowledgement letter that is sent out when comments are received so that this is clearer*

*and to consider if there are other ways in which your concerns regarding notification could be addressed more positively in the future"*.

**Former St Mary's Care Home:** An application for a 43 room "Bed and Breakfast" establishment was strongly opposed by the Society, as such an application was possibly a back-door method of securing a large HMO housing in excess of 80 people, which would have been the largest HMO in Dover. Following a large number of community objections, the applicant withdrew the application.

I am delighted that an application from a different applicant seeks to convert the property to flats (4 with 1, 3 with 2 and 5 with 3 beds). Two new houses built adjacent to existing houses in the grounds at the rear of the building would give a total of 4 flats with 2 beds and 3 with 3 beds. We have supported this application although we are concerned as to the lack of on-street parking in the area. Sadly, current planning policy concludes that if there is sustainable public transport (which there is in Dover) and adequate cycle storage, this precludes the applicant from providing "off-street" parking. This may be appropriate to inner cities but, in my view, should not be applicable to urban/town situations where, despite providing cycle storage, many of the residents will not have cycles or use public transport, but are car users.

**The Citadel:** I feel it appropriate to give the latest regarding the Citadel. As previously reported, The Society sought to have the Citadel listed as a community asset but this was refused by DDC. Therefore, we asked English Heritage to take ownership, but they declined. They could only consider taking ownership, if the Ministry of Justice donated the Citadel

together with a dowry for its upkeep.

In 2018 the 33-acre site was placed at auction through Savills. As there was no sale, I contacted the Director responsible for the sale of the citadel and received a reply: *"The sale is progressing so not yet sold"*. I also contacted the Ministry of Justice who replied, *"I can confirm that the former Dover IRC is sold subject to contract"*. Upon contacting DDC confirmed *"We are aware that, following a public sector procurement process, we are expecting that an announcement may be made in the near future."*

This would suggest that, if purchased by the prospective developer, in due course planning details will be available. Due to the importance of this site, we are hopeful that full pre-planning consultation takes place with the community and we shall be keeping a very careful eye on proposals for

the development of this important historical site.

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

I reported in some detail in the last Newsletter and some items have been mentioned in items above. Graham and I will be doing some additional research and hope to produce a factual document in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Of interest, a planning application in Dover for a one bed house was refused by DDC as not providing adequate accommodation. The applicant appealed against this decision and the Planning Inspectorate over-ruled the DDC decision. This type of decision by the Planning Inspectorate does little to encourage DDC to adopt a policy of good quality housing in Dover.



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