

Crime in Caversham

The Caversham crime statistics for the period April to August 2006 indicate a welcome 19% reduction on the period a year earlier, 198 less crimes in total.

However, recently there has been a spate of burglaries, which is being met by intense police patrols to both prevent crime and catch the perpetrators. The Council and the Police have installed 67 temporary yellow signs, indicating heightened policing. Sadly many of these burglaries are exploiting lack of security by householders. In particular, police warnings about security around the front door seem not always to have been heeded and it is worth restating them.

- Take steps to make certain that a hand through the letterbox or a broken glass pane cannot gain access.
- Double lock front doors if they are the type that can be opened by turning a handle from the inside.
- Most importantly, too many burglars are successfully “fishing” through letterboxes and reaching keys to the house and cars. Do not leave keys in the vicinity of the front door; preferably take them upstairs at night.

Having valuable items ultra violet post coded could help to recover them after a burglary. Finally, a reminder that the next monthly Caversham police surgery will take place at Church House on Monday 4 December from 17.00 to 20.00.

Reading Open Spaces Consultation Update

The next stage of this consultation summarises public responses and sets out the resulting proposals from the Council for further comment. Forms are available from the Civic Centre, Caversham Library or on line at: www.reading.gov.uk/consultations where you will also find the background documents and an on line form for comments. Responses should be submitted by Friday 15 December. The proposal to “protect the existing endowment of recreational open space” will raise questions as it overlaps with the period of consultation on Mapledurham Playing Fields which includes proposals to reduce the area of playing field left by Mr Hewitt’s legacy.

Caversham Safer Community Forum

While in the library collecting your consultation form, why not also ask for the autumn newsletter, Issue 4, from the Caversham Safer Community Forum? On the back page there is a useful list of phone numbers to ring for over twenty issues.

Central Business Area

The area still lacks care and attention, in spite of many protestations. Marks and Spencer have lent their weight to persuade the St Martin's Precinct landlords managing agents improve the substandard conditions, but still to no avail. There are now two CCTV cameras, one in front of the bakery and another at the bottom of Church Rd, which provide cover to help the police identify and deal with unruly incidents. The cameras are flexible allowing them to be directed to areas of interest. CADRA are also working with certain leaders of the business community to try to reinstate some life in the Caversham Traders Association. It would be a positive step if they could speak with a collective voice to initiate activities to improve the trading environment, as discussed in last month's Ex Libris column.

Reading Festival Review

Residents Associations and Parish Councils worked together to ensure that local concerns were voiced in the licensing process for the festival. The same organisations recently attended an informal debriefing meeting with Council officers and Mean Fidler, the festival organiser. The group examined reports of sound recordings and of all complaints received. In general, the festival with its increased numbers and revised noise provisions, had gone far better than many had feared. A number of issues were highlighted for improvements next year. The same organisations will continue to be involved in arrangements for the festival each year. The group are committed to improve advance communication to residents about arrangements for the festival and specifically to improve procedures for reporting problems arising during the festival, so that prompt action can be taken.

Planning

As we might have feared, two important planning applications, which were refused by the Council, are now the subject of appeal. The application for 13 units between All Hallows Road and Copse Avenue would, if approved, allow access for further development in that area. In the same way, the application for four houses on the site

of 161 Upper Woodcote Road, would allow further development adjoining the golf course.

Working in Collaboration

This has been a contentious period for working in collaboration. Feelings have been running high over the proposed one way IDR. As we go to press, there is still no information on the outcome of the legal challenge by Wokingham District Council. The consultation period for the future of the Mapledurham Playing Fields and its pavilion has now closed and we await the analysis of the results. In the light of an energetic campaign by Caversham Primary School and a voting structure that appeared to split the remaining vote three ways, there was considerable alarm on the part of those anxious to protect the heritage left by Mr Hewitt. This has led to an active campaign aiming to match that run by the school. Let us hope that once the results are in the open, the accusations on all sides will subside and allow constructive progress to be made.