

Caversham and District Residents' Association
Annual General Meeting Wednesday 21 April 2010
Chairman's report 2009/2010

Planning

The final consultation on the Sites Allocation closed this month. CADRA has input to all stages of the policy process and we anticipate approval for one development site and protection for the majority of the green spaces north of and adjacent to the Thames, effective to 2026. Maps showing the sites are on display this evening. The equivalent process from South Oxfordshire District Council, including proposals for sites close to Caversham, has been delayed and we are waiting for news of the next step.

Planning for and around Reading Station has been a major issue. RBC approved plans for the Sackville development and for the new station building, subject to listed building consent for the demolition of the western section. Plans for the transport interchange around the station continue to cause concern, particularly for buses. A Development Framework for the station area was the subject of recent consultation. This framework covers a wider area including Vastern Road and a section through to the Thames. The changes envisaged will be very visible from Caversham.

For individual applications, CADRA has continued to support local groups opposing planning applications. An application to demolish and replace Caversham House on Church Road will change that part of Caversham centre.

Open Spaces

The re-opening of Caversham Court has been a great success. CADRA sponsored one of the lime trees near the gazebo and continues links with the Friends of Caversham Court. It is always a pleasure to see the wind vane on the gazebo glinting in the sun.

CADRA was represented at the decisions on the future of the Kings Meadow Pool and Caversham Lock Island. The commercial proposal for a hotel complex added unacceptable conditions and RBC agreed to allow the Kings Meadow Campaign a period to develop viable plans to restore the pool. It is not yet clear what the next step will be for the Lock Island, owned by the Environment Agency which is committed to securing release of capital.

CADRA is also represented on the Management Committee of the Mapledurham Pavilion. There is no prospect of a replacement building but plans are being drawn up for some improvements including the kitchen and toilets. This is expected to be funded through support from Reading Festival.

RBC has completed detailed surveys on their stock of trees, including the launch of a formal Tree Strategy. A budget has been allocated to replace street trees which can no longer be retained safely.

Festivals

Reading Festival applied for an increase in sounds levels for 2009. CADRA and WADRA opposed this change in the license. While this opposition was unsuccessful, we were able to secure improvements in other ways. It is clear that the troubles on the last night of the 2009 festival are being taken seriously.

Sadly the 2009 Caversham Festival had to be cancelled and this is currently no prospect of a team being willing to organise further festivals. We would be happy to put any anyone interested in touch.

A Safer Caversham

A proposal was made across Reading to merge the Safer Forums with the Neighbourhood Action Groups to reduce duplication. CADRA shared the concern of other associations and of Neighbourhood Police Inspector, that Caversham is too large and diverse an area to be served by a single problem solving group and we were able to secure a decision for two separate groups. The Lower Caversham NAG which includes Caversham Centre is in the process of completing arrangements for a local survey and public meeting which will determine the local priorities.

The Upper Caversham NAG was re-formed following a well attended public meeting in February. An inaugural meeting on 22 March discussed the objectives of the NAG and explored a preliminary agenda and timetable of meetings. Mark Randall, a local Caversham businessman, had volunteered to act as Chair and Les James, a CADRA committee member, as acting Vice Chair. Inspector Penny MacKenzie from Thames Valley Police attended as Community Liaison Officer together with Sgt Rob Pitman. Following the survey and items raised at the public

meeting, priorities will include traffic problems such as speeding, volume of traffic and cycling on footpaths, burglary, and environmental issues such as litter and anti-social noise. The NAG will focus on quick-win issues that solve immediate problems, meeting every other month. The next meeting is arranged for 6.30 pm on 18 May at Highdown School; everyone is welcome. See: uknags.org.uk.

The NAGs are supported by the RBC schedule of Environmental Visual Audits which local people are welcome to join.

Caversham Centre

CADRA has always taken a particular interest in the Centre, supporting the re-formed traders association and promoting action to improve the precinct. Rob Wilson MP recently chaired a meeting of local Caversham business representatives and representatives of other local organizations including CADRA, to discuss issues mainly associated with St Martin's Precinct. Would Caversham traders be prepared to pay an additional rating levy for additional services, similar to Reading traders? The Caversham shopping centre is crucial to the local community although Reading Borough Council have no planning focus on St. Martin's Precinct. Issues raised included the poor structural state of St. Martin's Precinct, the poor state of surrounding paving, difficulties in getting a return bus to such places as Amersham Road and issues associated with a lack of car parking. MP Rob Wilson agreed to arrange a meeting with the landlords of St Martin's Precinct to discuss the issues raised and report back.

Following concerns about the safety of pavements during the bad weather, CADRA has asked RBC to consider plans for Caversham centre after heavy falls of snow.

Transport

Following an exceptionally well attended CADRA meeting in April 2009, CADRA has followed the emerging plans for Reading and surrounding authorities to bid to the Transport Innovation Fund. This was hoped to secure money for a low emission zone, improved public transport, station improvements and a new pedestrian/cycle bridge. However, the government have now withdrawn the TIF fund to be replaced by the Urban Challenge Fund and new bids will have to be made.

All Councils are required to draw up and to consult on their next Local transport Plan for 2011 to 2014.

Schools

The autumn open meeting focused on school places in Caversham – a new area for CADRA. No extra places are expected but adjustments have been made to catchment areas.

Membership

Email and the website are an increasingly important way of staying in communication with members – providing we have an up to date email address!! Please do let us know if you change your email or postal address. New members can now sign up via the website and payment can be made by electronic transfer or standing order. To remain a vibrant organisation, CADRA needs to sign up new members and to retain existing members. We welcome Jacque Tomkins who took over as Membership Secretary from Mick Simmons. A new membership leaflet is now available from the Library, Wordplay and 'Delicious'. We are grateful to Freezeframe Photography for their help.

The committee have also been examining ways to sustain its work in different areas without placing undue reliance on any one individual. To support this, the committee seeks to achieve its maximum size within the terms of the constitution.

Working Together

In many of the areas outlined above, CADRA has worked closely with other associations north of the river, in particular EGRA, WADRA, Caversham GLOBE and the members of the NAGs. We have been able to share local knowledge, pool resources and seek a wider range of views. We believe this is critical to continued success and send our thanks and good wishes to all those involved in working for Caversham. It is a great place to live!

Helen Lambert April 2010