

Planning Committee

Patrick Sherratt

With the difficulties of Covid-19, I wish everyone a safe time. One thing is certain; life will be different once this virus is controlled. As I write, the UK has recorded 37,000 deaths. In perspective this is higher than the whole population of Dover being lost.

The Planning Committee continue to make comments, where appropriate, with planning applications. We now have a “full” committee with Charles Lynch and Tony Bones joining us. Both have been highly involved with work on the Conservation Area Appraisals for Dour Street and the Town Centre and bring considerable experience to the committee.

Dover Western Docks Revival (DWDR)

As I have alluded in previous articles, phase 3 of the DWDR is most doubtful. With the current loss of cross-channel traffic and cruise ships, the revenue loss must be substantial and puts further pressure on this phase. Within phase 3 is a road from the cruise terminal to the clock tower, an important link. If the Tidal Basin/ Granville Dock and Wick Channel remain operational, this road will not be built. We have suggested a foot bridge similar to those at Eastbourne Sovereign Marina. We hope DHB take on board our proposal which has been submitted to the DHB Port and Community Forum.

To put into context the traffic loss at the time of writing this report, only the January to March statistics are available as below

Passengers: 1,493,395, down 23.6% on 2019

Cars: 219,321, down 25% on 2019

Coaches: 8,542, down 30.9% on 2019

RHV's: 562,256, down 13.7% on 2019

Vessel Entries: 3,705, down 7.7% on 2019

As traffic levels in April/May have been very low several ferries have been laid up, with the unfortunate consequence of job losses.

The cruise industry has also seen ships laid up and P&O Cruises *Oceana*, *Aurora* and *Arcadia* are frequently laid up at Dover. On the 15th May *Disney Magic* also arrived to lay up in Dover. Without doubt the cruise business will take some time to recover post Covid-19.

As an interesting aside, former DHB CEO, Tim Waggott, is now in the Falkland Islands as Financial Secretary for the Falkland Islands Government.

DTIZ (St James Development)

We wait to see lockdowns removed and how this will affect the retail activities both at DTIZ and shops in the “old town”. With nine units available for over 18 months it will be interesting to see if these are eventually let.

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) and Deprivation levels in Dover

Over the last few weeks, we have strongly objected to no less than five such planning applications. Our reason for doing so is that all Wards in Dover are now in the top 20% deprived Wards in England. This has seriously affected the socio-economic profile of Dover, DDC recognised the problem in the 2010 Core Strategy Document when only two Wards were in the top 20% of deprived wards in England. The Core Strategy stated, “Have no areas

falling within the 20% of those most deprived in England", also "Restore and improve an area's offer where it is in decline or stress". In our view, the following clearly indicates DDC have failed to deliver these objectives.

We have for many years spoken to DDC executives about the failure to deliver the Core Strategy objectives. HMO's are part of that problem. Despite mentioning Thanet, who at one time had a major HMO difficulty which was resolved by restricting such properties, DDC have done nothing. The following demonstrates Dover's worsening HMO problem.

Town	Approx. Population	No of HMO Properties	No of HMO Occupants
Dover	33,000	44	511
Ramsgate	40,000	22	218
Margate	61,000	22	280

The situation is not helped when certain Estate Agents suggest larger properties for HMO use rather than for conversion to quality apartments.

I have taken the issue up with the CEO of DDC, Nadeem Aziz, and a meeting has been agreed, possibly via computer link. I shall advise on the outcome in the next Newsletter.

Having spent considerable time looking at other Authorities in England with HMO problems, I think the following introduction to an HMO policy by one council is relevant to the difficulties in Dover. "Shared accommodation provides an important way of meeting the housing needs of many people in... and will continue to do so in the future. At the same time, high concentration of C4 and Sui

Generis HMO's are presenting a challenge to the future sustainability of many of our city's communities. The concentration of HMO's in some areas of the city is changing the character of these areas. Further HMOs are removing some valuable housing stock, in particular removing some of the smaller dwellings from housing stock and in doing so depriving others from entering the housing market.

Since the Adoption of the Local Plan the Council has seen a significant number of properties that would have otherwise been suitable for conversion to flats being changed to HMOs and Sui Generis HMOs thus restricting the choice of accommodation for our residents." The paper then provides various proposals for controlling HMOs. The above quote has been sent to Nadeem.

HMO properties are often used by the most vulnerable in the community without any form of supervision and as such we have constantly mentioned the role of HMO properties in the community that should be run by specialist organisations such as Porchlight.

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) have indicated the current Covid-19 is at a higher level in areas of deprivation. Self-distancing is a problem in some properties in deprivation areas.

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.

43 Biggin Street

The above property recently applied for planning consent to replace windows. The



Façade 43 Biggin Street

application sought standard UPVC windows. We expressed concern that standard UPVC was unsuitable and

materials should match the original bay windows that had been removed. DDC gave consent for replacement windows to be as per the original. It was therefore most alarming that Graham, in town late May, noticed standard UPVC windows being installed. The DDC Head of Planning and DDC Senior Enforcement Officer were informed and immediately responded, confirming they are currently in contact with developer who claims the UPVC widows are “temporary”. We have expressed our concern that the windows will not be temporary, and Head of Planning has also expressed this concern to Enforcement. We watch this issue with interest.

Town Hall Refurbishment Project update

Derek Leach

I am very pleased to say that following a vast amount of detailed work over the last 18 months the required report to the National Heritage Lottery Fund, totalling 1800 pages, was submitted before 1 June deadline. We should hear whether we have been successful in securing the major grant sometime in October. At long last this would allow the refurbishment work to begin in earnest once contractors are appointed. It is expected that the Town Hall would have to be closed from September 2021 for up to two years.

As you know, The Dover Society has been involved as a partner with Dover District Council and Dover Town Council since the project was first mooted in 2010. As a partner we have pledged £10,000 toward the cost and our Town Hall Fund has met this target. Income from the guided tours organised throughout this time with Society and Dover Greeters volunteers has made a substantial contribution to our

Town Hall Fund as well as making Doverians and visitors to the town more aware of this fantastic building and its 800 years of history. Now we wait patiently and hopefully to start the next phase in its long life.



Connaught Hall Impression – West Wall 2019