

Neighbourhood News

from the Bell Tower Community Association

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Platinum-grade fun



CELEBRATING IN STYLE: (clockwise from top left): DJ Burt on decks, making pizza, the party in full swing, and dancing in the street (Photos: David Neale, Jonathan Dart)

The party spirit soon dissolved the gloomy clouds that overhung the start of our annual street party in Newport Road, and the sun beamed down on the revellers of all ages.

The event was a celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and a reminder that Bell Tower's first street party was planned as a one-off in 2012 to mark the Diamond Jubilee. Since then we have staged one every year except 2020 when the pandemic made it impossible.

There was much that was familiar 10 years on such as Andy Becalick and team from the Moderation providing the catering, but this time they swapped the traditional barbecue for their wood-fired pizza oven. Judging by the queue and the satisfied look on the face of the diners, this was a very successful innovation.

New Hope provided the equipment for the children's activities, while

Mary Neale supervised the colouring and red white and blue cup cake decorating, with help from Tanya Newell and Carole Jarvis. And what would a Newport Road street party be without face painting? Maha Urbanski was happy to help, ably assisted by Andy Newell.

The feast for the senses was completed by DJ Burt spinning the disks to create a party vibe. After the New Hope Community Gospel Choir led by Jenny Nhau included an interactive element to their set and boosted everyone's sense of rhythm, many decided to face the music and dance.

Many reputations were made and lost as various shapes were thrown as part of Newport Road became a dance floor. Burt was not only getting bodies of a wide range of ages moving, he was also bringing on the next generation as DJ Elsa took to the decks.

We would like to thank all those who helped make the party a success, especially the unsung heroes who helped set up and take down as well as staffing the Bell Tower stall. Looking ahead, if you have any ideas about next year's party, please contact us.

Jonathan Dart

News in brief

- At the Bell Tower AGM in March our guest speaker was Anne Thompson-Ahmadova, who was at the BBC's monitoring bureau in Azerbaijan for many years and offered a fascinating insight into the region and its politics. A new committee for the next year was also elected: Jonathan Dart (Chair), Richard Chandler (Vice-Chair), David Neale (Secretary), Jake Marin-Hanson (Treasurer), Sandie Gill, Barbara Kendall, Liz Hobbs and Mark Ralph. Andy Ellis and Len Middleton will be continuing to offer their support with membership.

- We are pleased to welcome a new minister at New Hope. The Rev David Nyirongo will be the new Community Missioner for the church – we understand that he will be moving into the vicarage with his family in the summer and will be fully in post from September.



- Reading East MP Matt Rodda has contacted us about noisy vehicles, particularly on the IDR, as Reading could be put forward for a trial of noise camera technology. If you have any feedback on this idea please email mattroddampcasework@parliament.uk.

New plans for Dreads buildings



NEW DESIGNS: Simulated views from Caversham and Northfield Roads

Bell Tower representatives have recently met the developer of the Dreads buildings and his architect, and we were shown some views of the latest proposals and the design's evolution. The original application to demolish the entire main building and replace it with a seven-storey block of apartments was refused by the council in October 2020 and the developer's appeal was dismissed in May 2021.

The developer, S2 Estates, is now proposing to keep a substantial part of the facade of the main building, a former malthouse dating from the 1870s, as well as the smaller office buildings at the back of the site.

The side facing Northfield Road would now be kept intact, along with about half of the Caversham Road frontage, which would have the shop front removed and replaced with a new shop front set back and more in keeping. The southernmost building next to the gym would be demolished and replaced with a six-storey tower.

While we have a few comments on the details, we recognise that this represents a significant improvement and welcome the retention of much of the main building.

Plans for new secondary school approved

Reading will be getting a new secondary school in Richfield Avenue despite several concerns.

The latest approval by the council's planning committee means work on the 1,500 pupil school can now go ahead. The school was designed by the Bowmer + Kirkland construction company, which was contracted by the Department of Education.

The school will include 300 sixth form students and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision.



Concerns were raised over travel to and from the school, particularly that the proposed provision of 120 cycling spaces would be inadequate and that there is currently no bus service to the area from the west, with only the 42 service from Kenavon Drive running to the Rivermead.

The *Reading Chronicle* reported that councillors also complained about the incorporation of gas condensing boilers to heat the school. It was also pointed out that the school would have no access to the River Thames.

When completed the school will be known as the River Academy, and run by the Maiden Erlegh Trust. It is hoped that the new school will open by September 2023. Detailed plans can be viewed on the council's planning website - the application number is 212061.







QUIZ NIGHT



THURSDAY 7 JULY

7.30PM

NEW HOPE CENTRE

95 YORK ROAD, READING RG1 8DU

Baked potatoes, snacks
and refreshments will be
provided

Tickets £5 from
Richard Chandler
61 Cardiff Road
0118 950 8761
richard@bell-tower.org.uk

Concerns over bowling alley licence

The company Bowl Central is planning to take over the former Dawsons music shop at 65 Caversham Road, which closed last year, and convert it into a bowling alley and family entertainment complex. The facility would have seven bowling lanes, three interactive dart boards, shuffleboards and a children's 'redemption' games area. The plan is to sell food as well, including pizzas, panini and salads.

Bowl Central's owning company KTO Ltd has submitted a licensing application for the bar that will be located inside. The company has applied to sell alcohol and food and play music on site from 10am to midnight from Sunday to Thursday, and 1am on Fridays and Saturdays.

We have talked informally with nearby residents, and the feedback we have received is that it would be welcome with concerns about the late licence, with 11pm being more appropriate.

If you have a view please email us at info@bell-tower.org.uk. We are hoping to meet the developer soon.