

Caversham and District Residents' Association

Chairman's report 2019/2020

Covid – 19

Preparing this report for what would have been the CADRA AGM in May, it seems strange to look back on life before lockdown. The AGM was to have included a presentation and Q&A from the Environment Agency on the proposed flood defences in Caversham. Instead you will have seen an update in the extended [Spring Newsletter](#).

Like everyone else, CADRA has had to find new ways of working. As Councils and other services also find new ways of working, we may all have to work a little harder to track the ways in which decisions are made. Important decisions will continue to be made and our work must continue.

At the same time, we can provide some support across Caversham by sharing important information on ways to help cope in this difficult time. Our new Covid-19 webpage and our Facebook Page have both seen increasing traffic, extending CADRA's reach across the wider community.

Planning

The Reading Local Plan was formally adopted in November 2019. As well as introducing a stronger focus on heritage issues, it sets out some important principles for specific sites including the area north of the station and Reading Golf Club. In both cases, the emerging plans depart from what is set out in the Local Plan. CADRA continues to emphasise this point and to push for much better coordination between neighbouring schemes.

In Caversham Centre, Hermes have applied to provide a cinema in the existing space occupied by the gym and offices with a new access from Church Street, replacing the current entrance to Reading Solicitors. The earlier application has been withdrawn. We await decisions on this application and others.

The South Oxfordshire Local Plan has been on hold but is now being progressed based on an instruction from the Minister of Housing. With the increase in the housing requirement for South Oxfordshire there will be many issues for the border with Caversham and Emmer Green.

Although four of the team are engaged in planning issues, we would welcome a new member to join us. I pay tribute to the professional skills which Kim Pearce and John Nicholls bring and to Malcolm Pemble for his meticulous research in tracking applications through the planning process.

Local Heritage

CADRA has four members on the CAAC who work for Caversham issues and across Reading. Following the adoption of the re-appraisal of St Peters Conservation Area, we have been contributing to other work in Reading. Kim Pearce and John Nicholls made significant contributions to the review of the Russell Street/Castle Hill area with its proposals to extend the area. This major work has now been formally adopted by the Council.

The CAAC has also been pursuing protections including Local Listing and Local Areas of Special Character. The Drews building has been approved for Local Listing. With other CAAC members, CADRA continues to try and safeguard the Grade I listed Chazey Court Barn and the important lampstands on both Reading and Caversham Bridge.

Transport

The formal consultation on the Reading Transport Strategy 2036 has been extended to 30 August 2020 and enlarged to seek views on a “post covid world”. The long-awaited draft document raises major issues and we are working towards a detailed response. We raised concerns with Oxfordshire County Council that their document makes no mention of their Berkshire neighbours.

Safer Caversham

The Caversham Safer Neighbourhood Forum meets regularly with representatives from the Police, RBC and community members including Alan Wright for the CADRA committee. It is an important mechanism for a combined proactive approach to local problems. Police resources are limited, and local people can help by providing local intelligence and by reporting crime. These reports influence the allocation of scarce resources.

Signs and panels

November 2019 was a busy month with the replacement of the newly restored village sign and the installation of the William Marshal panel on Caversham Bridge. We are very grateful to Dr Tom Asbridge and the many people who helped us to complete the complex William Marshal project. We pay tribute to Mike Eggleton, a great enthusiast and a major donor who lived to see the project completed.

Caversham Bridge Newspaper

Members of the committee continue to write copy for this monthly Church and Community newspaper. You can subscribe for just £5.00 p.a. Call 947 1370 or email cemoloney@yahoo.co.uk. The paper is also available online at <http://www.cavershambridge.org/>.

Membership

A substantial membership keeps CADRA strong, so new members are always welcome. Subscriptions and renewals can be paid online by Paypal or credit card, as well by bank transfer or standing order. We still accept cheques - where possible to cover three years to save time for both sides. Membership forms would normally be available from the library or Waltons Jewellers. Email is the main method of communication so **please let us know if you change your email address and look out for CADRA messages going to Spam**. Members on email receive an update each month and a link to the newsletter twice a year. If those are not reaching you, please let us know. Members not on email receive paper copies of newsletters

And finally ...

We were very honoured to have been shortlisted by the Lord Lieutenant for the Queens Award for Voluntary Service. Decisions on the large number of deserving nominations are made by an independent National Assessment Committee which produces a shortlist of recommended groups for the Minister to submit to Her Majesty the Queen for approval.

The nomination is a tribute to the work of all the committee and I would like to record my thanks to every member for all their work through the year. We are always keen to hear from anyone who could offer support in some way so that Caversham can always be *a Great Place to Live!*