

## **St Martins scheme approved**

After seven months of discussion, the application from Hermes for the development of St Martins Precinct was finally approved on 11 February. The scheme will upgrade the precinct, which will link to a new public square - Caversham Square - and provide a larger Waitrose, a total of 40 flats, a cinema and improvements to the parking area. CADRA has always welcomed the opportunity to regenerate an area which has become dilapidated and to provide new facilities. Our aim has been for this once-in-a-generation opportunity to achieve a design which fits well in the historic heart of Caversham..

### **CADRA's concerns about the scheme**

CADRA's representations achieved some welcome changes to the initial application, particularly in the use of materials and the provision of an additional tree to the front of the precinct. We also secured some changes which should help to protect the future of the Holm Oak next to Costa, which is such an important feature in Church Street. A new Community Noticeboard will be provided within Caversham Square.

We worked hard to try to get further improvement to the design and its impact on Church Street and for additional changes to reduce the cut-back of the Holm Oak. These were not incorporated into the project, so we still have concerns about some aspects of design, especially the appearance of the new Pizza Express building, and the very substantial cut-back of the Holm Oak.

However, we helped to ensure that there was healthy discussion on the proposals and the contribution which CADRA made towards the debate was praised by the Planning Committee.

### **Section 106 Contributions**

The developer will contribute £430,048 towards local Transport Schemes. Some of this money should be available to implement some of the ideas being developed as part of CADRA's 'Sharing Our Streets' initiative, which aims to improve the relationship between traffic and pedestrians in central Caversham. Contributions of £96,000 towards open space, sport and recreation infrastructure as set out in the Thames Park Plan and £61,490 towards education infrastructure in Caversham have also been secured by RBC.