

Planning Committee

Graham Margery

Acting Chairman Planning Committee

While our Chairman Pat Sherratt continues his well-deserved break for a few months he has continued to bring his expertise and experience to bear by tackling some of the more complex projects that fall within our remit. More of that to follow but we continue to wish him well.

Despite the current pandemic, with all the restrictions imposed on us, the construction industry seems to be continuing unabated with Planning Applications coming thick and fast. My thanks to Pat and all of the Planning Committee for their invaluable help and support with this very busy portfolio.

Since the last newsletter we have reviewed around 100 applications that are potentially of interest and made formal response to Dover District Council in respect of 22 of them. The Planning Committee is always pleased to receive comments and feedback from the members of the Society.

Members can let the Planning Committee know their views on any application, or on any development that may concern them. This will help form the official Dover Society response. Alternatively they can lodge their views as an individual directly with the DDC Planning Dept. in writing or via the DDC Planning portal at <https://www.dover.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-Applications/Home.aspx>

Inland Border Facility:

In October 2020 local residents received a letter from the Department for Transport that plans were being made to create an Inland Border Facility at a site in Whitfield

adjacent to B&Q and the new Leisure Centre. The purpose of the facility is to create customs and border controls for import and export freight vehicles with a view to it being operational early in 2021. With the decision to leave the EU having been made some four years ago, this announcement has come very late in the day leaving interested parties no time to engage in meaningful consultation and being faced with a "fait accompli". The Dover Society wrote to the Transport Minister and the Local MP Natalie Elphicke to protest at the lack of transparency in the planning process and to object to the proposal. The principal route to Dover for cross channel traffic is the A20/M20 and road signs clearly indicate this but still a significant number of freight vehicles use the A2 despite the fact that most of the A2 between Lydden and the docks is not suitable for such traffic. In this new plan, freight vehicles will be indirectly encouraged to use the A2 in order to access the border control facilities, putting increased pressure on the Whitfield and Duke of York's roundabouts. I dread to think what chaos will ensue when the inevitable delays arise at the docks. In addition, residents of Guston that live close to the site are likely to suffer the effects of noise and light pollution and we fully support the concerns expressed by the Guston Parish Council. Belatedly there is now a public consultation on the proposal and the Dover Society has made formal response.

Dover District Council Local Plan:

The Local Plan sets out planning policies and proposals for new development in the

Dover District and a new Plan covering the period 2020 to 2040 is currently subject to public consultation. This is a crucial document which will be used in the assessment of future planning applications so it is vitally important that, as far as possible, our interests are incorporated within it. Pat Sherratt has been working on the Local Plan Advisory Group to assist in the development of the Plan but in the final stages all lay representatives were removed from the Group without explanation. Nevertheless Pat has continued to provide input to the process and is currently working on our formal response to the consultation on behalf of the Society. So much for him taking a break!

Market Square Project:

You may be aware; a £2.9m project to revamp Dover's Market Square is set to get underway in summer 2021. According to DDC "the work will include a new event space and water feature, and highways improvements to make the square more pedestrian-friendly. The works will create a more attractive street scene and improve links between Cannon St, St James and the Waterfront." This is a controversial modern design that we will be formally commenting on.

King Street/Flying Horse Lane:

Plans have been put forward to develop the site bounded by Fishmonger Lane, King Street, Flying Horse Lane and the St James development. This is an important site that, over the years, has suffered from war damage, inappropriate development and repair, neglect and dilapidation leaving the area in much need of improvement. The Dover Society is therefore not opposed to the principle of redevelopment and indeed would encourage it but we are concerned that it should be carried out carefully. The original character of Fishmonger Lane has already been lost to war damage and the

creation of a new carpark, but Flying Horse Lane is one of the few remaining Dover streets that is typical of the narrow network of streets that would have existed in what was the main part of the town so we are keen to see its character retained in a sympathetic way. The old Post Office / job centre is a particularly interesting red brick building that has suffered from neglect and inappropriate modification over the years and also has an interesting heritage style lantern over the door. The preservation of these features, at least in part, would provide an interesting link for visitors between the new retail development and the old part of the town and seafront. The proposed new building would be a modern four storey building design but with some features reflecting a more traditional style. We consider the height of the building to be too high which with the loss of heritage features has led us to object to the particulars of this proposed development.

Buckland Mill:

Work continues slowly at the old paper mill site to develop the apartments associated with the existing buildings. The new Co-op store has opened on the site and appears to be doing well. The outline planning application for 135 dwellings has now been submitted which is largely in line with the long established expectations for the site. We regard this site as one that particularly lends itself to a much needed quality development to attract professional people to the town which will lead to its increased prosperity. In addition it will open up the river corridor for the benefit of the Buckland Mill residents and the wider community. We have been pleased to support the scheme.

Former Buckland Hospital Site:

The Dover Society objected to the original plans to develop this brownfield site with 188 dwellings and continued to do so when

the number was reduced to 150 on the grounds of over intensification. A new planning application has now been submitted for the construction of 81 dwellings. The mix of two and three bedroom houses in four different types provides much needed quality family accommodation which will help enhance and regenerate the area. There is also included green amenity space with a play area and landscaping at the frontage and throughout the site to include a mix of trees, hedges and shrubs. We have supported the proposal.

Marina Curve:

The principle of hotel and retail development on this newly reclaimed land as has always been part of the Dover Western Docks Revival project and we welcome the beneficial impact that this would have for the town as a whole. But to achieve this by construction of a motel and

other facilities from shipping containers is totally inappropriate for the site. The application clearly regards a commercial port as an appropriate context for such a design but Dover is nothing like Rotterdam and it completely ignores the status of the iconic waterfront setting with its Grade II Listed buildings which has long been a major tourist attraction. We have objected to the scheme.

Shop Fronts in Conservation Areas:

We have long been concerned about the way shop fronts in Conservation Areas have been allowed to be altered in such a way as to destroy the historic character of the area. DDC has a policy "Guidance on Shop Fronts and Signage within Conservation Areas" that is intended to set clear guidance as to what would be considered appropriate but all too often this policy has been ignored when deciding planning applications. However, just recently, some plans that we have objected to have also been refused by DDC citing this policy as the reason. We see this as a significant change for the better in the quality of planning decisions. In particular, with regard to 43 Biggin Street which we mentioned in the last newsletter, the recent decision to retrospectively approve plans placed a number of conditions "In order to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area". We look forward to future decisions being made on the same basis so that the town centre can be worthy of the designation "The Old Town" which DDC aspires to create.

I wish you and your families a belated healthy and happy New Year and look forward to a resumption of more normal life in the not too distant future.

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