

# Community associations seek special character recognition



Bell Tower Community Association members in front of EP Collier School, part of the area's rich heritage including the bell tower after which the association is named. In the picture (L-R): Mary Neale, Jonathan Dart, Julia Wink, David Neale.

## Two community associations in Reading are seeking recognition for their local value and protection for future generations.



Bell Tower Community Association (BTCA) and Northcourt Avenue Residents' Association (NARA) want to become local areas of special character.

LASCs recognise areas that do not meet the criteria to be recognised as conservation areas, which gives statutory protection, but have special character worth preserving.

BTCA, which covers the area between Reading town centre and Caversham, asked if the council would be supportive of the associations' proposals at full council on October 16.

Councillor Page said: "I always welcome and encourage greater engagement by the public in protecting and enhancing their communities and local environment.

"I am happy to engage with BTCA and NARA to discuss progressing LASCs in their respective areas.

"However, the council's planning resources are already stretched and the basic work in documenting and justifying the case will have to be done by the community and residents' associations."

To become a Local Area of Special Character, a record of the character of the area must be made, to guide the council in assessing planning applications in the area and nearby.

BTCA is in the process of producing a report on the character of its area with a view to obtaining designation.

It is also working alongside the Northcourt Avenue Residents' Association, which wishes to obtain similar designation for their street.

David Neale, BTCA spokesman, said: "We Look forward to working with the council and the Conservation Area Advisory Committee with a view to introducing LASCs into Reading's local planning."

"We believe the Bell Tower Community Association area, which lies between the Great Western railway and the River Thames in Reading, merits such a designation.

"The area has many fine examples of Victorian terraced houses and commercial premises, along with some original street furniture such as a number of surviving Victorian cast iron lamp posts that were made in nearby foundries by the Thames."