



CADRA News

Caversham & District Residents' Association
The Voice of Caversham since 1967



ROUND UP MAY 2026

No apologies for starting with a reminder that the **CADRA AGM** and **Spring Talk** are just a few days away—**Tuesday!**

Our speakers will take you back to 1926 to explore the opening of the new Caversham Bridge, the importance of our river, and the 1926 Royal Show held at Caversham Park. **Our Bridge, Our River and the Royal Show** is on **Tuesday 19 May 7pm for a 7:30pm start at Caversham Baptist Church, Prospect Street**. The talk follows our brief AGM, and remember the meeting is open to all. [AGM Documents and Spring Newsletter](#)

The main news this month is the appeal inquiry into the 70 houses on the edge of Emmer Green, where CADRA has had a key role, and there are important updates on other planning applications which have been concerning members. The sale of Caversham Lakes is interesting, and there are some events coming up locally which we think are well worth attending, we hope you agree.

AGM and TALK

After the short formal business and a look back at the year, the open meeting explores **Caversham in 1926**, a year of civic pride, national attention and remarkable local change. Expect film clips from the period and some striking images of the Royal Show, which occupied the part of Caversham Park now home to the cemetery.

Our speakers are **Helen Lambert**, CADRA President, sharing new insights from her research into the building of the bridge; **Jane Parker**, President of Reading Amateur Regatta and former rower, reflecting on the transformation of rowing—especially for women—during this pivotal year; and **Avis Furness**, whose recent work has uncovered the story of the 1926 Royal Show and the extraordinary photographs that captured it. A fascinating evening in prospect, and we look forward to welcoming you.

PLANNING

Land West of Kidmore End Road Appeal

The appeal for the 70 homes on SODC land at Kidmore End Road concluded this week and we now await the Inspector's decision. Thank you to all the members and residents who contributed evidence and came to support us.

As a Rule 6 Party, CADRA provided all evidence in advance, made an opening statement, cross-examined both our own witness and the developer's witnesses, took part in a site visit, and delivered a closing statement — all without the support of a barrister.

Our case was that the site is unsustainably located. Usable bus stops are 750m–900m away, down and up steep unlit slopes, with the faster 25 service to Reading up to 1,300m distant. The site falls outside the catchment for Highdown School — oversubscribed for years — and for Emmer Green surgery. Refuse collection will require SODC lorries to travel through Reading.

These burdens fall hardest on affordable housing residents least able to rely on a car, yet this is an area of high car ownership precisely because walking, cycling and public transport are so difficult. Additional traffic on the narrow Kidmore End Road will worsen already strained junctions in ways that are hard to mitigate. We also raised concerns about the adequacy of ecological survey work, the minimum buffer to Cucumber Wood, and threats to bat habitats from the loss of dark skies. Residents gave the Inspector a vivid account of a landscape that acts as a green lung for urban Reading.

We worked alongside Kidmore End Parish Council (KEPC) and SODC's barristers, who covered the complex planning law arguments that are a major factor for the Inspector, including the defence of KEPC's Neighbourhood Plan, developed after intensive community work. This will be weighed against the lack of housing supply in South Oxfordshire.

KEPC having a barrister was a significant asset. The parish council has very limited funds, especially for unforeseen circumstances such as this, and so they are funding it through crowdfunding. If you can help, please consider contributing to their [crowdfunder](#).

The development conflicts with the SODC and Reading Local Plans and the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan. Owners of other land near the Reading-South Oxfordshire boundary will be watching for the Inspector's decision with interest. It is expected in June.

Other Planning News

At the **Caversham Park and House** redevelopment for retirement housing ([PL/26/0204](#)), Condition 9 (Wastewater Network Capacity) has been met by Thames Water confirming there will be sufficient sewerage capacity between the site and the downstream treatment works. However, CADRA understands the Environment Agency considers the works are already at capacity and any further development brings a high risk of raw sewage being discharged into the Foudry Brook where the sewage works are.

Also at **Caversham Park and House**, RBC's Transport Development Control said the traffic aspects of the Construction Method Statement ([PL/26/0311](#)) were acceptable. We hope the planning officer will note that CADRA considered them inadequate. We also commented on the safeguarding of the heritage aspects of this listed house and park, including its trees.

Hemdean House School ([PL/26/0138](#))—Here 51 retirement apartments, conversions and 10 open market apartments are proposed. RBC's Transport Development Control is now advising **refusal** on grounds of an additional entrance creating highway safety concerns, insufficient parking, and lack of footways, contrary to Council policy.

2 Mill Green ([PL/26/0252](#))—The retrospective application for a single-storey rear extension and change of use to a small HMO was refused, stating significant harm to this locally listed building because of the unsympathetic design and the impact on the setting. CADRA will monitor for signs of the extension's removal and garden improvements.

Napier Court, Napier Road ([PL/24/0846](#))—A proposal for 576 build-to-rent dwellings in 11 and 12-storey buildings was **refused**. The reasons included transport and highways harm, inadequate design and landscaping, failure to protect trees, and not safeguarding the opportunity for a Mass Rapid Transit route from Thames Valley Park.

7 Surley Row ([PL/26/0430](#))—This application for a loft conversion with roof extension is in a conservation area. CADRA has asked for the supporting details to be made public.

OTHER NEWS

Meningitis Cases affecting Local Schools and Colleges

Members will likely have heard about the recent meningitis cases affecting young people linked to Henley College, Highdown School and Reading Blue Coat School, all attended by students from our area. We want to join others in offering condolences to the family and friends of the young man who tragically died, and to acknowledge how concerning this will be for many local families. For anyone seeking further guidance, here is a link to some useful information: [RBC Meningitis Advice and Reassurance](#).

Caversham Lakes on the Market

The Caversham Lakes 411-acre site, consisting of seven lakes beside the Henley Road, is up for sale as a whole or in parts for £3 million—[Sale Details](#). Members will recall that it was previously used for open-water swimming, paddleboarding and an inflatable aqua park, closing in March 2024 after both South Oxfordshire District Council and Reading Borough Council refused retrospective planning permission. Any future use of the site will be subject to a 20-year landscape and aftercare management plan. CADRA will be watching for news of what is planned, particularly given the longstanding concerns about access to the site via the Henley Road/Caversham Park Road junction, and the environmental and ecological importance of the site.

Surley Row Conservation Area

Reading's Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) is still asking for help with updating the [Surley Row Conservation Area Appraisal \(2010\)](#). They are keen to hear from anyone with knowledge of or an interest in the area — you don't need to be a resident. Please do get in touch with us.

SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

There has been an **increase in thefts**, attempted thefts and petty thefts reported in our area this month. The North Reading Safer Neighbourhood Forum (NRSNF) has raised this directly with the police. Members are encouraged to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity.

Residents have also raised concerns with NRSNF about an **increase in graffiti**. RBC's Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) help tackle anti-social behaviour linked to graffiti. NRSNF is working with Thames Valley Police, represented on the forum and RBC.

LOCAL ELECTIONS

CADRA would like to congratulate the three new councillors to our area: Saadia Saadat (Caversham Heights), Alex Smith (Emmer Green) and David Clarke (Thames). We look forward to working with them.

TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN CAVERSHAM

Many of us will have felt the impact of last week's roadworks at the Bridge Street/Church Street junction. It's already a busy pinch-point, but journey times multiplied and both bridges were gridlocked at peak periods. Often, the work is necessary and carried out by utilities, in this case Thames Water, and while councils cannot stop a utility, they can regulate how, when and for how long they work. With the election period now over, we hope the Council will review how such works are scheduled, coordinated and communicated, so disruption is minimised and residents get early and clear notice. You may find this link to [current and planned roadworks in Reading](#) useful.

EVENTS

People's Emergency Briefing — Film Screening

Members may be interested in a free screening of the [People's Emergency Briefing](#) on **Tuesday 30 June 2026, 7pm–9pm** at **St Barnabas Parish Centre, Grove Road, Emmer Green**. Seats are free but limited - [Book here](#). There are other screenings in our area and Reading, which you can find on this [map](#).

The film brings together nine leading UK scientists and experts on the climate crisis, featuring Chris Packham and Deborah Meaden among others. It follows the National Emergency Briefing held in Westminster, which received coverage on ITV, Channel 4 and in The Times. The screening will be followed by an open discussion about what the issues raised mean for our local community. Matt Rodda MP has been invited to attend.

May Fayre at Signature Caversham

The Signature retirement home on the Henley Road is holding a family-themed [May Fayre](#) on **Saturday 23 May from 12pm-4pm**. The afternoon will feature food and drink stalls including a barbecue run by the home's Head Chef, live music, craft stalls with hands-on activities, and entertainment for children and families. Admission is £2 per adult, with under-16s admitted free. All admission proceeds will go to Dementia Research. Places should be reserved in advance via Eventbrite [May Fayre tickets](#).

Free Farm Visits for Local Schools

Emmer Green residents Clive and Veronica Leeke run a 34-acre regenerative farm at Gallowstree Common, just north of Caversham, where they offer fully funded educational visits for school pupils aged 4 to 18, free of charge under the Government's Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Sessions cover topics such as where food comes from, farming and the environment, and traditional rural skills. Clive also runs Hedgecraft, offering public countryside courses throughout the year at the same site, including hedge-laying, scything, pond building and wildflower meadow management. Full details of both the school visits and adult courses can be found at www.theoldfarmyard.co.uk.

AND FINALLY...In case you have forgotten we look forward to seeing you at our **Spring Talk at Caversham Baptist Church on Tuesday 19 May**. Doors open at 7pm for a 7:30 start. It promises to be a fascinating evening, and a chance to catch up with neighbours old and new, and with your committee. If you've been meaning to join CADRA, there's no better moment — you can [Join Now](#) or come along on Tuesday and sign up in person. See you there!