

Neighbourhood News

from the Bell Tower Community Association

Issue 24 - June 2011



Station development on the fast track

Network Rail have announced an updated plan for the station development, with the intention of finishing the project a year earlier than originally planned.

The previous plan was to finish the second phase of the work - mainly the new track layout to the west of the station - in 2016. This includes the new flyover for the main line and larger Cow Lane bridges. The revised plan shows completion of the station upgrade and new train depot in 2013, Cow Lane bridges in 2014 and the flyover in 2015.

A major feature of the upgraded station will be a much larger and more accessible concourse on the north side of the station. In fact this will be nearly the same size as the main concourse next to the Three Guineas pub. The RailAir coach service and all trains to Gatwick will be moved to the north side of the station, and it will be possible to get to the northern entrance along the bottom of the embankment behind the retail park. The existing main



REMODELLING THE EMBANKMENT: the bulldozers have moved in behind Cardiff Road

concourse will be left in place, but it is expected to be used much less than at present since the footbridge will be demolished and a new one built on the other side of the Three Guineas. An option being considered is opening more shops in this area.

Meanwhile, preparation work for the new train depot and sidings for Intercity Express Project (IEP) trains has now started in earnest. Huge cranes and excavators can be seen on top of the embankment behind Cardiff Road and Barry Place, working on the new embankment profile to accommodate the additional sidings and access road.

This is causing concern for some Cardiff Road residents, particularly those whose gardens have up to now backed on to buildings on the embankment. These buildings have acted as a sound barrier to reduce the noise from passing trains and it is likely that there will be a period of time between demolition of these buildings and the construction of an acoustic fence during which residents will be exposed to additional train noise. Residents have written to Network Rail seeking assurances that effective

measures will be put into place to minimise the extra noise.

At present it is planned to run the Crossrail service from Maidenhead to Shenfield in Essex; so far there is no plan to extend this to Reading. However, the electrification of the entire main line and extra platforms and tracks will allow extension to Reading if this gets the go-ahead. When asked about this a Network Rail representative explained that the proposed timetable would not include Crossrail services to Reading, and that it would in fact be quicker for passengers to take a fast train to Paddington and join the Crossrail service there.

The Reading station development project is part of a much larger general upgrade of the Great Western region lines. There will be other station upgrades including a new lower station at Paddington for Crossrail trains, and there will be a new sophisticated in-cab signalling system for the whole region. There is also a plan to install overhead electrification for all lines between Paddington, Oxford and Cardiff.

David Neale

JOIN US NOW

for only £1 per person per year!

We need more volunteers than ever to help us with all our activities - supporting local residents, planning for emergencies, organising events, and many more.

And don't forget members can claim some great discounts from local businesses!

You can join at any of our events or by contacting Jonathan at 68 Addison Road.



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Visit www.bell-tower.org.uk or email us at info@bell-tower.org.uk

Forthcoming events

● **Sunday 17 July - Community lunch, E P Collier School playground, 12.30-3.00pm.** Unfortunately we couldn't participate in this year's Big Lunch event, but we've decided to hold our own 'little lunch' instead. Bring some food to share and enjoy!

● We hope to hold another tidy-up day this summer, with the usual big skip for your rubbish and the opportunity to recycle usable goods.

New Bell Tower committee

At this year's AGM the following committee members were elected:

Barbara Kendall (Chair), David Neale (Vice-Chair), Rod Plinston (Secretary), Sandie Gill (Treasurer), Jonathan Dart (Membership) and Denise Sanders.

Would you like to help keep the community spirit in our area going? We still have vacancies for committee members, so please contact Barbara at 77 Addison Road if you are interested in joining us.



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SUNDAY
12.00 - 4.00

A touch of spice

Our area is well-served by Indian restaurants, so if you open a new one you need to be good. A few months ago River Spice took over the old Riverside Bar by Caversham Bridge. How do they measure up?

First impressions are good. The place has been refurbished in a smart, modern style, and the service and welcome is always prompt and efficient.

But it's the food that really marks out River Spice from our other local restaurants. They advertise a 'relaxed yet refined dining experience' and that's certainly delivered. As well as the standard chicken and lamb dishes you would expect, the menu also features more

unusual offerings like Duck Tamarind and Venison Bahaar.

In addition there's a much more extensive fish section than at most Indian restaurants; dishes include Tandoori Monkfish Massala and Seafood Bhuna - 'an infusion of king scallops, squid, cuttle fish and tiger fish in our Bengali chef's speciality stock in a medium blend of bhuna spices and herbs'.

The venue itself is a plus point, right on the bank of the Thames and with panoramic views across the river - lovely when the sun sets. Now that the weather's improved, some people are choosing to eat outside on the terrace rather than in the restaurant itself.

Sandie and I have eaten at River Spice several times since it opened and have always enjoyed it. We'll be back again soon. The prices aren't the cheapest but we think they're good value.

So with the addition of River Spice we now have a great range of Indian restaurants in our area. Whether you want a quick takeaway, a buffet, a big group meal or a fine dining experience, there's a place for you.

River Spice is open midday to midnight, 7 days a week. Phone 0118 950 3355 or go to their web site at www.riverspicerestaurant.co.uk for more information.

Phil Gill

Emergency plans tested

The Bell Tower Community Association recently took part in two events in the national Operation Watermark emergency planning exercise.

We spent an evening in March trying out the first draft of our plan with Environment Agency and National Flood Forum representatives. This was a 'table top' exercise where several flooding scenarios were tested to see if our plan could cope. On the whole the plan performed well; the largest concern identified was the lack of an escape route from our area in a severe flood since the Lower Caversham area and the Caversham Road railway bridge would be impassable. We are discussing this with the council's emergency planning team and hope to publish an outline of our plan when this has been resolved.

We also participated in the Environment Agency's event for community groups in the Thames Valley area. This was a useful opportunity to meet other groups and share ideas.

We would now like to recruit more volunteers to help us complete the plan and help in the event of an emergency. If you would like to help please contact David at 24 Addison Road or on 07890 118167.

FIVE STAR WINES

133 Caversham Road



★National Lottery (Lotto) ★Pay point ★Gas and electric meter cards & keys ★Bill payments
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