

Residents campaign to protect local heritage

A group of central Reading residents is urging the council to keep the cast iron lighting columns in their area and around Reading, as the LED street lighting replacement programme sweeps across the town. The lights in their area are all due to be converted to LED technology this month.

The Bell Tower Community Association, which is based in the area round EP Collier School off Caversham Road, says that there are more than 20 cast iron lamp posts in the area, most of which are original Victorian gas lighting columns.

Bell Tower secretary David Neale, who has been researching the history of the lighting columns, said: "As well as being attractive, the old cast iron lighting columns are also a valuable part of our heritage, and many of them have an additional local connection, having been manufactured by foundries off Caversham Road. The area consists mostly of Victorian terraces, and has one of the largest clusters of original lamp posts in Reading. It would be a great shame to lose them."

The association believes that the columns can be refurbished economically and fitted with new LED lights, and is happy to offer to paint them to keep them in good condition.

"In its local plan the council describes Reading as 'a city which has rediscovered and embraced its heritage and landscape'. We hope the council will show it is in tune with the city it describes and commit to preserving our heritage," Bell Tower chairman Jonathan Dart said.

Mr Neale added: "We think the parts to refurbish an old street light will be cheaper than installing a new column, and they are likely to last longer. We hope the council can preserve them, and that the old lighting columns in other areas of Reading will be saved too."

About the Bell Tower Community Association

- The Association was founded in October 2005.
- It represents 600 homes and businesses in the area bounded by Caversham Road, Northfield Road, Barry Place, the residential end of Cardiff Road, Addison Road, Denbeigh Place and Randolph Road.
- It represents the local community, organises events, publishes a quarterly newsletter and operates a members' discount scheme with local businesses.
- It won a Pride of Reading Award in 2007 in the Environmental Projects category for its graffiti clean-up campaign and won third place in the 2010 Reading area of the South East Community Empowerment Awards.

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- The neighbourhood has no historic name so the association took on the name of a local landmark, the bell tower on E P Collier Primary School in Swansea Road. The tower can be seen from all over the area.

Further information on the Bell Tower Community Association can be found at www.bell-tower.org.uk

For further information on this campaign please contact Jonathan Dart: info@bell-tower.org.uk or 07982 130 360.