

Planning Committee

Graham Margery - Chairman

Planning Activity: Over the last twelve months the Dover Society Planning Committee reviewed some one hundred and ninety-one planning applications that are potentially of interest and made formal response to the Local Authority in respect of sixty-seven of them. In total, since the last newsletter, we have reviewed some seventy-eight applications and made response in respect of twenty-six of them. As ever we would encourage members to look at planning applications that may be of interest to them and make comment to Dover District Council as they feel appropriate or contact our Planning Committee with their views. Applications can be found on the DDC website or the Dover Society Website under Planning. We are also looking for new members to join our small team who are prepared to actively participate in the work, so if you are interested in town planning please get in touch.

Dover Town Centre Conservation Area: The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a Conservation Area as being of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". Such designation conveys a degree of protection with planning controls. The central part of Dover has several Conservation Areas including Dour Street, Town Centre, Charlton Green, Waterloo Crescent, London Road, Dover College and Dover Castle.

The Town Centre Conservation Area includes Cannon Street and Biggin Street most of which comprises retail premises at ground level with office or residential accommodation to the upper floors. It's these

upper floors and roof lines which have particularly striking architectural details to those who shift their gaze above the shops! Sadly, some of the shop front designs and signage let the street down in places and spoil the character of the area. DDC has clear guidance as to what constitutes good design for shop fronts in a Conservation Area but there are many examples where this has not been followed. Typically, this might involve large plate glass windows in metal frames with no subdivision, loss of stall riser at the bottom, loss of the cornice separating the top of the fascia sign from the floors above and oversized fascia signs. Garish colour schemes are also not appropriate, and lighting should be integrated in the overall design. Sometimes planning permission is granted contrary to the guidance and in other cases there has been no planning application at all! We are consistently trying to preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area in this regard, but we appear to be fighting a losing battle. Some smaller premises seem to change hands frequently with each new owner wanting to establish their own unique shop front so keeping track of this is quite a challenge. We believe some shop owners are unaware that they operate in a Conservation Area and are therefore subject to special controls and perhaps some just don't care. Either way we keep trying.

St James' Church: Originally built in the 12th century, the parish Church of St James was badly damaged by shelling from the French Coast during the second world war and now stands as a "Tidy Ruin" as memorial to the suffering of the people of Dover during that war. The site is now a Scheduled Monument with the upstanding remains being Grade II Listed.

The surviving remains had deteriorated over the years and were becoming unsafe to the extent that it was included on the Historic England Heritage at Risk register. Dover District Council therefore commissioned Purcell Architecture to undertake a condition survey of the ruinous church and their report was duly published in August 2016. It is comprehensive and goes into great detail about the condition of the structure and concludes with recommendations as to the remedial works required both urgently and into the future.

In response to this report, the then Strategic Director submitted a report to the DDC Cabinet recommending a project to carry out urgent remedial work and, further, to reintroduce metal railings including gates to a design based on historic photographs. It was eventually agreed to proceed with works to stabilize the structure but with no details of exactly what would be done, and with no explicit mention of the railings. However, the Strategic Director was authorised to take "necessary actions to deliver the project". We are delighted that remedial work was carried out to stabilise the structure but bitterly disappointed that the railings were not reinstated. As a consequence, we find the monument has become a site for anti-social behaviour including littering, drug taking, camping and defecating. Not only is the resulting detritus unsightly but it is also dangerous and deters visitors from exploring the site. Furthermore, with underground vaults still in situ we regard this behaviour as a desecration. The aforementioned railings would solve this problem, and we have been trying to get them re-instated for some time but to no avail. We will continue to press the case.

Barwick Road: There is a proposed housing development on land at Barwick Road which was to deliver eighty-one dwellings as a combination of flats and houses. Planning

application 22/01305 was granted Planning Permission in January 2025 but there has been very little progress other than some recent clearing of the land and now recent press reports suggest that the project is "stalled".

The Planning Statement attached to the application states that the applicant has a long-term investment in the site and that it will be a "build-to-rent" development. If the press reports are to be believed this is no longer the case and the applicant has sought to sell the scheme to the Local Authority but having failed to reach agreement is now looking to sell it on the open market.

We are very concerned that this will jeopardize the "build-to-rent" concept which would be tragic since there is no affordable housing in the scheme. We appreciate that, within the Local Plan, affordable housing is not an obligation in the centre of Dover but this scheme is on the extreme boundary of the town so the constraints that underpin this exclusion don't really apply. Of greater concern is that this quality development may not proceed at all under a new owner who may have other ideas.

Marina Curve: In December 2021, a planning application was approved for the erection of three number three and four storey motel buildings comprising ninety bedrooms in total, together with a two-storey reception building and single storey buildings for welfare and storage. This was subsequently amended in February 2023, and a further amendment is currently under consideration. These do not fundamentally change the nature of the scheme. There is also now a new application to add an additional five storey block at the end which will provide sixty-eight bedrooms giving a total of one hundred and fifty-eight for the hotel as a whole. We fully support the principle of a hotel on the Marina Curve but,

bearing in mind the prestigious location and proximity to historic buildings, we have been disappointed that this scheme has not been a more high-quality development. We are also concerned about the height of this additional five storey block. However, whilst there will inevitably be some disruption to this locality during the construction phase, this will provide a real economic boost to the businesses on the Curve, potentially rivalling the success of the Folkestone Harbour Arm as well as to the town more widely.

Housing Delivery - update: I wrote at some length in the last Newsletter about the problems of getting approved plans for housing actually delivered. We also wrote to the Housing Minister and our MP Mike Tapp to express these concerns. We have now had a reply indicating that the Government is well aware of these issues and is actively pursuing possible solutions to the problems and refer to, now closed, consultations of which we

were not aware at the time we wrote. In May 2025, the Speeding Up Build Out working paper was published which invited “views on options to increase build out rates. This includes incentivising and supporting models of development that build out faster, use of conditional confirmation of Compulsory Purchase Orders, and exploring giving local authorities the ability to charge developers a ‘Delayed Homes Penalty’. It also confirmed that we will implement reforms to completion notices.” Some of these ideas we had previously suggested (in less technical terms) in our response to the consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). A further change to the NPPF is now subject to consultation. It seeks to ensure major development proposals are capable of being implemented within a reasonable period. It sounds so obvious! We shall be making our comments broadly in support of the proposal.

AGM

A reminder to all members

The Annual General Meeting this year will be held at
7.30pm Monday 20th April 2026 at
the Silver Screen, Market Square, Dover.

All resolutions for discussion and nominations for officers and committee members must be received by Wednesday 9th April 2026. They should be supported by a proposer and seconder and nominations must include the written consent of the potential candidate, then submitted in writing to:-

the Hon. Secretary Carol Duffield, 46 Friars Way, Dover, CT16 2WD,
 Tel: 07855 045650 Email: cddoversociety@gmail.com

All members are urged to attend this most important meeting of the year.