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# Historic fort could be used for 'great hotel or housing'

by **Sam Lennon**  
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A historic fort and former detention centre could be turned into a hotel or housing.

MP Charlie Elphicke has met council planners and the Prisons Minister to discuss the future of Dover Immigration Removal Centre.

The Dover MP explained: "The citadel fortress played an important part in keeping Dover and our nation safe and secure.

"Now it could be the engine to drive the renewal of the Western Heights.

"Great houses or a great hotel – we can all see the incredible potential for bringing more jobs and money to the town.

"Investment like this is absolutely crucial to building a better future for Dover and Deal."

The Western Heights building closed as an immigration detention centre on November 2, 2015.

It remains controlled by the Ministry of Justice but is currently disused and is staffed only by a skeleton crew to deter trespassers. Mr Elphicke met with both planners from Dover Dis-



**Dover Immigration and Removal Centre at the Western Heights**

trict Council and Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah to discuss its potential redevelopment.

The DIRC was built inside an old Napoleonic fort in 1952, serving as a prison and youth detention centre before being converted to immigration removal in 2002.

It held men aged 18 and over who were suspected illegal immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The detainees were usually appealing for asylum or had failed in seeking it.

It could accommodate 300 detainees and 200 staff.

The building could be seen as potential redevelopment for the

more remote part of western Dover after plans to build 600-plus homes at nearby Farthingloe were stopped by the Court of Appeal.

Last September judges had quashed an application for 521 homes and a 90-apartment retirement village, which had been granted permission by the district council.

The CPRE (Campaign for the Protection of Rural England) had lodged the appeal as it was on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Mr Elphicke had condemned the court's decision, saying that more housing was needed.



**MP Charlie Elphicke, Tim Ingleton and Cllr Nick Kenton from the district council and Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah**



**Dover Immigration Removal Centre**

Picture: Simon Burchett

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