

## From the Lookout Post – January 2018

### **CADRA celebrates 50 years**

On Tuesday 17 October the Caversham and District Residents' Association celebrated 50 years.

At noon, the team gathered by the Caversham War Memorial to plant a new Copper Beech tree. They were supported by the Mayor of Reading, Councillor Rose Williams and by Damian Farmer of Farmer and Dyer who had contributed to the cost of the tree.

In the evening the theme of trees continued with an excellent talk on 'Trees in Caversham' from Dr John Evans who traced the planting and care of trees as Caversham grew and examined how we can protect our local treescape and add to it.

Following Dr Evans' talk, thoughts turned to celebration. Ian Brown, CADRA Chair in the 1990s helped to cut a celebration cake, supported by past and present members of the CADRA Committee. Sadly Tom Chadwick, who served as CADRA Secretary and as Chair in the mid-2000s, was unwell and unable to take part. Those present signed a card for him with good wishes to accompany a slice of cake.

None of the original CADRA team are still with us but Hester Casey, daughter of Molly Casey who was a founder member, long-time Secretary and finally President, reminisced about growing up with CADRA campaigning, with some delightful anecdotes.

Helen Lambert, current Chair reflected on the time since CADRA was first formed. The 1960s was a period of great change and concerns grew across the country that insensitive development may destroy historic areas. Reading Civic Society formed in 1962 to fight a wave of insensitive development that threatened to destroy much of the town's historic centre. In 1967 the first conservation areas were designated under the Civic Amenities Act, and there are now nearly 10,000 in England. (Two are in Caversham – St Peters and Surley Row – both date from 1988.)

It was against that background and with the prospect of considerable change in Caversham village, that a residents group was formed in 1967 which was subsequently formalised as an association. The association developed over the years, addressing new challenges and adopting new means of communication. Throughout, it has depended on a team of volunteers who give their time to support the local community. So, the first toast was to:

#### **"The team – past and present"**

There will be new and different challenges ahead that require new approaches, new people, new skills. CADRA cannot and should not stand still and so the second toast was to:

#### **"The next 50 years"**

With a glass of fizz and a slice of cake in hand, there was time to enjoy the exhibitions from the Caversham 100 Years On project, to catch up on local news including the recent consultation on Caversham bus routes and to help strengthen that ever-important local network.

## Reading Buses – Caversham Routes

Reading Buses launched a consultation on 11 October 2017 with a short closing date. It was proposed to reroute the 22 along Hemdean Road and Oakley Road, remove the 24 service and amend the routes of the 23 and 25. This produced stiff opposition locally and a revised proposal was made.

The second proposal included a new Hoppa service to cover some areas which were to lose their service. This would run off peak only and would not cross over the Thames.

Following continued concern and a second public meeting, a third proposal was made. Revised timetables are expected and may be available when you read this column. They are reported to being introduced from February 2018. The plans are described by Reading Buses as follows:

- *Routes 23 and 24 to Caversham Park and Emmer Green will be re-merged into clockwise and anti-clockwise loops every 20 minutes.*
- *Route 25 will continue unchanged in frequency and route.*
- *Routes 27/29 will be revised from Lower Caversham to provide a two-way link to and from Caversham centre (instead of having to travel around a loop via Central Reading).*
- *A through link to the Royal Berkshire Hospital will run hourly Monday to Saturday from Caversham centre by an extension of route 22 from Caversham Heights.*
- *Caversham Heights route 22 will run on its existing route every half hour during peak time and hourly off-peak and all day Saturday. The Sunday service will be withdrawn. Alternative travel will be on the Thames Travel 'River Rapids' X39/40 (half hourly Monday - Saturday and hourly on Sundays). Reading Buses return tickets are accepted.*
- *Plans for a Hoppa bus for Albert Road and The Mount have been withdrawn following the retention of the existing 22 route.*

While this is welcome and represents a number of improvements to the current service, the reduction of the 22 route to an hourly service off- peak, will impact severely school children, college students and workers finishing their day before the peak service resumes and concerns continue to

be expressed. There are also many doubts whether passenger numbers are being captured correctly as some off-peak services are already standing room only. Loss of the Sunday service is also a concern.

It is important to understand the background to these discussions. Reading Transport Ltd is wholly owned by Reading Borough Council. They report that the Caversham routes, and particularly the 22, run at a loss. The intended changes are expected to deliver only half of the planned savings and Reading Buses are seeking to get more passengers on board. Higher usage could potentially mean a better service. It would contribute to keeping cars off the road, reduce congestion and improve air quality. Their message is, "Use it or lose it."

We should recognise the extraordinary work of a number of individuals who worked tirelessly to ensure that local people were kept up to date with proposals and had the opportunity to express their concerns.

## **St Martin's Centre**

Hermes the owners of St Martins Centre are preparing alternative plans for the position of the new cinema. The intention is to develop above and behind the Superdrug store which would be retained with some alterations. The proposed building may rise to 5 storeys with the upper levels set back. The entrance to the cinema would be from the new Caversham Square on the car park side. The entrance to the new residential accommodation on the upper floors would be from Church Street.

The proposals for Caversham square with the cinema entrance and a new rear entrance to Waitrose suggest a positive external space. It will be important that the building line and the detailed design of the Church Street frontage is sympathetic and not over dominant and that the height and bulk of any new building are carefully considered. A formal planning application is expected next year.

Now that that the refurbishment of St Martin's Square is virtually complete, it is expected that work will follow on for the new 5 storey block for a restaurant and flats above, adjacent to Marc Antoni Hairdresser, where permission has already been granted. The work for the cinema and Superdrug could follow on.

## **Gladman proposal for 245 homes off Peppard Road**

Although South Oxfordshire District Council had earlier been expected to recommend refusal of this application, the planning officer finally recommended approval. Following substantial opposition from Parish Councils and individuals in South Oxfordshire, Caversham and Emmer Green, the Planning Committee decided to refuse the application. The developer, Gladman submitted an appeal and the closing date for comments passed in

November. <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/ViewCase.aspx?Caseid=3185997&CoID=0>

CADRA submitted further comments to the Planning Inspector. Reading Borough Council have confirmed they will support South Oxfordshire District Council in resisting the appeal in the light of the inadequacy of infrastructure and services.

The public hearing will be in Henley Town Hall, May 1 to 5, 2018 and we await the next step in the process.