

## **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 be 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 a 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



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