



CADRA Monthly Roundup: October 2020

We hope all our members and supporters are remaining healthy and in good spirits and add our voice to those urging everyone to abide by the guidelines.

Your committee met once again via the web this month, and this update summarises what is going on. Please share it with anyone you feel might be interested.

Membership administration

Over the past months we have been examining ways of streamlining our membership administration. We hope to introduce a new system early in November and will be contacting all members with more details.

Transport

A 'Tiger' crossing, with lanes for pedestrians and bikes, is to be installed on Gosbrook Road, close to the footpath into Christchurch Meadows. A crossing to improve the route towards Christchurch Bridge has been planned for some time. While welcome, this will mean the loss of some on-street parking spaces.

Planning

[South Oxfordshire's Local Plan](#), on which CADRA previously commented, has reached an important stage: the Council has published its list of proposed modifications following the recent Public Inquiry and has invited comments up to 2 November.

The news is broadly good: the major new housing allocations lie well to the north and take development pressure off the Reading boundary. However, there are sufficient smaller sites closer to Caversham to continue our concern about the cumulative impact of traffic here, so we shall be commenting.

The application for new housing on the Reading portion of **Reading Golf Club** has closed for comment. These are [CADRA's comments](#). Much of the developer's case rests on using the much larger portion of the course, in South Oxfordshire, for various public amenities, but SODC have understandably commented that this will be their planning decision so cannot be taken for granted.

The application to redevelop **Drew's** former premises, across the river on Caversham Road, for seven storey apartments has been refused by the Council. This was against officers' advice and was primarily because of the height of the proposal and the loss of part of Reading's heritage. Councillors strongly supported the case against the scheme, put forward partly by CADRA and very effectively by the Bell Tower Association (the local community group). The first round is won.

There is further good news: RBC has appointed its first full-time **Conservation and Urban Design Officer**, so that this important aspect of its planning role will be much better-resourced than hitherto. This has been needed for a long time.

The Government is consulting on a wholesale and radical **reform of the planning system**, based on their view that it is a major brake on development, especially of new housing, and is no longer fit for purpose. CADRA's view is that where it applies to an established built-up area like ours, the present system works: it is widely understood and is an important, though seriously under-resourced, safeguard of the character and amenity of such areas. We have commented on this and a wide range of other issues, from the perspective of a long-established community group with much experience at the 'sharp end' of the system. These are [CADRA's comments](#).

Flood defences

The Environment Agency tell us that they are currently updating the scheme costs based on the outline designs, which they shared with the community earlier this year. The updated costs and the latest assessment of how many properties may benefit will be used to re-calculate the amount of central government *Grant in Aid* funding the scheme could receive and how much funding will therefore be needed from other sources. In the meantime, further design work is on hold. Once updated costs and benefits are

available there will be further community updates and discussion of potential next steps. The scheme is still in the early stages and will need secured funding and other approvals before it can progress to the next phase.

Crime

The spate of thefts of bikes and from garages and garden sheds in Caversham continues, especially in larger properties, and we urge vigilance.