

From the Lookout Post
August 2006

Reading Festival

The License Hearing for the festival took place in the Civic Centre on June 16th and was well attended by public and press. Mean Fidler were represented by a suave barrister and members of the public and of local associations raised different issues of concern. The emergency services attended to present their reports and answer questions. After an airing of the issues, the panel of three Councillors withdrew to reach a decision. Their decision to allow an increase in ticket numbers and to allow a car park and camp site on Mapledurham leaves many feeling both apprehensive and disappointed.

The better news is that the panel have restricted the sale of alcohol to midnight on the Thursday and 2am on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The numbers allowed early admission to the site have been restricted. After all the problems last year, with noxious smoke and explosions, bonfires will not be allowed in any area but small campfires will be allowed if carefully stewarded. Mean Fidler made all sorts of assurances as to the effective management of a whole range of potential problems and we must congratulate the panel for binding them to comply with these intentions as set out in the operating schedule.

This means that if Mean Fidler does not ensure that the operating schedule is put into practice, they may be in breach of the license. A 24 hour hot-line is to be in operation and leaflets are to be distributed to local residents. The review of the festival will draw heavily on the range of problems reported so if you are aware of problems please don't keep them to yourself. Record the details, call the hotline, tell your Ward Councillor and, most importantly, contact your residents' association so they can build up an overall picture. As residents north of the river, we can form an inspectorate of over 40,000!

Planning Applications

Planning Officers for Caversham have been kept busy of late with a flurry of large and/or significant applications. On the approach from the A4074, an application for four houses

on back gardens adjoining the Caversham Heath golf course has been refused. On the approach from Henley, a large scheme for 65 units in four blocks of three storeys is currently expected to be considered at the July Planning Committee. There are many issues of concern including height, visibility, inadequate landscaping and the impact on the Berry Brook at the bottom of the site. It would be a high density development at the gateway to Reading.

In the heart of Caversham, there is an application for a development of 57 units of sheltered accommodation between Wolsey Road and School Lane which runs down the side of Waitrose Car Park. Although the provision of sheltered accommodation in such a central location will have many supporters, the size and dominance of the proposed buildings would change the character of that part of Caversham. We hear that a pool of electric buggies is proposed but despite this, local residents fear that the very limited car parking provision will cause many problems nearby.

The saga of the proposed development on the site of the Caversham Laundry continues to roll. To date, the proposals are for a block of 3 storey terraced houses, two 4 storey blocks of flats and one 5 storey block making a total of 76 residential units. The general appearance and the surrounding landscaping viewed from both George Street and from Christchurch Meadows need to be of the highest standard for another very prominent site.

Our list, though by no means complete, concludes with an application for outline planning permission in the back gardens of houses on Kidmore Road, across from the turning to Richmond Road. Many are concerned that it will establish a precedent. Trees have already been felled and local residents are contacting the Planning Department in the hope that any further tree felling can be prevented by protection orders.

St Martin's Precinct

By the time this column finds you, it may be that the new Marks and Spencer's shop will be open in the precinct. There does appear to have been some discussion behind the scenes as to how the precinct could be smartened up. Many people have commented on

the poor state of the buildings and the paving and the absence of anything to brighten the area and make it look cared for. Let us hope that the owners of the precinct can be persuaded to fund some real improvements rather than merely chastise the existing tenants.

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