

Planning Committee

Graham Margery

Chairman Planning Committee

Over the Christmas and New Year period things were a little quieter on the planning front. Nevertheless, the Planning Committee continued with the relentless task of overseeing planning applications so that, since the last newsletter, we have reviewed some 110 applications that are potentially of interest and made formal response to Dover District Council in respect of 31 of them.

Town Centre Improvements: We commented in the last newsletter on the proposed changes to the Market Square and I am sure many of you have now seen the contractors at work bringing the plan to fruition. Canterbury Archaeological Trust was allowed the opportunity for a limited excavation to reveal and record part of the foundations of the Medieval Guild Hall dating from 1605 and subsequently they have been conducting a watching brief to see what might be exposed as the contractors dig out for foundations and services. This involves snatching the odd half hour between periods of digging to record what is found before it is destroyed or re-buried. Apart from the Guildhall foundations, other finds include the metalled surfaces from earlier times in the square. In King Street the medieval foundations have been found of the buildings demolished as part of the road widening scheme in 1826. Of particular interest has been an important medieval stone built coffin cut into a number of earlier graves probably dating to the 13th Century. These belong to the churchyard of St Martin le Grand which originally extended into what is now the Market Square. These were not excavated through lack of time but have been recorded, protected and re-buried. See the separate article from Charles Lynch about

our ongoing discussions with the Local Authority.

Marina Curve: You may remember that the controversial scheme to construct a motel on the Marina Curve using shipping containers was withdrawn after considerable opposition. Subsequently the scheme was amended to use slightly larger modules rather than shipping containers, but the design was still modern and, in our opinion, not in keeping with the heritage of our iconic waterfront. The plan for a commercial building alongside was unchanged. Both of these schemes have now been granted planning approval. We wait to see if the expected beneficial impact that this would have for the town as a whole is realised in practice and brings the much needed regeneration of the local economy.

BP Service Station: Dover seems to be quite well served with various carwash facilities from fully automated to self-service and the ever popular hand wash. A planning application has been submitted for a self-service car wash attached to the BP service station in Folkestone Road close to the Priory Road roundabout. It will be sited at the rear of the premises and back onto the properties in Saxon Street which are Grade II listed buildings within the Dover College Conservation Area. Although a wall and screens will be erected, we are still concerned about the effects of spray and noise since, as the application stands, it could operate day and night every day. Although we are not opposed to the idea of a local business expanding its activities, we object to the operation going ahead without any time restrictions to minimise nuisance to the adjoining properties.

Discovery Centre: The Dover Discovery Centre was built in the late 1980s and closed as a visitor attraction in 1999. It currently houses the museum, library, the Roundhouse Theatre, an education centre, the Registry Office, and other ancillary rooms. A plan involves "the relocation of the Children's Services Team and provision for The Good Day Programme to the site, redevelopment of the library and adult education offering, with improved public access, and opportunity for an improved co-ordinated service, as well as bringing higher footfall to the town centre. The scheme also improves public access to both the archaeology which sits below the building, the external ruins of the St. Martin's Le Grand Church and the Classis Britannica Fort. The proposals have provided an opportunity to incorporate the provision of a walk-in archive facility and education room within the Dover District Council owned area, which provides an opportunity to co-

locate the Dover District Council and Kent County Council local studies archive within one single space. The proposed archive facility will provide improved facilities for those undertaking local studies research and allow enhanced access to the extensive artefacts and ephemera held by the Museum." The scheme will cost over seven million pounds. One casualty to the project will be the Roundhouse Theatre which will be lost and although DDC claim to be assisting drama groups to relocate elsewhere, it is hard to imagine how that will succeed.

On the positive side, making the important archaeology accessible to the public is to be welcomed since so much of the town's priceless history has been destroyed or remains buried.

May I wish you all a very belated Happy New Year as we look forward to a progressive return to some sort of normality.

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