

Maison Dieu Restoration Project



Welcome

Thank you for coming to this public consultation event. We have run several workshops for existing users of the Town Hall and key local stakeholders to learn more about how they use the space and how it can be improved in the future and we are very grateful to all the people who have attended these and help to shape the proposals for the Maison Dieu so far. We are now keen to understand from the local community what you think of the emerging designs and the education programme we are planning as part of the Town Hall restoration.



Connaught Hall Roofspace, look closely to see the names of pantomimes chalked on the beams

Is it the Maison Dieu or is it Dover Town Hall?

It's both!

The earliest parts of the building date back to around 1203 when it was founded as a Maison Dieu which means House of God. It was constructed as a place for pilgrims to stop, rest and worship whilst travelling from mainland Europe to Canterbury Cathedral to visit the shrine of Thomas Becket.

After being used for a wide range of activities, Dover Town Council bought the building in 1834 and began to renovate and extend it. It was opened as the new Dover Town Hall in 1861.

Today the building is owned by Dover District Council. Dover Town Council are located next door, confusingly in Maison Dieu House!

What is the restoration project?

The project aims to restore the Maison Dieu to its former glory and make sure that it can continue to play a vital part in the life of Dover for many years to come.

Despite continuing to serve the community for a range of uses, parts of the building are in poor condition and in need of repairs and upgrades. Anyone who has used the building for a function will know that the position of toilets, storage spaces, entries, exits and disabled access create a whole host of problems. The building also operates at a significant annual loss that is currently met by Dover District Council. With increasing pressure on Council finance, this position is not sustainable and ways need to be found to help the building cover its costs.

Who is behind the project?

The project is being led by Dover District Council, Dover Town Council and The Dover Society. This core team will be supported by a range of independent specialists such as architects, cost consultants and business planners.

Will it still be a community building?

Yes.

The Maison Dieu was built for the community and has played an important role in the life of Dover ever since. Initial proposals for the building will keep the Connaught Hall, Stone Hall, Council Chamber and Court Room for community use. The plan is simply about making them work better for the community with new entrances, toilets, disabled access routes, cloak rooms and storage.

Other parts of the building that are currently not used will be given sensitive new uses. These include a new café and self-catering accommodation. There is much more research and consultation to be done on these ideas so things may change.

Photos: Matt Emmett, Forgotten Heritage



Connaught Hall Roof

Have you secured any funding for the building?

Yes! In 2018 we were lucky enough to secure a first round pass from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (HF) for £4.7m to restore, introduce new uses and improve accessibility for the Maison Dieu.

The HF operates a two stage application process that can take two years from start to finish. We are now half way through this process having secured a first round pass. The HF now provides funds for us to develop our ideas in more detail and we will have to submit a second round application in summer 2020 before being awarded all of the funding and restoration can begin.

During the next year the project team will be working hard to secure the match funding that is necessary for the bid to be successful.



One of the cells in the old gaol



Mayor's Parlour ceiling

How long will all of this take?

The project will take time to deliver. Restoring historically important buildings correctly takes time and needs to be done carefully. There will be much going on behind the scenes to make sure all of the necessary consents are in place and that the right repairs are carried out before you see any changes.

What about the furniture?

The Maison Dieu that you see today is largely the result of a renowned Victorian architect called William Burges. The major overhaul that Burges led for the Town Council back in the 1800s was so extensive that the commission included lots of bespoke furniture designed specifically for the building.

The furniture is truly unique and arguably as important as the building itself. The aim is therefore to retain and restore as much of the original furniture as possible so that people can see it in all its splendour.

How do I give my feedback?

The consultation boards have been designed to provide some background to the project and to allow you to provide feedback on the designs and education programme. Each board will explain how to give your feedback on the project.

How can I find out more?

To learn more about the project you can:

- Follow the project on twitter: @DoverMaisonDieu
- Follow the project on Instagram: maisondieudover
- Sign up to the project newsletter: By visiting the Dover District Council website www.dover.gov.uk



Stair in one of the towers