

Neighbourhood News



from the Bell Tower Community Association

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Season's greetings to all our readers

Towering above us



SKYSCRAPERS: the proposal for the former post office site showing blocks of up to 24 storeys. Caversham Road is on the left of the picture.

A planning application has recently been submitted for redevelopment of the former sorting office site at 80 Caversham Road, between the retail park and the railway.

The proposal shows a central square surrounded by several tall buildings, the tallest of which has 24 storeys and if built would be the tallest building in Reading. There are 12-storey blocks at the western end of the site, which would effectively be next to TGI Friday's.

At this stage this is not a full planning application but a 'request for screening opinion', which gives the developer's view on how the planning process should proceed. The developer does, however, include some plans and drawings that give an indication of the contents of a future full application.

Residents are worried about the likely effect of the tall buildings. It is likely that the 12-storey blocks will overshadow houses in Northfield and Swansea Roads and the tallest block will overlook streets as far away as Addison and Newport Roads. The association is urging the council to require a full analysis of the effects of

the tall buildings on neighbouring streets and refuse the application if any adverse effect is found.

The planning document can be viewed at planning.reading.gov.uk – the application number is 171448. Residents can submit their own comments on the proposal by post or via the council's website.

David Neale

JOIN US NOW

for only £1 per person per year. Don't forget members can claim some great discounts from local businesses.

Discounts now available from Richfields Café!

You can join by contacting Len or Andy at 89 Addison Road, phone 0118 962 3945.

What's going on here?



A long grey shed-like structure is being built on the railway embankment behind the Reading Drive-in Centre in Cardiff Road, near the bollards where the road is closed to through traffic.

The train depot plans from 2010 show enough space for a building but no plans for anything there – so as far as we can tell no kind of planning application or notification has been made for it.

Cardiff Road residents have alerted the council's planning enforcement team, who have been pursuing this with Network Rail. They eventually received a reply that the building is a plant room for effluent extraction from train toilets, and Network Rail says that the structure does not need planning permission.

As well as being overlooked by the new building, residents are also concerned that a door has appeared in the acoustic fence which makes the train noise, already at unacceptable levels, worse when it is left open. Residents have also been hearing additional noise from heavy machinery in the area.

Council officers are now investigating.

Show your old lamp post some love!

Did you know that our area has more than 20 old cast iron lighting columns? Most of these are the original fluted pattern that dates from Victorian times and carried gas lamps, and these columns were all manufactured in Reading, many of them by two foundries close to our area - Samuel Griffith in Vastern Road and H C Goodman by Caversham Bridge where the Peter Brett Associates building is today.



With the advent of LED street lighting the council is considering scrapping all these columns, and Bell Tower residents are taking part in a town-wide campaign to save them, as they can be converted to take LED lanterns. Look out for decorations on these columns during the festive season.

To find out more about the campaign and how you can show your support please visit bell-tower.org.uk/lampposts.

Traveller camp proposal for Cow Lane



UNDER WATER: flooding in Cow Lane in February 2014

Reading Borough Council is proposing a transit caravan site for travellers on the junction of Cow Lane and Richfield Avenue, next to the Rivermead. The site would be the first of its kind in Reading, and up to 17 pitches are proposed there.

The Bell Tower Community Association has concerns about the proposed location, which is within the Thames floodplain and will be right next to a busy main road after Cow Lane bridges are fully opened in 2018. The site is also near Reading's Air Quality Management Area and would affect the visual amenity for local walkers and visitors to the Rivermead. It could also significantly affect the Reading Festival.

Many local residents and businesses have raised objections. We will be watching developments closely, particularly in the light of increased levels of reported crime around Cardiff Road while an unofficial camp was at the site.

News in brief

- We had a lively and fun quiz night in October, and Richfields café turned out to be a great venue. The quiz was chaired by Bell Tower secretary David Neale and we had a packed house with over 30 participants. Many thanks to everyone that took part, to Richard for arranging the event and to Dan and Suzy at Richfields for their warm welcome and excellent buffet. We hope to hold our next quiz in late January.

- Bell Tower and residents of Cardiff Road have scored a major victory, with Reading Borough Council issuing a statutory notice to Great Western and Network Rail to end the nuisance being caused by operations at the Reading Train Care Depot. The companies have six months to comply. This has taken years of campaigning both behind the scenes and through the local media. The media campaign, which started in December 2015, made the council take the issue seriously and investigate thoroughly, culminating in the abatement order. However, the construction of the effluent treatment plant next to Cardiff Road has forced residents and Bell Tower committee members to take to the airwaves once again. On this issue the council has so far been supportive.

- The new Warwicknet broadband cabinets in Cardiff Road should go live in December. We hear the service may be available to residents as well as businesses.

Season's Greetings from

DREWS
THE IRONMONGERS

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