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

Christmas is coming, and we believe it's less about opening presents and more about opening our hearts. In that spirit, this month we're delighted to help spread the word about some voluntary roles that local groups are looking to fill. Of course there's the regular news about events, consultations and planning which features proposals for significant local government changes that are wider than just planning.

PLANNING

Planning Applications

The redevelopment of **2 Norman Place, Vastern Road** (PL/24/0958) was unanimously approved by the Council Planning Applications Committee (PAC). The existing office block will be replaced with apartment blocks of up to eleven storeys, providing 212 build-to-rent units. The plans include areas open to the public, a restaurant within the ground-floor commercial space, improved pedestrian and vehicle access routes. PAC liked the design, welcomed the sustainability measures, and they would have preferred more affordable housing but accepted the commercial limitations. They asked for more disabled parking bays.

At 2 Bridge Street, what was formerly the Persian Palace and is now Pathaan's restaurant, the flood risk assessment condition (PL/26/1070) has been discharged (approved). This related to the retrospective application PL/24/0022 for an outdoor seating terrace and canopy at river level. The procedures in the revised report included measures to address CADRA's concerns about the free flow around the structure in times of flood, evacuation arrangements, active monitoring of flood warnings and clearance of debris collecting around and under the terrace.

Local Plans Update

Reading's Local Plan Partial Update is close to adoption, with the final version expected to go to full Council in January 2027. Meanwhile, examination hearings for the South Oxfordshire/Vale Joint Local Plan continue, with Gladman renewing its objections to development restrictions on sites around Reading No further progress has been published on the Eye & Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan.

Local Government Reorganisation and Strategic Planning

CADRA has been following with interest three significant changes proposed for local government and planning across the Thames Valley that some members may already have read about.

Alongside proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire and the creation of a Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA), councils across our region are already working on a Strategic Development Strategy (SDS) to guide future housing, infrastructure and economic growth.

The Oxfordshire reorganisation could be delayed as Oxfordshire County Council are considering a legal challenge to the reorganisation, which includes a proposal to merge West Berkshire Council with South Oxfordshire DC and the Vale of the White Horse DC.

A public consultation on a Thames Valley MSA will be held in 2027, with the mayoral election in 2028.

The proposed SDS timeline is for a public consultation by late 2027 or early 2028, followed by an inspector-led examination, like a Local Plan. After examination, the SDS will be the formally adopted strategy for the region.

The new unitary councils in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire are expected to be established in 2029.

This raises the question: how will the three separate projects be coordinated to ensure they integrate effectively?

For CADRA, the key issue is ensuring that local voices are still heard on decisions affecting future growth, transport and infrastructure, while protecting the green areas that help maintain the separate identity of Reading and neighbouring Oxfordshire communities.

EVENTS

There is lots coming up in Caversham. On **Wednesday 18 November** we have our Autumn meeting where our speakers will tell you all about the **history of Caversham** at the time of the Normans and RABBLE Theatre will tell us about their 2027 production of William the Conqueror. Doors open at 7pm for a 7:30pm start at Caversham Baptist Church. The event is free for both members and non-members.

Friday 4 December to get you into the festive spirit it is **Cavmas** in Caversham centre. There will be late night shopping, mulled wine, entertainment, live music, food, reverse Santa and collections for the food bank donations.

On **Saturday 5 December**, we have the wonderful **Vocalese Choir** presenting "9 Lessons and Carols" at Highdown School. Tickets are £8 in advance or £10 on the door. All proceeds are in aid of Olly's Work.

The following week on **Monday 14 December** it is the **Twilight Christmas Carol Evening** presented by the Friends of Caversham Court Gardens. Admission is free but donations will be gratefully received to cover running costs and support local charities. Mince pies and festive hot drinks will be available from the tea kiosk sold in aid of local charities.

VOLUNTEERING

At this time of year more of us get involved in charitable work and local groups start thinking about the year ahead. The **3rd Reading Scout Group** are looking for a volunteer to Chair their Board of Trustees as they expand, modernise and make themselves more inclusive. Scouting experience is not necessary; they are seeking someone with a leadership, business or community background. They are a registered charity (308237). If this sounds like you, please reach out to them via their website - 3rd Reading Scouts. CADRA cannot express enough how important such groups like Scouts and sporting clubs are.

If being outdoors is your thing, then **Keep Caversham Tidy** (KCT) are looking for volunteers. KCT normally meet on Saturdays at 10am and you may have seen them hard at work. Litter picking is lots of fun, there's great camaraderie and a real sense of achievement when an area is tidy; it may even take you to parts of Caversham you never been to. The easiest way to find out more is to check their Facebook page - Keep Caversham Tidy.

CONSULTATIONS

There is only one RBC consultation this month. **Reading Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Services** is reviewing its services before new contracts start in September 2027. When homelessness and rough sleeping occurs, the Council wants them to be rare and brief and not occur again for the same individuals.

Their proposed focus will be more on prevention and providing specialist support for people facing multiple challenges in their lives. Closing date is 6 December. Reading Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Services 2026

SURLEY ROW CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Mount Street Conservation Area Appraisal prepared by Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) has been adopted by RBC, so attention now shifts to Surley Row in Emmer Green.

If you live on the Row, you will be shortly receiving a CADRA/CAAC flyer telling you more about the project. Thank you to those who have offered to help. We will set up a page on our website storing the information as it

is collected, so that everyone can see it. We are really excited about the update of this vital piece of work as it will highlight the unique heritage of this wonderful part of North Reading. The Mount Street Conservation Area Appraisal

And since you've got this far—remember we welcome your feedback and whilst we like to keep abreast of what's happening in North Reading some things get passed and we are very grateful to members who report those things to us.

And please come along this Wednesday for the talk and for a chat.