

Neighbourhood News

from the Bell Tower Community Association

Issue 10 - December 2007



4 page special edition

Double awards for our area!

Bell Tower and E P Collier win Pride of Reading

The Bell Tower Community Association has won the 2007 Pride of Reading award in the environmental projects category for its graffiti clean-up campaign. At the same ceremony E P Collier School was presented an award in the healthy lifestyle category.

The awards were presented at the Renaissance Hotel on November 29

by Reading-born Chris Tarrant, and celebrate the individuals, organisations and businesses in the town who have really made a difference.

David Neale, organiser of the Bell Tower graffiti clean-up, said after the awards ceremony: "We are truly surprised and honoured to receive such an award. The graffiti clean-up started last spring with a few of us cleaning up Ross Road one morning, and it's hard to believe how big it's become."

Bell Tower chair Teresa Colliass said: "I am delighted that our community has received such recognition. It really shows how people in a small community can work together to make a noticeable difference to their surroundings."

The project has had considerable

support from local residents and businesses, as well from our local councillors. Abbey Ward councillor Tony Page said: "This award is great news and a worthy recognition of the considerable efforts undertaken by the Association. It has been a pleasure supporting them and I hope that our close working relationship continues to serve the local community in years to come." Fellow councillor and former mayor Bet Tickner said: "Congratulations ... you deserve the award. It takes a real effort to turn a place into a real community and you've done it!"

Reading Borough Council community project manager Chris Bloomfield, who nominated the Association for the award, said: "I have worked as a community development worker for over

(Continued overleaf)

Neighbours doing it for themselves

Environmental Project



A LOT of people whinge about graffiti in their streets, but one group of neighbours rolled up their sleeves and cleaned it up.

The Bell Tower Community Association, formed two years ago, regarded graffiti in the Central Reading neighbourhood as a problem. And they asked what they could do about it.

They called on the council – not to clean up the graffiti for them – but for training and information about how they could do it up themselves.

David Neale of the association said: "It is very important for people to understand that they can do things for themselves."

They soon set about the clean-up. Mr Neale said: "Everyone can get involved, even if it just by allowing us to connect our hoses to their taps."

Nowadays they are out there scrubbing off the graffiti long before the council can get there.

The group has a membership of 550 households and produces a lively newsletter to keep everyone in touch. Their nominator described them as simply "inspirational"



GROUP ACTION – Teresa Colliass, far left, and David Neale, far right, of the Bell Tower Community Association with nominator Chris Bloomfield and Chris Tarrant

(courtesy of the Reading Post)

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



AWARD WINNERS: Representatives of the Bell Tower Community Association and E P Collier School with their award nominators: (L-R) Jenny Gladwell, David Neale, Justine McMinn, Teresa Colliass, Gail Boorman and Chris Bloomfield.

(Continued from front page)

twenty years in Reading and during that time I cannot recall a piece of work that has given me more job satisfaction than my involvement with the Bell Tower Community Association. It has been my pleasure to have been of some assistance in helping Bell Tower get started and in giving the odd bit of encouragement and support along the way, but the real congratulations need to be made to the really special group of local people that make things happen on issues of concern such as graffiti.

"I was really pleased to be in the right place at the right time to nominate the Bell Tower Community Association for a Pride of Reading Environmental Project Award and was chuffed to bits to discover that they had won. With E P Collier Primary School also

winning the Pride of Reading Healthy Lifestyle award, this year has been a real double whammy for your community."

The school's award was for its multi-faceted approach to teaching its students about how to live healthily and adopt healthy habits for life.

Among its activities are regular PE sessions, including weekly dance lessons; healthy school meals; provision of water fountains; outside sporting groups such as London Irish working with the children; drugs and alcohol education and relationship education.

Acting headteacher Justine McMinn said: "This is really marvellous to receive this award. We do work very hard to promote healthy eating, healthy snacks, drinking water and sport in the school."

Pride of Reading 2007 winners

Business In Action – sponsored by Kyocera:

Over 50 employees: Yell

Under 50 employees: Phoenix

Securities

Service Excellence – sponsored by Yell:

Martin Turner

Restaurant of the Year – sponsored by Reading Food Festival:

City winner: L'Ortolan

Casual winner: Isq2

Employee of the Year – sponsored by Novotel:

Maggie Donaldson

Cultural Contribution – sponsored by Chatham Place:

Luisa Garcia

Healthy Lifestyle – sponsored by GreenPark:

E P Collier School

Environmental Project:

Bell Tower Community Association

Young Person of the Year – sponsored by Reading 107 FM:

Sam Pither

Community champion – sponsored by Broad Street Mall:

BASIAN

Local Hero – sponsored by Waitrose:

David Wotherspoon

Child of Courage – sponsored by Malmaison:

James Togher

Mayor's award:

Francis Nartey

Lifetime Achievement:

Acting Assistant Chief Constable
Dave Murray

**Next Bell Tower Community Association public meeting
Tuesday 26 February 2008
Look out for details!**

Season's greetings to all our readers! 🛎 *Wesolych Swiat i Szczesliwego Nowego Roku* 🛎 Naya Barsa Ko harkik Shuvakamana 🛎 Naya Saal Mubarak Ho 🛎 *Seng Dan Fai Lok* 🛎 Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda 🛎 *Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!* 🛎 **Feliz Navidad y Prospero Año Nuevo** 🛎 Isa'nin dogum yortusu 🛎 Shub Naya Baras 🛎 *Froliche Weihnachten und ein gluckliches Neues Jahr!*

When gambling doesn't pay off

Casino plan scuppered - for now at least

Plans for conversion of the shop units next to the fire station in Caversham Road into a casino have been rejected by the council.

Many of the residents of Northfield Road, Monmouth Court and Swansea Road whose properties back on to the car park for these shops sent letters of objection, and the Bell Tower Community Association backed them up by organising a petition with 80 signatures and speaking on behalf of local residents at the planning committee.

The application was unanimously rejected because of the likelihood of night time disturbance to neighbours, the probable use of Swansea Road as a rat-run and the appearance of the planned building conflicting with the existing streetscape.

Although the developers insisted that the premises would not be used as a night club, local councillor Tony Page was not convinced. He said: "My concern is that this is much more than a casino. The potential disturbance to residential areas in close proximity to the car park is substantial, as there will be comings and goings throughout the night."

The casino application covers the entire block from 65 to 69 Caversham Road, even though half of the building is occupied by another business, Dawsons Music.

Stewart Smith, financial director of Dawsons Music, said: "We've been on Caversham Road nearly two years. We moved to these premises because they are a good size and there is free parking. People who work in Reading visit us on the way home and it has been a good place to trade."

The plans may have been rejected, but this may not be the end of the

Season's greetings from
**VIRK'S NEWS
& FOOD**
**The Friendly
Off Licence**
Caversham Road
(corner of York Road)
Open 7am (8am Sundays) - 10.30pm
We're open on Christmas Day
7pm - 10pm

story. The developers have applied for an alcohol and entertainment licence up to 6am, for which the Bell Tower Community Association has sent its objections. It is also possible that the developers will lodge an appeal against the planning committee's decision.

It is therefore important that residents keep an eye on the application process and take the opportunity to object if they wish to do so. If the alcohol and entertainment licence is not refused it would make an appeal easier for the developer, or another developer might have a strong argument for a similar change of use for the building.



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Reading

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Open daily 12 noon-2.30pm
and 6.30pm-11.00pm

Discount for Bell Tower
Community Association members!

Takeaway menu available

www.standardtandoori.co.uk

News in brief

- Our campaign for improvements to the pedestrian crossings in Caversham Road has finally achieved the changes promised by the council. The crossings are now both marked by red anti-skid road surfaces on their approaches and the new road markings leading up to the crossings are much clearer than before. In addition, the phasing of the lights has been altered to allow pedestrians more time to cross.

- The Bell Tower Community Association held a shopping evening on Wednesday 7 November at the New Hope Centre. Local residents had a chance to purchase a treat for themselves or start their Christmas shopping early with a range of goods from chocolates, jams, jewellery and books. We hope to make this an annual event.

- A number of local residents attended the first police surgery on Monday 5 November at the New Hope Centre, where a local community police officer and a PCSO answered various questions. Future surgeries will be held on the first Monday of each month at the New Hope Centre, York Road between 7.00 and 9.00pm. Anyone is welcome, and no appointment is necessary. The next surgery is on Monday 7 January 2008.

- Police have arrested a 42-year-old woman in connection with the 'Hawk' tags that appeared on numerous cars in and around West Reading in August, including several in our area.

- New Hope's annual carol singing evening will be in the week starting 17 December - participants will tour the streets on the evening and there will be refreshments afterwards. All welcome - look out for details.

- There will be a 'Christingle' service at New Hope on Monday 24 December at 4.30pm. All welcome.

- The Bell Tower Community Association is hoping to organise a 'Big Bell Tower' visit for members, with the opportunity to climb Big Ben and see the Houses of Parliament, to take place on a weekday in spring next year. More details to follow in the March edition of *Neighbourhood News*.

On the right track?

Plans have been put forward for a massive redevelopment of Reading station. Phil Gill looks at the proposals for the development and the effect it might have on our area.

Ambitious plans for redevelopment of Reading station were announced earlier this year. But what do they mean for us? There are four main elements:

New platforms

Four new platforms will be built to the north of the current station. Together with some track works, this will increase the number of trains that can use the station and reduce delays. One of the bridges over Caversham Road will have to be rebuilt.

New station buildings

The old station building, now the Three Guineas pub, will once again become an entrance to the redeveloped station. There will be a second entrance further down Station Hill. Closer to home, a third entrance is planned on the northern side of the station.

The current pedestrian bridge will

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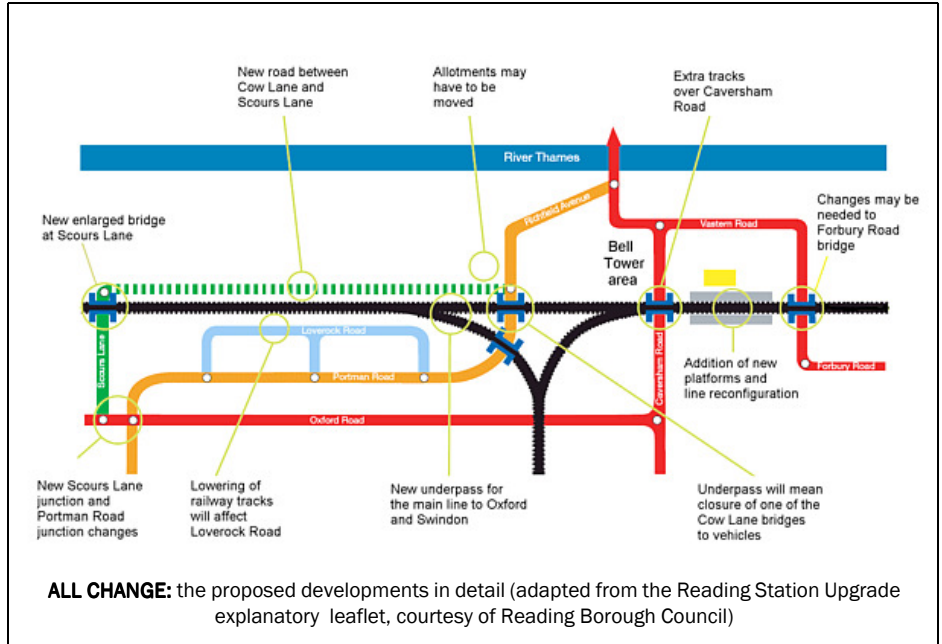
Why not come and see for yourself!

You can find us behind Reading station at 1-5 Lynmouth Road off the Vastern Road Caversham

0118 950 8261

HOUSE CLEARANCES UNDERTAKEN

OPEN EVERYDAY
10.30 - 4.00
SUNDAY
12.00 - 4.00



be replaced and the old subway is to be reopened to provide public access north and south through the site. It will be widened and lined with shops, and will also be open to the sky at some points to avoid it becoming just a dark and dingy tunnel.

New junctions

West of Caversham Road, the two fast tracks (those closest to the town centre) will be dropped to ground level to pass under some cross-country lines. This will avoid trains on one line holding up those on the other. The tracks facing our area will remain at their current height.

New roads and bridges

Dropping the fast tracks to ground level will block off the northern Cow Lane bridge. To maintain access to Oxford Road, a new relief road is planned to run from Richfield Avenue (by the festival site) to a new bridge at Scours Lane.

Currently a large volume of traffic uses Oxford Road to get to the town centre. It is likely that some of this will divert on to the new road and end up on Caversham Road, so traffic levels locally may rise.

What happens next?

The works to the railway do not need planning permission but the new station buildings and roads do, and a planning application is likely

to be put before the council in late spring or summer next year.

The project is due to start in late 2008. The new platforms will come first. The rest of the work will happen in phases but it should be completed in six to eight years' time.

Every home in Reading should receive a leaflet and questionnaire soon, offering a chance to comment. Look out for yours.

"Open all hours" off licence and convenience store is now at

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Neighbourhood News is kindly sponsored by BT's Community Champions scheme.

