

2010 PLANNING ISSUES Coats, A. (December 2010). *Dockyards*, 15(2) 5-7.

NDS has been involved in four Planning Applications during 2010. Sheerness Dockyard has been ongoing since developer George Demetriou submitted his first plan to convert 6 listed Georgian buildings into 26 residences and offices, build 69 new apartments among their grounds and breach the dockyard wall. This was rejected by Swale Planning Committee in January 2008. South Yard Devonport redevelopment has been anticipated for a couple of years, alerted by the Friends of Plymouth Naval Base Museum, whose museum will close in 2011 as a result of Defence Estates disposing of South Yard. Development of Deptford Yard previously arose in 2004, with NDS objecting to the Richard Rogers Partnership Application, which was rejected. Finally, English Heritage invited NDS to become a consultee on an application to grant a late C19 Mast and Boat Slip at Chatham Dockyard immunity from listing.

Commenting on planning applications: reading and analysing scores of documents, juxtaposing them with existing planning regulations, being well-informed about the history and presenting NDS aims rationally as a stakeholder, is time-consuming. What is crucial is the network of committed and knowledgeable members who link NDS, sometimes minute by minute, to local historians and the media.

Plymouth South Yard

NDS has previously been involved in assisting The Friends of Plymouth Naval Base Museum (PNBM) in their aim to move to another building after being served notice that they would have to vacate the Pay Office as part of Defence Estates' plan to dispose of buildings in South Yard. NDS proposed that they move to the West Ropery, as that had a nearby entrance at Mutton Cove and would have room for their collection, which is also housed in the Tarn Yard Houses. Princess Yachts' 2010 Application (Plymouth Planning Application Reference: 10/00640/FUL HM Naval Base South Yard Devonport Plymouth PL1 4SG) to move their super yacht facility was at first welcomed for bringing employment and shipbuilding back to South Yard. This is the most historic part of Devonport Yard, whose core was a revolutionary design by Edmund Dummer in the 1690s: a stepped stone dry dock opening onto a wet dock, with storehouses around it, to minimise time taken in getting men and supplies to ships needing repair. However, it became apparent from the plans that not only would the scale of Princess Yachts facilities impinge on historic listed buildings and future access become uncertain, but the company was including use of the Ropery in its plans, even though the building was not included in the application.

NDS therefore submitted its objections on the grounds of impaired views and lost access to historic buildings, queried the status of the Ropery and called upon the councillors to raise these issues:

'...the historic buildings of South Yard will be threatened irrevocably by additional activities which are not clarified within the Planning Application documents, in particular:

- threats of physical damage to the historic buildings
- unclarified loss of the West Ropery
- destruction of historic vistas
- destruction of assemblage and sense of place
- permanent loss to the public of the Ropery Complex and Gazebo
- loss of integrated historic group value by isolating buildings and threatening future physical damage to the historic built environment.

The NDS therefore encourages the Planning Authority to do all it can to mitigate the impact of these huge buildings upon the setting and their surroundings, and to secure the future of the adjacent historic buildings and calls for:

1. Consideration of the NDS suggestion to reverse the 3 development Phases
2. Assured and specified means of physically protecting the historic buildings surrounding the PY site
3. Clarification of the future of the Ropery Complex, Gazebo, Covered Slip and Mutton Cove Gate
4. Assured and specified access to the historic buildings by museum and historical groups to guarantee future interpretation of the tangible and intangible heritage of South Yard through guaranteed specified access for tours and research (NDS to PCC 28 June 2010)

However, on 21 July the Planning Committee recommended acceptance conditionally subject to S106 Obligation. (Town and Country Planning Act 1990/ government Circular 05/2005 whereby a local planning authority makes a legally-binding agreement with a landowner when planning permission is granted, regarding services and infrastructure, such as highways, recreation, education, health and affordable housing. <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=71631>)

On 22 July I was interviewed on BBC Radio Devon about our views on the proposed development and how we thought it would affect the local area. I stressed how beneficial the jobs would be to the local economy, but how little Devonport heritage is promoted in Plymouth and how the plan would seriously limit South Yard's potential for future heritage tourism access and interpretation. It would remove historic buildings from local community access and the museum would lose its building. I raised unanswered questions regarding the Ropery and Mutton Cove Gate and urged councillors to question the details of the plans. We also sent a last minute letter repeating this plea to councillors. Our views were noted by *Superyacht Business*:<http://www.ibinews.com/auto/newsdesk/20100621102923syb.html>

On 27 July Mary Wills submitted a Listing Application for No. 3 Slip and Building S173 at Devonport. If English Heritage list No. 3 slip, a separate listed building consent would be required to dismantle the raised head and implement the current proposal. Mary reported of the Planning Committee meeting on 29 July '70 people attended the meeting tonight. The plans were unanimously approved, despite at least two of the committee voicing their concerns.' A spokesman for English Heritage said that the organisation was 'disappointed' at the decision, which would have 'an

irreversible impact on the rest of the historic South Yard':
<http://www.thisisplymouth.co.uk/news/ahead-163-45m-yachtsdevelopment/article-2472963-detail/article.html>

Mary further stated that on 30 July 'The MD of Princess Yachts spoke on the radio confirming their aim for the freehold within 12 months. If they get the freehold it means they will have the Ropery, Tarred Yarn Stores, Gazebo, No. 1 Covered Slip and King Billy on their land.' She cites an earlier reference to the tangible and intangible heritage of the Gazebo:

Near the south end of the mast-house is a small mount, generally called Bunker's Hill, on the summit of which is a watch-house, and a battery of five cannon, nine-pounders, four of iron, and one a beautiful brass piece, made at Paris. The prospect from this place is very extensive and interesting, including the Sound, St Nicholas's Island, Mount Edgecumbe, the Dock-yard, Hamoaze, and the Cornish side of the Tamar, as high as Saltash. Under the hill is a small powder magazine, and near it a slip for building cutters and small vessels in.
(Anonymous 1812 booklet of a tour around South Yard, Plymouth Reference Library)

So the situation is that there is no conservation plan for South Yard and no specified conservation programme for the listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments within the proposal. PNBM, the Fire Service Museum and the Lighthouse museum will all close. The National Museum of the Royal Navy is conducting an audit of the PNBM collection and historic fire engines are being valued for sale. Mary Wills continues to represent the interests of PNBM. If you wish to help please contact rayandmary@talktalk.net

Ann Coats