From the Lookout Post March 2015

As is often the case, more water will have flowed under the bridge before you read this column but some major issues in Caversham have been moving forward.

St Martin's Precinct

We now know that the final decision on the planning application is due to taken at the planning Applications Committee on Wednesday 11 February. This has taken some time to process for a number of reasons. The original planning application in May resulted in a large number of objections and Planning Officers also raised concerns on a range of issues. It is a very complex scheme, covering not only the design but parking, access, deliveries and much more. Discussions led to a series of changes over the course of several months. The final plans show significant changes in the use of building materials. Brick facing and zinc panels have been introduced in the upward extension above Costa and Boots and in the new Pizza Express building by the Telephone Exchange. In general, the shape and height remain unchanged. There has been a range of reactions to the plans. The 1960s buildings are long overdue for improvement and many people will welcome the new facilities.

The application was first considered at the November Planning Application Committee and was deferred at the request of the developer as no agreement had been reached on the financial contribution. Members of the Committee described the scheme as a 'once in a generation' opportunity to achieve right outcome for Caversham and following representations from CADRA at the meeting, they asked the developer Hermes and the design team from Barton Willmore to look again at the design.' They were also asked to resolve problems from an earlier design error, where the upward extension over Boots and Costa conflicts with the Holm Oak so that a major part of the canopy will have to be removed to allow construction. Further cut back will be required on a regular basis to allow light into the windows of the flats. Since that request in November, some very minor changes have been made but there has been no review of the design. Concerns remain about the long term survival of the tree. Given the guarded recommendation by Planning Officers to approve, it will be for the Committee Members to reach a conclusion in February.

Image – A view of Church Street looking west

Sharing our Streets

Following a successful joint open meeting in November Paul Matthews, the author of the report, has been invited to make a presentation to the Transport Users' Forum at Reading Civic Centre on 12th

March. The broad concept of a scheme for Caversham was well received. The report can be read at www.cadra.org.uk.

Adult Social Care

The issue of adult social care has been very much in the news. Difficulties with providing adequate care regularly delay discharge from hospital, adding to pressures on the NHS. The Care Act in Reading was the subject of a local consultation by the Borough Council as they implement the changes of the new Care Act. The Act updates over 60 years of law around adult social care in England. Most of the changes come into effect in April 2015, with many of the changes to funding for care starting from 2016.

CADRA always looks for a topical issue for its Open Meetings and is delighted that Suzanne Westhead, Head of Adult Social Care, RBC has agreed to come and talk. This will follow the brief AGM business and will be held at **7.30pm, Tuesday 12 May 2015 in the Caversham Baptist Centre, Prospect Street.**

A permanent site for the Heights Primary School

In November the Education Funding Agency and Reading Borough Council agreed to work together to resolve this difficult issue. The Borough Council agreed to carry out a consultation which would inform the final decision to be taken by the EFA. Rob Wilson MP had convened a meeting of Stakeholders earlier in the year and two further meetings were held in December and January.

The main focus of these meetings was to allow input to the arrangements for the consultation and the information pack to accompany it. The groups represented include residents' associations, campaign groups and user groups, school trustees, parent groups as well as the Borough Council and EFA. While the groups hold diverse views, discussion has been polite and orderly and progress made towards the launch of the consultation. Although some issues remained unresolved, a majority agreed that the early timetable should not be allowed to slip. The school is successfully up and running but with a new intake each year, it will run out of space in its temporary home.

Xxxxxxxxxxxx

- Xxxxxxxxxx
- Xxxxxxxxxxxx
- Xxxxxxxxxxxx
- Xxxxxxxxxxxxx

The timetable for consultation covers the period xxxxxxxxxxx to xxxxxxxxxxx. More information is available xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx on how responses can be made on line or on paper.