

The work of the

PLANNING

Sub-Committee

Reported by LAWRENCE GAGE, *Chairman*

This has been a rather disappointing period for us as many of our initiatives have come to nothing and a number of our comments on planning applications have been ignored.

OLD PARK

The sub-committee produced a thorough ten-page document outlining why we believe the site could and should be developed for a high profile use such as a regional 'Sports Academy' and Ice Sports Centre. Our ideas were presented to the Dover District Council which decided not to support such a proposal. The application for a large industrial and warehousing project over the whole site, together with a substantial amount of new housing, a petrol filling station, restaurant and other ad hoc facilities, has recently been given planning permission. We objected to this application on the grounds that its approval; will seriously affect the success of the adjacent White Cliffs Business Park which is currently struggling to attract tenants and investors. Additionally we believe there is no need for more new housing sites to be allocated, as Dover is already over-provided for in terms of sites designated for housing. Our objections, and those of others, were not heeded and Dover looks like having another unsuccessful Business Park and housing it does not need. It is a great shame that the enormous potential of this spectacular site to provide a high profile use, giving the town a new regional rôle, is being lost.

DOVER MILLENNIUM PROJECT

We were delighted that the Dover Society's application to the Millennium Commission for funding of a project to regenerate the Western Heights as a managed nature reserve together with a New Millennium Pharos there was confirmed as meeting the Commission's criteria at the first stage. Much work was done by the Committee to prepare the documentation for the next stage of the application and the project had the support of English Nature and English Heritage. However, at the eleventh hour the District Council decided it was not willing to support our application. As the Council own the land and their support was crucial, we reluctantly had to withdraw the application. We were particularly disappointed with the Council's decision as not only has two years of considerable effort been wasted, but we were not even asking for financial backing – just its enthusiastic support.

It is clear that Dover has a very strong case for a project of national importance to mark the Millennium – and it has been pointed out that it is difficult to think of another provincial town in Britain that so famously represents the image of our nation, particularly as we approach a millennium that will undoubtedly be inextricably linked with Europe. It is a great shame that Dover now looks like missing out on the big 'golden opportunity'. Fortunately applications for a number of smaller projects to be funded by different Lottery funds are in the pipeline and we wish them every success.

FORMER EYE HOSPITAL

Despite our objections, planning permission has been given to build flats on the site of the former Eye Hospital at Noah's Ark Road.

HOARDINGS AT YORK STREET ROUNABOUT

Despite our considerable success in encouraging the Council to refuse planning permission, and the Council's decision being upheld at an appeal, the hoardings are still there! All those hoardings are illegal — but it seems that at present the Council is powerless to do anything about it!

BURLINGTON HOUSE

Thankfully, the planning application to convert 'Dover's Eyesore' into housing has been refused. An appeal is pending and the Dover Society will be there to continue to oppose the application and to press for the demolition of the building to make way for an appropriate re-development as part of the 'Dover St. James Masterplan.

ECONOMIC STRATEGY

We have recently commented in detail on the draft of an annual document prepared by the Council. It reports some encouraging new initiatives that are being

taken, but generally lacks a vision for the future of the town.

TOWN GRANTS SCHEME

Dover has a fine stock of historic buildings, especially those of the 19th century, many of which display particularly imaginative and high quality detailing — an asset that is not always fully appreciated. Unfortunately, many of these unusually good examples of the period are sadly neglected. Previous grant schemes have gone some way to help 'stop the rot' and funding from the Town Grants Scheme, albeit modest, was crucial in this process.

Now it is distressing to learn, just at the time when the valuable urban regeneration work of IMPACT is drawing to a close, the Town Grants Scheme is not to be continued, thus losing for Dover the money from the agreed three-way partnership funding from English Heritage and the K.C.C. Does this mean that Dover will be left with little or no conservation resources?

In General

The Committee will remain watchful of all planning matters and will continue to keep the pressure up to make Dover a better place to live, work and play in.

Contributed by **MIKE McFARNELL**

PLANS FOR CONNAUGHT PARK

Information from the Dover Society's questionnaires has been collated. At a meeting at Dover Girls' Grammar School in February it was thought that probably the best chance of obtaining any money for Connaught Park was through the channel of Sport in Education. As new guidelines from the Sports Lottery Fund on this are being issued in April, further discussion was postponed until they appear. A further meeting will be held in June. Any progress will be reported in the next *Newsletter*.

DOVER PAGEANT 1997

Noreen Thomas has written the script for the 1997 Pageant, which for this special occasion will be at Crabble Athletic Ground which in that year celebrates its centenary. It was opened on 7th June 1897.

The 1997 Pageant will be on 4, 5, 6 and 7 June and the theme will be TRANSPORT.