

Planning Committee

Patrick Sherratt

Having been unwell for most of this year I am grateful for the support of the Committee to ensure the Dover Society continues to maintain its strength of comments in respect of local planning issues. I am particularly thankful for the work taken on by our Society Chair, Derek Leach, as well as Beverley Hall and Mike Weston who have kindly compiled the following report. The Planning Committee recently welcomed two new members to assist us in our scrutiny of major regeneration projects and the on-going review of local planning applications. Since my last report, the key focus has been on:

Dover Western Docks Revival (DWDR).

Construction of the marine structures is underway and a second round of stakeholder presentations was held in May to update us on the build programme, changes to the local environment and the impacts of construction.

However, at the time of writing, uncertainty remains on the overall cost and timing for delivering the project due to the slow and difficult progress of the application by DHB for a dredging licence to use the Goodwin Sands. The Society has submitted a letter in support of the DHB proposals. We received a response that indicated the delays are far from over as more information has been requested from DHB and a further consultation is proposed prior to any decision.

Waterfront Masterplan

DDC appointed consultants to produce a masterplan for Dover Waterfront in October 2016. It is expected that the draft masterplan, covering the new marina,

waterfront area/Wellington Dock and the town centre gateway (Bench St) will be out for consultation in summer 2017, with adoption scheduled for autumn 2017.

In April, The Dover Society was invited to a consultation on an early draft of the Masterplan with several other stakeholder organisations. We submitted comments welcoming the overall vision for Dover and the scope of the improvements identified. We also highlighted a number of key priorities for us such as the protection of Historic Dover; the need for quality in design, build and landscaping; and the recommendation that DDC take this opportunity to strengthen existing planning policies to help halt and reverse the current socio economic decline of Dover. Another component of the Masterplan work aims to improve connectivity between the new waterfront created by the Western Docks redevelopment and the town centre and railway station. The draft plans so far contain a pleasing recognition of the importance of landscaping, good signage and providing the best local environment for our many historical buildings.

Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

Both last year and in recent months, we have submitted comments on a plethora of planning applications which would significantly increase the number of HMOs in Dover. There is now much evidence from across the country that, without proper controls, HMOs do not improve the amenity or socio economic profile of an area. Indeed, many HMOs have created a range of local problems relating to: traffic and parking issues, anti-social behaviour,

poor or no management of refuse storage/ collection, and overall deterioration in the buildings, gardens and local built environment.

As more HMOs are added to a small area, the worse things can get. We have therefore raised concerns with DDC regarding recent applications for HMOs in Taswell St, Maison Dieu Road and Park Avenue. We have also recommended that the Council considers the full ramifications of the escalating proliferation of HMOs. A fully thought out strategy which gives proper consideration to the issues and how they should be addressed by those seeking planning approval would be a better approach than a piecemeal review of each application. In the past I have suggested DDC should maintain a record of properties that have anti-social activity or do not comply with DDC rubbish collection and other requirements. If the property has a poor record then the licence should not be renewed.

Dover Leisure Centre

Following their speedy decision to locate the new centre at Whitfield, this development has continued at a rapid pace. In March, DDC agreed a deal to acquire 2.1 hectares of land at Honeywood Parkway in Whitfield and almost simultaneously submitted an application for full planning permission. The DDC Planning Committee will consider the application soon so you may well already know the outcome as you read this newsletter. Not content to rest there, March also saw DDC prepare and issue an invitation to tender for an operator of its proposed new £26m Leisure Centre.

BAM Construction was awarded a contract in January 2017 in respect to the groundworks and are working with the DDC team on the pre-construction phase.

The tendering process for the actual build is expected to be complete by July 2017 with construction due to start in October 2017. Construction is expected to take around 59 weeks with a planned opening early in 2019. If only the developments that actually improve our town could receive this level of focus and resource. Our concern that Dover will now have no leisure facility remains unanswered and we shall continue to press for a facility similar to those provided at Deal (population circa 20k) for the 30,000 residents of Dover.

DTIZ (St James Development)

The DTIZ or St James' area scheme has made rapid progress recently, with the main buildings rising at a reasonable rate. DDC announced that RG Group were being appointed for the construction work following the withdrawal of Keir Construction. However, we remain concerned about the impact the scheme will have on the High Street shops and whether the quality structures we were promised will actually materialise: the fake flint Townwall Street wall segments already in place do not inspire confidence. The latest completion date is now quoted as early 2018.

Section 215 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Work continues to ensure properties in close proximity of the DTIZ area are properly maintained to a high standard.

Dover District Local Plan

DDC is in the process of producing a new Local Plan covering the period up to 2037 which will set out the key policies for the district. Currently evidence gathering, DDC expect to begin the first round of public consultation in June/July this year with adoption of the Plan scheduled for 2019.