

## **1. Background**

The London Road Community Forum is a local community forum which seeks to express the views of all sections of the community on issues affecting us. It does this by liaising with the Council and other agencies, supporting local projects and community events.

The area covered by the forum and the subject of this action plan is bounded by London Road, Buckland Avenue, Barton Road, Frith Road, Maison Dieu Road, Park Street, Park Place, Ladywell and The High Street. This area is a mix of residential and commercial, principally retail premises, with many of the retail outlets being part of mixed use premises, having residential upper floors; the area also contains or is within a number of designated conservation areas which include a substantial number of Grade II listed buildings.

This area, like many within Dover, has suffered from years of under investment in terms of community assets, street scene etc. Further being bounded by what is effectively Dover's inner ring road creates safety, noise, littering and other anti-social behavior issues predominately, but not exclusively, from people "passing through" the area. Finally, the significant percentage of low value rental properties and the consequent transitory nature of the renters creates a minimal sense of community or desire to be involved.

Since this document was first published DDC have put their Street Scene initiative on hold pending discussions for greater co-operation pending negotiations over closer co-operation with Thanet District Council (amongst others) who already have a Street Scene project under way; throughout the remainder of this document reference to Street Scene refers to this proposed future arrangement.

## **2. Objective**

To create a sustainable and attractive environment in the London Road area and its adjacent streets for the benefit of the whole community by instilling a sense of partnership between all stakeholders.

Time-scale: 5 years

## **3. Short-term Actions**

### **3.1. Empty Properties**

3.1.1. LRCF to establish ownership of vacant properties and engage in positive dialogue with these owners about their future plans.

3.1.2. LRCF to liaise with the relevant local authority departments over the use of maintenance orders where owners are not willing to take action to maintain properties.

3.1.3. LRCF to work with DDC to clarify the role and powers of the Conservation Officer(s) and liaise with them as to actions they can/will take to control development etc. in the conservation area (e.g. satellite dish placement, replacement of wooden sash windows with UPVC etc.).

### **3.2. Physical Environment**

3.2.1. LRCF, working with DDC, to consult with the community on issues relating to the physical environment and draw up a plan to address high priority concerns.

This should be split into categories along the lines of the list in the Street Scene consultative documents.

3.2.2. LRCF to continue with the programme whereby local schools and art groups create displays to enhance boarded up properties once owner consent is granted.

3.2.3. LRCF to work with both Councils to provide floral enhancement for summer 2010 and beyond. Actively promote the objective through website and media.

3.2.4. LRCF to work with both Councils to provide more litter bins in relevant areas within London Road, Barton Path and Maison Dieu Road.

3.2.5. DDC to ensure pavements are clean of chewing gum in many of the area's streets, priority being given to the main shopping areas and pedestrian routes.

3.2.6. LRCF to work with DDC to identify and ensure that damaged paving stones/area of pavement are repaired/replaced promptly

3.2.7. LRCF to work with the Councils, Environment Agency, relevant Council contractors and appropriate volunteer groups to improve the cleanliness of the River Dour within the LRCF area.

### **3.3. Social Environment**

3.3.1. LRCF to work with the Kent Police and other agencies to target and reduce drug dealers to make the area safer and cleaner for residents and visitors.

3.3.2. LRCF to work with DDC Anti Social Behaviour Unit and other agencies to target and reduce anti-social behaviour to improve the environment for visitors and residents.

## **4. Medium- to Long-term Actions**

### **4.1. Properties**

4.1.1. LRCF need to achieve commitment from business owners to "buy in" to the Objective by maintaining their properties.

4.1.2. LRCF to work with KCC Empty Property scheme to bring unused residential properties back into use.

4.1.3. LRCF to enter negotiations with property owners and DDC towards seeking a diversity of usage in the local shops (given the 'big picture' plans for Dover, too many takeaways will create a drunks rat run in the evenings unless precautions are taken early).

4.1.4. LRCF to work with DDC to accommodate these proposals within the Local Development Framework, particularly Phases 1 & 2 covering the period from now until 2016

### **4.2. Physical Environment**

4.2.1. LRCF to work with partners to ensure a clean and usable environment which meets community needs.

4.2.2. Priority should be given to dog fouling/littering and fly tipping (SITA do an exceptional job, but in between their rounds the mess reappears).

4.2.3. LRCF to work with DDC and relevant property owners to obtain better all night lighting on Barton Path, the path running alongside B&Q and within the Castleton Shopping car park.

4.2.4. LRCF to seek support from businesses and Councils to provide Christmas lights on the main stretch of London Road.

4.2.5. LRCF to explore how infrastructure-works (street furniture, lighting, signage, road layout/traffic calming) can be integrated into the wider regeneration efforts of the Dover Pride programme and cooperate more closely with the

scheme.

4.2.6. LRCF, DDC and others to investigate and implement a plan for improving our 'green' areas with furniture, foliage, etc.

### **4.3. Highways**

4.3.1. DDC to work with Kent Highways Agency on improving the conditions of the roads and pavements (i.e. pot holes and unevenness in the High Street, London Road, Maison Dieu, Granville Street, Bridge Street , etc.).

4.3.2. DDC to arrange to have CCTV installed in areas of London Road and Barton Path.

4.3.3. DDC to work with KCC & Kent Police to reduce traffic speeds on the High Street, London Road, Barton Road and Maison Dieu Road through various measures/actions including prominent speed limit signs, a reduction in the speed limit to 20mph, crossing islands, speed cameras, signs reminding people that this is a residential area etc.

4.3.4. DDC to work with Kent Highways Agency to implement a change in the London Road from the bottom of Coombe Valley Road to the Bull Inn whereby this section of road is reduced to one lane and introduce lined parking on either side the whole section of road. At the moment it's sort of, but not quite, two lanes and is dangerous when approaching the Bull Inn. To have just one lane would improve safety issues if traffic were following in one lane rather than inviting overtaking from less considerate drivers.

### **4.4. Shopping & Development**

4.4.1. LRCF should begin an engagement with the owners of the Charlton Centre & multi-storey car park over ways to improve its look and feel and also work with retailers in the Centre to explore ideas how they can be better integrated into the High Street. Priority needs to be given to how the pedestrian route between the High Street and Charlton Green could be improved to stitch the two areas together and maximise footfall for retailers both in the centre, but also on the High Street.

4.4.2. LRCF to work with DDC in the longer term to consider replacements for both the Charlton Centre and the block opposite. Options include inclusion in the regeneration plans, compulsory purchase, working with existing owners etc.

4.4.3. LRCF to work with the Street Scene project on the priority issues highlighted by the community.

### **4.5. Community**

4.5.1. LRCF to build upon the short term schools art initiative to develop community art projects such as regular exhibitions, murals etc. The latter will encourage a sense of ownership amongst younger people and promote a wider participation in maintaining the area.

4.5.2. DDC to arrange for sandblasting/cleaning of high walls along the routes of the High Street and London Road and repainting of railings along London Road and St Paul's Place (removal for this street).

4.5.3. Examine how the forum can become a recognised body for consultation on planning applications within the area, as well as being consulted and involved in contributing to the relevant sections of the district plan.

4.5.4. Explore how the forum can build links to, and work with, other community groups within the forum area to co-ordinate actions and activities, ensure the widest possible advertising of activities, community events and most importantly successes.

4.5.5 LRCF to continue work with Kent Police and the Community Safety Unit to further reduce anti-social behaviour and criminality in the area, including extension of Neighbourhood Watch schemes, retailers radio system etc.

## **5. Funding**

5.1. Options for funding include:

Fund-raising events held by the Forum;

Grants from the Town Council, KCC community grants and neighbourhood forums

Donations from businesses and residents

£500 has been ring-fenced by Dover Town Council towards the boarding up of shops.

Inclusion of some or all of these proposals within the wider remit of the Dover Pride Regeneration Programme.

Consideration by DDC for running a similar programme to the previous HERMS scheme providing match funded grants to local property owners for restoration/repair works on buildings in conservation areas.

5.2. Donations of supplies and equipment and volunteer time.

5.3. Much of the key work should be funded by the relevant property owners themselves through regular care and maintenance.

5.4. Floral displays could be funded and maintained by donation from local companies/businesses/individuals; a small plaque could then be attached noting who funded it. A similar approach could be taken to other items of street furniture such as refuse bins (perhaps funded by the takeaways).

## **6. Benefits**

### **6.1. Environment**

Delivery of the proposals detailed above will lead to significant improvements in the environment within the LRCF area.

Success can be directly assessed through measures including:

Volume of litter collected from the Dour

Volume of on street litter collected

Level of graffiti and vandalism

Level of dog fouling & gum on pavements

### **6.2. Highways**

The principle benefit of these proposals is

Reduction in accident levels on the roads bounding the LRCF area

A secondary benefit is

reduced noise and therefore nuisance levels from motor vehicles, through enforcement of speed limits and other traffic calming measures

### **6.3. Properties & Shopping**

Improvements in the built environment through improved maintenance/decorative order and artistic boarding of vacant premises will lead to a general improvement in attitudes towards the area that can be assessed both directly through

Number of empty residential properties (using a baseline count at an agreed date following approval of these proposals)

Number of empty retail and commercial properties (using a baseline count at an agreed date following approval of these proposals)

Increased average sale price for properties in the area, adjusted for inflation.

And indirectly through

Reported sales levels from retailers

Average car park usage at Charlton Green & The Charlton Centre Multi-storey

#### **6.4.Community**

Potentially the most significant benefits, but also the hardest to achieve, are in this area. Successful delivery of the proposals outlined above should lead to:

Improved sense of community

Creation of a sense of pride in the area

(Both the above can be measured through surveys/community questionnaires)

Greater ownership of the public realm by residents

(Specific values for successful delivery of all these benefits can only be assessed and given once the proposals have been accepted, a detailed delivery plan produced and baseline measures have been made).