

From the Lookout Post October 2015

Energy Saving in the Home

The next CADRA open meeting will be held at **7.45 pm, Wednesday 21 October** in the Caversham Baptist Church. CADRA has taken advice from members of the Reading Climate Change Partnership. Recognising that Caversham has a large proportion of older buildings which have particular issues for energy efficiency, advice was also taken from the Society of Protection of Ancient Buildings. As a result, three very knowledgeable speakers will make up the panel.

Ian Gough, Energy Manager for Wokingham Council is also Director of Reduce Energy so is well able to give an overview of the range of options and some potential pitfalls. Tony Cowling, a former research chemist who ran a local building firm, is now involved with both community hydro and solar PV projects. After he retired from his business he built himself a very low energy home and will introduce its design concepts. He will talk about the Reading DraughtBusters project and more generally about saving energy in the home.

Richard Oxley a Chartered Surveyor, established the Oxley Consultancy on the conservation of historic buildings. Richard leads a homeowners' course elsewhere on energy efficiency in traditional buildings and is highly regarded in the field. After a presentation from the panel and a few general questions, each member of the panel will take a small 'surgery' answering individual questions. We expect that representatives of Citizens Advice at Reading will also hold a surgery. They have a long running project providing impartial advice on energy saving and switching suppliers, particularly to those who are "fuel poor". Anyone is welcome to attend and it will be a good opportunity to join as a member.

St Martins Centre

There has been some delay on the planned start date in September 2015 but we understand that Hermes are finalising arrangements to start on site before the end of the year.

Xtra Care Housing Albert Road

A2dominion, who are developing the extra care units on the site of the Albert Road Day Centre and Arthur Clark home, circulated new information to neighbours during August. It is expected that a planning application will be available before this column appears. Links to the latest information will be available at www.cadra.org.uk.

Conservation Areas

The last few years have seen a marked deterioration in Conservation Areas in Reading. The Baker Street/Russell Street area is a major concern and St Peter's Conservation Area in Caversham has also suffered. Many of the problems stem from conversions to Houses of Multiple Occupancy. This often lead to multiple satellite discs, bins, cables and a failure to care for what remains of the front garden and garden walls. Community groups across Reading, including CADRA, are working with the Council and Historic England to identify priorities and work towards better protection and understanding for these important areas. If you would like to contribute to this work, please contact info@cadra.org.uk.

Reading Neighbourhood Network

RNN held a very successful summer event bringing together community groups across Reading. The next event will be the Annual Neighbourhoods Conference at 6.30 for 7pm on Tuesday 24 November

in the Town Hall. The theme will be 'Growing your Group' and anyone interested to help promote community activity is welcome to attend. rgneighbours.net

A permanent location for the Heights School

The consultation on five different sites for the Heights Primary School showed that overall, Mapledurham Playing Fields was the first choice site for the majority of people and had the least opposition to it. The Education Funding Agency announced in August that they had decided to pursue this site for the school and to start the work necessary to put forward a proposal to RBC. RBC do not own Mapledurham Playing Field. They are the trustees because the land was donated and is held in a charitable trust, the prime objective of which is the provision of recreational facilities. Therefore, any proposal agreed between the EFA and RBC will require the consent of the Charity Commission. Detailed plans will also require planning permission.

In the meantime any refurbishment work on the dilapidated pavilion is in abeyance. A planning application has been made for a first floor addition and a time extension to 31 August 2018 on the school's temporary site on Gosbrook Road.

Developing proposals will be complicated if sports and community facilities are to be accommodated alongside the school. The EFA have pledged to continue working with the steering groups on which many local groups are represented. Rob Wilson MP has set out a series of commitments that he believes would help frame a positive and constructive dialogue.

1. There should be appropriate compensation for any space given over to the school, so that there is little or no overall loss of green/open space in the area.
2. That there is no loss of playing space to the sports clubs at MPF. Indeed there should be improvement and investment in the leisure facilities currently available which relevant local sports clubs should be closely involved in scoping.
3. That sufficient space is provided for a new community pavilion to complement the school plans and additional resources to ensure it happens alongside the school building programme.
4. That sufficient reassurances and commitments are made to ensure there is no further development, including a strengthening of the covenant if that is deemed to be necessary.

These commitments would require action from both the EFA and RBC and engagement from local groups.