

# Public Document Pack

Notes of the meeting of the **DOVER BEACON AND DOVER TOWN REGENERATION PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 24 July 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor K Mills

Councillors: T J Bartlett  
M Bates  
D G Beaney  
S H Beer  
E A Biggs  
P M Brivio  
G Cowan  
S Hill  
J L Pout  
O C de R Richardson

Also present: Councillor S Jones (Mayor of Dover)  
Ms E Carswell (Faithful and Gould)  
Mr L Fish (Lee Evans Partnership)  
Mr D James (Lee Evans Partnership)  
Mr L Smith (Lee Evans Partnership)

Officers: Head of Place and Growth  
Major Projects and Programme Manager  
Regeneration Delivery Manager  
Strategic Project Manager  
Project Manager  
Projects and Engagement Coordinator  
Senior Accountant (Housing and Projects)  
Democratic Services Officer

## 6 APOLOGIES

It was noted that an apology for absence had been received from Councillor C D Zosseder.

## 7 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor J L Pout had been appointed as a substitute member for Councillor C D Zosseder.

## 8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 9 NOTES

The notes of the meeting held on 28 November 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 10 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Group's revised Terms of Reference were noted.

## 11 DOVER BEACON/BENCH STREET PROJECT

Members received a presentation on the Dover Beacon project. The Regeneration Delivery Manager (RDM) recapped for Members as follows:

- Project funded by two Government sources: £3.2 million from the Future High Streets Fund and £18.1 million from the Levelling Up Fund (LUF).
- Predicted to benefit the district economically by £90 million
- Future High Streets Fund element would provide a creative centre, upgraded underpass and signage to link harbour and town centre
- Levelling Up Fund element would provide an education campus, business centre, urban park and public realm and Click2Cycle bike hire expansion
- 11-week demolition contract with contractors already on site
- Exercise to identify tenants for the centres already underway

Consultants advised that:

- Rapid progress made on the design including input from local residents
- Three buildings under one roof canopy to share efficiencies/services which would help to reduce capital costs
- Buildings linked by a central atrium and designed to improve connections with and between the Market Square, Bench Street, St James's and the underpass
- A multifaceted and accessible building that would act as a catalyst for Dover's growth and regeneration

The Head of Place and Growth (HPG) emphasised the importance of such a visible site and advised that the project was currently on time and on budget. The RDM added that having three buildings under one roof would help to capitalise on carbon reduction.

The following points arose during discussions:

- Councillor E A Biggs welcomed the fact that the building would be visible from all sides, unlike St James's.
- Programme been rephased to allow more time for concept design and involvement of contractor
- Access from Townwall Street onto Fishmongers Lane likely to be retained
- Deliveries/loading bay likely to be at Mill Lane
- March 2025 deadline for spending of LUF funding but Government had already indicated an extension would be acceptable
- In response to Councillor D G Beaney who raised a concern about massing, it was confirmed that architectural details would be added as design work progressed.
- Agreed that achieving an iconic building which could be enjoyed by all was paramount
- In response to Councillor O C de R Richardson, the HPG clarified that the extension of the cycle scheme was a Dover Town Council initiative, run by Click2Cycle, and not funded by the LUF. Whilst it would provide linkage between six new sites (including Kearsney Abbey, the hospital and leisure

centre), it was a Dover project and was not intended to improve cycle connections with Deal and Sandwich.

- Formal planning pre-application likely to be submitted end of September/beginning of October, following initial discussions with Planners. A full planning application was expected to be submitted in March 2024 following finalisation of detailed designs. There would be community consultation/engagement and the design team was also seeking to subject the plans to an independent design review.
- Two-stage tender process with packages likely to be tendered in summer/autumn 2024.
- 18-month construction period with an expected completion date of March 2026

The HPG advised that regular meetings were held with the Port of Dover to discuss its strategic plans, including how £45 million from Kent County Council (KCC) would be spent on access improvements.

In response to questions about climate change, Members were advised that it was intended to achieve at least a BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) very good standard and, if possible, exceed it. RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) 2030 sustainability performance targets would also be a benchmark, and the design team experts were already evaluating possible options such as the use of ground source heat pumps, etc. The RDM cautioned that the budget limited how much could be achieved in terms of sustainability. However, he added that sustainable options would certainly be preferred where they had minimal or no cost implications. He clarified that, as a local authority, BREEAM was the minimum standard the Council was expected to achieve. The Passivhaus approach required buildings to be carbon net zero and built to a particularly high standard. Given that Passivhaus accreditation was a costly process, the intention was to build in accordance with its principles as far as possible rather than seeking official accreditation.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

## 12 CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

The HPG advised that a Cultural Strategy was being developed in order to create a cultural vision for the district, provide opportunities for young people and unlock funding. Numerous businesses, community groups, etc had been consulted about the draft strategy which would go to the PAG in August or September and to Cabinet in October.

The following points arose during discussions:

- Consultation had involved schools and young carers' groups, amongst others.
- The Discovery Centre – discussions with KCC and Jon Iverson ongoing
- The Roman Painted House – lots of work going on behind the scenes to move things forward and progress was being made
- Reference was made to towns like Margate and Folkestone having extended their cultural/art offerings and the need for Dover to identify its own cultural specialities

- Recognised that strategy must identify Dover's cultural strengths/activities so important that communities came forward with their views and advice to inform the document
- Age UK, St Edmund's Chapel, 6<sup>th</sup> form roadshows were mentioned

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

## 13 PLACE PLAN

The Group received a presentation which set out the purpose and aims of the new Dover Place Plan. The HPG advised that the Plan had been developed in consultation with Dover Town Council and had an overall aim of ensuring that Dover town centre was accessible and well connected. It built on the Market Square project which had brought people into the town and generated income for businesses.

The Major Projects and Programme Manager (MPPM) advised that the document would identify key priority projects that could be delivered in the town centre, working with residents, businesses and Members in doing so. The starting point had been defining the area which mirrored the definition of the town centre included in the emerging Local Plan, including shopping areas, open spaces, etc. The adopted Plan would also help to secure funding, pinpoint where current resource was insufficient and align with existing policies. Once priority projects had been identified, a cost/benefit analysis would be carried out.

Other points that arose during discussions were:

- Recognised that there was currently an oversupply of parking in Dover. However, need to proceed with caution where projects potentially involved building on car parking sites to ensure that sufficient parking was retained.
- Pencester Gardens earmarked for improvements in the Council's Open Spaces Strategy.
- KCC funding secured for improvements to Pencester Road to create better links to other bus services including Fastrack.
- Proposed revenue projects included improving town centre cleanliness and devising an action plan.
- Dover Town Team had been disbanded and the Council was considering how to support local business owners in establishing a new representative body.
- Relevant service areas within the Council were members of a recently formed street scene working group.
- It was proposed that the Place Plan be reviewed every 5 years
- Dover College had submitted a planning application for a performing arts centre with theatre which would also be available for potential third-party use
- Need to make progress on the Roman Painted House. The situation was challenging but things were now moving in the right direction.

In response to Members' queries, the MPPM advised that the Dover Fastrack route out from Dover Priory station to Whitfield was currently proposed as running along York Street, the A20 and Woolcomber Street. If the Pencester Road project went ahead, the route would be able to pass through the town centre.

Should evidence come forward that supported an extension of the plan area to the shops in London Road, the plan could be amended. Councillor G Cowan

commented that shops on London Road beyond the Eagle public house would be prepared to move if business rates in the town centre were lower.

The MPPM remarked that the Place Plan programme was a challenging one, with workshops held with key stakeholders during September and October, followed by a draft to Cabinet, consideration by the PAG (possibly in November), public consultation in January and February, and approval and adoption of the final plan by Cabinet in May 2024. She added that the PAG would be provided with information on which of the projects were supported by key stakeholders and which were considered most important by businesses and residents. When bidding for funding, it was important to be able to demonstrate that the Council had gathered reliable evidence and could be trusted when it came to decision-making and financial governance.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

#### 14 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The RDM advised that the timing of Group meetings would centre around the various RIBA plan of work stages, with the first stage being RIBA Stage 2 for the completion of concept design. It was intended that the Council's Internal Audit team would carry out a review at each sign-off stage, and a week before reports went to the PAG. The Government had imposed a monthly oversight requirement on the project which would be achieved via the establishment of a Dover Beacon Discussion Forum, an informal group that would report back to the PAG.

Councillor S H Beer requested that explicit instructions be given to Members regarding their input and role.

RESOLVED: That the next meeting would be held in September, on a date to be decided.

The meeting ended at 7.43 pm.