



READING CIVIC SOCIETY

24 March 2022

Dear Reading Civic Society Members

I had been working on a wider update for members and then a very useful update to FOR A members arrives from John Painter which covers many of the things I wished to share. So with thanks to John, and hoping he takes the view that a little copying is a form of flattery, and bears with a little "tinkering" to his update, please see below.

READING CIVIC SOCIETY AGM

I look forward to seeing members at the AGM and talk by the High Sheriff on 6th April. If you are able to join us please do log your place on Eventbrite. This will help us to judge numbers as we have shared this with other groups as this is an open meeting. [What is the role the High Sheriff ? Come and meet him to find out. Tickets, Wed 6 Apr 2022 at 13:30 | Eventbrite](#). The agenda, accounts and Annual report will be emailed to members in the next couple of days.

A film at the Biscuit Tin in Broad Street Mall linked to the Huntley and Palmers Bi Centenary 24 March - FREE ENTRY

<https://whatsonreading.com/venues/museum-english-rural-life/whats-on/unsweetened-ode-biscuits-film-screening>

Reading University of the Third Age

One of our new members, Virginia Day, has asked if I will be willing to share information about the Reading U3A, which I am very happy to do. Having delivered presentations to the U3As in Reading, Wokingham and Woodley I have certainly been impressed by the range of activities they support and the number of members they have. Please see attached documents

FOR A Spring Lecture - this Saturday (26 March)

The Annual Spring Lecture - the **2nd Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture** - is on **Saturday 26 March 2022, at 2.30pm, at the Abbey Baptist Church** in Abbey Square, Reading. The speaker is **Dr Fredrica Teale**, on the **Reading Formulary**. Doors open at 2.00pm. The event is free!

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust - Englefield Lecture - Monday 25 April

The Berkshire Historic Church's Trust annual lecture this year will be held on **Monday 25 April, at 7.30pm, in the Long Gallery at Englefield House**. Doors open at 7.00pm. The talk will be given by *Brigadier Michael Aris CBE DL and Richard Bennett DL*, on ***The Duke of Wellington - a life of service***. The cost will be £15, including a glass of wine. The poster is attached, which gives booking details. Whilst it is planned that we will run this talk for Reading Civic Society members it will not be in such grand surroundings as the Long Gallery at Englefield. My thanks to RCS member Dr Peter Durrant MBE DL FSA for inviting Michael and I to deliver this talk.

Launch of Reading Civic Society and Archi-Adventure Project Thursday 28 April Haslams Estate Agents



This is a project which we are working together with Archi-Adventure, which is run by RCS member Gemma Solanellas, who is based in Barcelona.

In 2021 Gemma obtained £4,000 from Great Western Railway to deliver a project to 10 Primary Schools in Reading which would engage children in years 5 +6 in design, engineering and architecture by supporting them to build their own model stations. Gemma required a partner and

the project seemed to fit our aims well.

Work starts in schools in April with an introductory Video which explains about ; the history of the Railways, station structures and then the things to think about designing their own station. One cold Friday afternoon in March I was Chris Forsey's "bag man" as he videoed the Network Rail Station Manager, Andy Phillips, positioned him around the station talking about how it works. He was very patient with us

During April / May each school has the opportunity to have a Station Safety briefing provided by GWR, either at school or at Reading Station .

During May workshops will be delivered by Stantec Engineering & Weston & Co Architects. Students will work in teams of 3 to build their station. Each school will select a representative model from each class, after which a panel will select the top three across all schools. During late June / July we plan to hold an exhibition about the project, and the selected models, in a public place such as the Market Place, the concourse in front of Reading Station and Haslams Estate Agents. More on this and the launch in due course.

I am delighted that Haslams Estate Agents offered to become a Gold Sponsor of the project and, as always, they have been a terrific support.

Gentlemen Danes Book Launch 19th May Haslams Estate Agents

Members who applied for the postponed event in December will be sent an invitation in the next week or two.

Reading Water Fest - Saturday 4 June 2022

This year's annual Reading Water Fest will be held earlier than usual, on the first Saturday of June. It will be an integral part of Reading's celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, which start on the Jubilee Bank Holiday on Thursday 2 June and run through to Sunday 5 June. For more details see the Council press release:

<https://media.reading.gov.uk/news/celebration-date-announced-for-water-fest-2022>

A range of Jubilee celebration events and activities will take place in Reading over the Platinum Jubilee, including:

- A beacon lighting ceremony in the Abbey Ruins on the evening of 2 June 2022
- A specially created, augmented reality trail across Reading to link with our Mayor's charity sponsored walk across Reading over the Jubilee weekend
- Trinity Concert Band children's concert at the Forbury Bandstand on Sunday 5 June
- Jubilee exhibition at Berkshire Record Office - May 26 to August 26
- A range of Jubilee-related activities at Reading Museum, including a Platinum Pudding Trail and Jubilee Dress-Up

- Reading Libraries Jubilee Rhymetime in the Forbury Gardens – Wednesday 3 August
- Jubilee Street Parties - 2 to 5 June

FOR A hope to be involved in the lighting of the Reading Jubilee beacon, in the Abbey Ruins, at 9.45pm on the evening of Thursday 2 June.

Reading Civic Society will join the many local groups which will have stands at the Water Fest on the Saturday, including Friends of Reading Museum, Friends of Reading Abbey

Planning Consultations etc

SSE Vastern Road / Berkeley Homes Proposal



Many members may recall attending the public exhibitions about the proposals by Berkeley homes to erect housing, mainly flats, on the SSE site on Vastern Road. The planning application was turned down in 2021 by Reading Borough Council. The main reason was that the proposals did not include a direct cycle/ pedestrian link from the Christchurch Bridge to Reading Station, rather the route from the bridge “wriggled” through the site. The barrier to the direct route was that the Sub Station, which supplies

Caversham, is in the way . SSE were simply not willing to countenance its relocation or the cost of doing so.

Berkeley Homes Appealed against the refusal and their appeal has been successful. The decision notice is

<https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/ViewCase.aspx?caseid=3276463>.

Also [Developer wins appeal for 209 homes at Reading SSE site | Reading Chronicle](#)

The feedback from most members was that the deign was generally ok. Committee members engaged with the development team over several design iterations. Overall we gave it a high mark. We could see the wiggly route through the site was not idea and did understand RBC’s desire for a straight line for the North South route but if the Sub-station was in the way then it seemed to be simply impossible, without other compromises. A huge amount of RBC resource we know has been spent defending this appeal and the start date delayed by at least a year, probably longer.

Peter Robinson of the Reading on Thames Blog highlighted that the key sections of the appeal decision are:-

155.In past discussions about the development of the CR11g Riverside area the site owner, SSE, have indicated their intention that the entire site would be comprehensively redeveloped. Past feasibility studies illustrate various approaches to development, including retaining and encapsulating electricity transmission equipment below new buildings. Representations were made to the Council in 2017 and 2018 seeking to secure alterations to the emerging LP. This related to a suggested extension of the tall building cluster to include the site and a request that the 10m riverside setback be relaxed to 5m. These representations indicated that such alterations would allow maximisation of potential riverside development, presumably by allowing taller buildings closer to the River. Further, the riverside frontage development would generate the high values required to support the relocation of the central electricity transformers, thereby opening up this part of the site for the desired central pedestrian/cycle link.

156.It appears that the failure of these representations to result in amendments to the LP led to the conclusion that moving the substations and transformers within the site or to another location was financially unviable. As a result, the part of the site no longer required for operations was sold on."

Reading on Thames Blog suggests the RCS should have been braver in its vision for tall buildings for this site which by requiring a smaller footprint would have made it easier to have a direct North South link.

The AVIVA site (on Vastern Road opposite to the SSE site with TGIFs at the corner)

A planning application was made for this site which was very intensive. The owners did not seek to integrate their design with the proposals for the SSE site opposite or the proposals for the old sorting office site (Reading Metropolitan). RBC found it to be complex application and it was taking time to work through. The applicant in the end became fed up and lodged an Appeal against non-determination. When we viewed the initial proposals we too had significant concerns and were very much aligned to RBC's caution.

Bristol and West Arcade/ The Coopers Arms Building group on the Market Place

This site has been increasingly derelict as owner after owner has put forward a scheme (Residential followed by Hotel / Residential) for the centre of this site, the buildings next to M+S and the heritage buildings. The Heritage buildings were deteriorating badly as they had pretty much been abandoned with people gaining access, water leaking etc. In the autumn 2021 RBC pressed hard and successfully encouraged the then owner to restore the externals of the heritage buildings. Unfortunately, they appear to have gone into administration and the site was sold again in December.

In March a small number of members of the CAAC & RCS members, Reading on Thames Blog and a member of FOR A met the new owner and his architect on Line. The new owner is [Pd developments - Mountley Group Ltd](#). This site seems a bit of an odd one in their profile. We did ask what possessed him to acquire the site, we are still waiting for an answer.

The proposal which was outlined to us was;

- retain the front of the building as it faces the Market Place / joins M &S.
- The "arcade" through the site will be retained but instead of several small units there will be a couple of larger retail units on either side of the walk through.
- The upper storeys to be converted to residential units and two floors added.
- The heritage buildings facing the Market place to become Residential above with "retail" below.
- In the centre of the site create a "piazza" , by demolishing the modern additions at the back of the heritage buildings which will connect to the "arcade" .
- In the very centre n build a block in the centre (8 floors), there is already consent for height on this site.
- Overall around 90 flats.
- They do not want to be bound by any of the existing planning consents so new planning applications will be made, probably in 3 phases.
- Overall the ideas seemed quite sensible. They were learning from the over optimism of previous schemes.
- The phased approach seeks to get elements of the site working generating funds for the next phase.
- We do have some drawings which I will share at the AGM.

39 + 35-38 Friar Street (AKA Cosmo Corner)



6 of us (Mainly RCS/ CAAC and Reading on Thames) attended consultation about 35-39 Friar Street. This small number despite the company having circulated over 1,000 flyers.

The proposals may be seen at [Our Proposals - 35-39 Friar Street \(friarstreetconsultation.co.uk\)](http://Our Proposals - 35-39 Friar Street (friarstreetconsultation.co.uk)).

The plan is to remove a 1970s brick building and a Georgian building (Listing removed some years ago) and replace them with a single block which will provide **103 homes**, including 30 % affordable. All will be to rent. Mix 40% single bed, 54% 2 bed and 6% 3 bed. There will be residential co-worker spaces, communal terrace at 1st and 7th floor . They were keen to highlight that the design maximises dual aspect views. One large and one small retail unit. Height 4-5 storey on Friar Street raising to 6 at the back. Not massively inspiring but basically ok. It will match the corner building being constructed on the Station Hill site, Friars Walk. To the building facing that site they proposed a colonnade, which you can just see in the left of the image below.

You may listen to the consultation discussion <https://youtu.be/E6qiCZl8Lws>

To comment on the proposal go to [Feedback - 35-39 Friar Street \(friarstreetconsultation.co.uk\)](http://Feedback - 35-39 Friar Street (friarstreetconsultation.co.uk))

For further analysis see also [Cosmo Corner – Future Friar Street – Reading-on-Thames \(readingonthames.com\)](http://Cosmo Corner – Future Friar Street – Reading-on-Thames (readingonthames.com))



Kings Meadow View



An on line Public Exhibition was held on the proposal for housing to replace part of the Forbury Retail Park, which lies between the IDR and the railway line. This appeared to have more participants than the Friar St discussion. Called Kings Meadow view only a few of the some 900+ flats will face Kings Meadow. The majority will look at each other, the SSE building alongside, the IDR or the Prison.

The layout is shown to the left.

Heights between 5 – 11 storey as is prevalent in the area. Landscaping will conceal the car parking (the existing car parking for the retail park will be left in place and not dug up). They did not envisage a significant increase in the number of vehicles compared to its use as a retail site.

200 parking spaces+ car club. Will be some retail on site (nursery)/ community spaces/ medical.

Anticipate starting 2024 (subject to planning) and will take 4-5 years.

All flats; 50% 1 bed, 40% 2 bed and 11% 3 bed, in line with the mix on Huntley Wharf.

There will be 2 access points to the site as there is now. Roof gardens.



Overall the landscaping and distance between blocks did not look too bad, see sketch left.

However the block design is truly typically unimaginative. They kept emphasising that the materials would use different brick surfaces “reflecting Reading’ Heritage”. We raised that there was not a single redeeming feature of design interest to the buildings. I really do wonder what they teach architects these days or do we blame clients with lack of vision?

I asked “how suitable for downsizers” . The response was that for their other developments 60% are sold to people downsizing. Good luck with that one.

The Reading on Thames blog bemoans the limited ambition of the design and the constraints of the Tall Buildings Policy [A closer look at Kings Meadow View – Reading-on-Thames \(readingonthames.com\)](https://readingonthames.com)

To find out more and to make a comment go to [Home — Kings Meadow View](#)

INFORMATION

Holy Brook Culvert

Bus travellers into Reading from the east, along King's Road, are currently being inconvenienced by the loss of the stop at Jackson's Corner. This is due to maintenance works to the Holy Brook Culvert which carries the watercourse under the town centre from The Oracle to Reading Library, where evidence of the works can be seen. The works will last for two months, up to mid-May. The Holy Brook watercourse formed the southern boundary of the medieval Abbey precinct, and powered the Abbey Mill. The Brook was culverted beneath the town centre at Jackson's Corner at some point(s) after the Abbey's dissolution, in the C17th or C18th centuries, and parts of the culvert include carved stones which may have come from Reading Abbey.

Reading Board of Health Maps

The Berkshire Record Office (BRO) has digitised and published the maps of inner-urban Reading which were produced in 1853 for the newly-constituted Reading Board of Health, to show the state of sanitary provision in the town. This initiative has been done in collaboration with the Reading High Street Heritage Action Zone, with funding from Reading Borough Council and Historic England. For more details, and access to the digitised maps, use the link below:

[BRO Maps \(berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk\)](http://berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk)

An RBC Post about them is [HERE](#)

Tithe apportionment maps

Evelyn Williams tells me that in addition the BRO has also placed on its website digitised copies of the tithe apportionment maps for St Giles and St Marys parish in Reading as well as many other parishes in Berkshire.

ACCESSING THESE MAPS REQUIRES PATIENCE

The maps are in the catalogue as thumbnails. To get to them you have to expand the catalogue entry for the parish you are interested in, find the 'map' line and click on the thumbnail there.

Evelyn comments that the files are big and a couple of times they have failed to load for me but it is worth persevering as the resolution is good.

<http://ww2.berkshirenclosure.org.uk/CalmView/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=DD1>

History of the Maiwand Lion



The Maiwand Lion war memorial in the Forbury Gardens is an iconic much-loved feature of the town. A new booklet celebrating its history has been produced by local historians Mike Cooper, Katie Amos and Andrew Scott, which shines a spotlight on the intriguing story of the Lion, which has stood proudly in the Forbury Gardens since 1886. It is available from Reading Central Library and branch libraries for £3. For more details, use the link [New](#)

[booklet celebrates the history of Reading's Maiwand Lion](#)