

The work of the

PLANNING

Sub-Committee

Report by
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In the last Newsletter I outlined the use of Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and if adopted by our Local Authority (Dover District Council) how it would benefit Dover.

I am pleased to say that Dover Town Council (DTC) is working with The Dover Society in taking this forward with DDC. At DTC a small budget was agreed at the December Council meeting which will be used on Land Registry searches and the issue of warning letters to owners of properties that are eyesores to the town. We have supplied a list of properties together with back-up photographs and I hope that by the time this newsletter is with you the first warning letters will have been issued.

For this to succeed requires a will from both Councils (Officers and elected Councillors) as has been shown in Hastings where since 2000 over 500 properties have been improved by using Section 215. At least a start in Dover, if a small number can be improved each year will benefit the town in due course.

On the subject of "ailing properties" we have sought to see that Dover District Council brings empty homes into use in Dover. There is an Empty Homes Strategy policy at DDC, however, very limited action. In Thanet a major

programme of bringing empty properties into use has been undertaken and is championed by Laura Sandys their Member of Parliament.

We have contacted our MP (Charlie Elphicke) who drew the Housing Ministers attention of the plight of empty homes in Dover at a recent Ministers Question time in the House of Commons. Central Government has made available additional funding and we hope that DDC will take the opportunity of seeking this as the latest figures published by DDC in June 2011 show that between 2005 and 2009 empty homes within the District has increased by 41 % from 674 to 951. Whilst the District continues to concentrate on "new build" it is so wasteful to ignore perfectly good buildings that could be brought back into use.

Dover is a wonderful historic and architectural town and must with the use of Section 215 and Empty Homes policy maximise on these assets.

On the "Planning Application" front the most important applications have been in respect to the Dover Town Investment Zone (DTIZ) development. This is the derelict site in Townwall Street (including Burlington House) and has now re-submitted plans since the Asda scheme failed.

The development consists of three applications, for a hotel, a Tower with LED Screen and the main retail/residential. The Dover Society welcomes the development but has opposed the design of the hotel that fails to respect the historical aspects of the surrounding area, indeed our description in our objection compares the design (which is an oblong box) as akin to a prison ship (*see illustration*). We suggest that the Local Authority look at hotel design in such historic Cities as York. We recognise that the tower is essential in order to remove communication equipment from Burlington House so it can be demolished. We are however concerned that the LED screen (11m x 2.7m) to be placed on the tower is not ideal and

question its safety aspect at the junction of Townwall Street and Woolcomber Street. Of concern it seems this screen was added to the original "Asda Scheme" and agreed, but, without any apparent public consultation.

With regard to the retail/residential plans we have remained "neutral" as we must recognise the value of developing this eyesore site. We have made detailed comments in particular with regard to the need to improve on the quality of materials being proposed, increased landscaping, more sensitive rooflines using traditional materials rather than the proposed "Warehouse style" metal roofs.

We also draw attention to taking the opportunity of improving adjacent areas as well as DDC adopting a strategy in respect of possible vacated shops in the town as "brand names" may relocate to the new retail site that offers larger premises. The residential building is within the Castle Street Conservation Area and we approve the design of the proposed building that compliments the area and adjacent buildings.



If any member wishes to see our full comments in respect to the above please contact me.

In addition to the above we have made comments to six other applications since the December Magazine so there has been plenty to keep the Planning Committee busy.