

# LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION 2015 AUTUMN NEWSLETTER Cattle arrive in Sunbury Park



www.losra.org

After several years of discussion, false starts, aborted consultation exercises and no little controversy, the trial of having cattle grazing in Sunbury Park to improve biodiversity and, in the long term reduce mowing costs, came to fruition recently.

During the first week in September, six Aberdeen Angus heifers were introduced to the Park. Once again, there had been very little notice, and no further introductory event for residents and Park users. In fairness to Spelthorne's environmental officers, they did not know until the last minute if the cattle would become available, and there was insufficient time to organise anything other than some notices around the Park.

The fencing and other infrastructure has been in place for a while, and the officers were keen to get a trial done before the winter to see what the reaction of Park users would be, and how the whole project would work within the Park environment.

The trial lasts for two months, and the cattle will be leaving at the end of October. In general, there seem to have been few problems, and people who use the Park to walk their dogs seem to get on fine, although of course, there will be other people who simply don't go to the Park at the moment simply because the cattle are there, and who like their dogs to run freely, which is perfectly understandable, but who also feel the cattle and their dog might not mix too well, so there's an element of self-fulfilling prophesy.

There were issues at first with lack of a good water supply, but that was rapidly sorted out and there are two troughs which are regularly replenished.

Other complaints have been made about the cattle dung making the Park unpleasant to use. For those who like their Park to be more suburban than rural, that's a fair enough view, although on the other hand cow pats, coming from a vegetarian ruminant, are maybe a lot less offensive than dog poo, and at least you can see them!

We have calculated that based on the normal cow pat output of cows of this size, the cow pats generated over two months by six cows would cover an area about 15-20 metres square, so the Park will by no means be covered in a blanket of dung. One of the people who complained to LOSRA about the dung said it affected them cycling round the Park. It's worth noting that cycling is prohibited in the Park by-laws, but nobody really minds

much so they don't complain—maybe that spirit of tolerance could be reciprocated.

The vocal lobby of people who are strongly opposed to the presence of the cattle has mobilised the media, resulting in an article in the Telegraph with the magnificent headline "*London Park overrun by giant Aberdeen Angus cows*" ( see it at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/lucy-clarke-billings/11872500/London-park-overrun-by-giant-Aberdeen-Angus-cows-in-bid-for-biodiversity.html> ). It's a laughable bit of journalism, bearing no relation to reality.

They also got a story on ITN local news, with an interview with Cllr. Colin Davies, who did a nicely measured piece. We spoke to the ITN contact, as we couldn't get there in time to contribute and he said: "Don't worry—it's a complete non-story, isn't it? I was hoping I might get whole herd chasing kids round a playground".

It's hard to see what purpose this kind of publicity serves—it's shouting from rooftops, for sure, but if anyone went to the Park the next day, as we did, they would have had trouble finding the cows, as they were skulking in the trees, as they often do.

However, in addition to this there has been some mis-information and rumour-mongering, including a piece on the Sunbury Facebook page saying it was all a ruse by the Council to reduce Park usage so they could justify releasing the land for housing. The Council posted a response, using the piece that appeared in Sunbury Matters which rebuts what is a nonsensical and hysterical claim.

LOSRA, perhaps more than anyone, has a healthy scepticism about Spelthorne's motives and actions on occasions, but in this case there is nil justification for the Facebook conspiracy theory which was attributed to "someone in the know". The Council's statement is on our web site in the news section, but here's an extract:

*Sunbury Park is a locally significant area due to its social, historical and ecological values. The introduction of cows has raised some misplaced rumours of potential land change designation and*

*subsequent development. These reports are not only wide of the mark, but are a contradiction of what we are trying to achieve; improving the biological stature of the Park would make it more ecologically valuable and less likely to be subject to detrimental land change."*

This is a trial, and the Council want to know what people think, so whether you are opposed to the cattle being there, or happy to see them there, tell Spelthorne your views. E-mail Steve Price, the Countryside and Commons Officer, at [S.Price@spelthorne.gov.uk](mailto:S.Price@spelthorne.gov.uk).

If the results are positive, the plan is that the cattle will return in late spring for 12-14 weeks this time, and probably with a few more cows than this time.

The purpose of the exercise, for those who aren't aware, is primarily to improve biodiversity and the quality of the grassland. The way cattle graze rips the grass, exposing patches of bare earth where the seeds of wild flowers and herbs can take root and compete with the rank grasses that have partly taken over the grassland. This will increase the invertebrate population, introducing nectar-loving butterflies, moths and other insects which in turn will support a wider range of birds and small mammals, enhancing both the health and attractiveness of the Park.

Another outcome is that it could also obviate the cost of mowing, if the cattle are eventually grazed over a longer period.

This is an important topic and deserves to be addressed in a measured way. Dog owners need to recognise that it is not just a dog-walkers park, and the Council and the community need to do what's best for such a valuable amenity. This writer (sadly currently dogless) has walked our dogs in the Park for the last 35 years, and once had a jobbish Labrador who would certainly have chased the cows—we simply couldn't have gone there—but the potential benefits of the initiative have to be weighed against that.

A number of people have said both to us and the Council how the cows have added to the peaceful ambience of the place, and they must surely be benefits in suburban youngsters having the chance to engage with farm animals they might only see on a special trip to the country.

Anyway, whatever you think, please make your views known, so that this is a genuine trial, and we will naturally keep you in touch with developments.

# The Local Plan, Kempton Park & Redrow Homes - be really afraid!

This subject could fill this newsletter three times over, so this story will do no more than skim the surface. If what you read bothers you, and it should, take a look at [www.keepkemptongreen.com](http://www.keepkemptongreen.com), where former LOSRA Chairman Alan Doyle posts all the news and documents on a regular basis, and you can get on the mailing list for updates.

Redrow Homes recently announced that they have an agreement with the Jockey Club to prepare proposals for housing on Kempton Park, and that they will promote the idea not with a planning application but by seeking to influence the Council's review of the Local Plan.

That means they want to have Kempton Park's Green Belt status removed.

Spool back to June. We received a copy of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which was the result of 18 months of work by a firm of consultants, which probably cost about £30k. The study looked at a range of variables which affect likely housing demand as a basis for establishing the Borough's housing target.

It proposed that, rather than the current housing target of 166 homes per annum, which Spelthorne has regularly exceeded, the borough would need to build between 543 and 725 new homes

every year for the next 20 years, that's between 11,000 and 14,500 new homes in a Borough that currently has 45,000 households. Interested parties like us were given just a few weeks to respond — a clear signal that Spelthorne wanted to stifle opposition.

The SHMA is a huge and complex document, and it was impossible to do a proper job of challenging either the methodology or conclusions, so we have established a holding position so that we can if necessary challenge it at a future Examination in Public.

What has now emerged is a further process related to the Local Plan Review. It is called the Strategic Land Availability Assessment, which will look at what sites are available for housing in the Borough in the foreseeable future.

Spelthorne circulated the draft methodology recently, which includes the setting up of a "Development Market Panel". And guess who it comprises: *"developers; those with land interests; land promoters; local property agents, registered providers, each representing a different business/interest group..... representatives who have knowledge/experience to comment on the draft methodology/sites proposed for economic development in terms of their viability"*.

## "EcoPark" building development starts, but without a final design for the plant

Work has started at Charlton Lane Recycling Centre on the infrastructure for the incinerator (for that's what it is) for which permission was granted by Surrey County Council despite irrefutable evidence that it is inappropriate, unworkable and potentially hazardous.

A vast amount of piling (around 3,000 piles) are being driven into the ground to support the structure. However, at this stage, quite bizarrely, no-one is actually sure of the detail of what is being built, as the plant is still being designed to address an array of technical, safety and logistical issues which have emerged.

Surrey has given the go-ahead, despite an escalation in costs from £50m to £91.3m. That money is from PFI sources, which means that the taxpayer will be paying over the odds for this at inflated rates for several decades. At a meeting of the residents Liaison Group recently, when asked how this could be justified, a representative of SITA, the developer, said "It's all about the ROCs, of course!" A ROC is the Renewables Obligation Certificate, which they have managed to get by pretending that the incinerator is a gasifier, so becoming falsely classified as

a source of green energy for which we will all pay SITA three times the going rate.

The re-designing has been necessitated by technical and safety advice which rendered aspects of the original design unworkable. One change about which those of you who have registered objections will have been advised affects the bunds surrounding the plant to retain noxious fluids in the event of a spillage.

The original design has been rejected by the Environment Agency, so SITA are proposing to replace it with a two-stage bunding which means that if a spillage overflows the inner bunds, it is contained by outer bunds in an area that encompasses the roadway around the plant. So that's all right, then. No mention of how emergency vehicles might approach the scene.

To a layman, the idea that an authority can give permission to, and commit £90m of funding, to a project that would use unproven technology, and for which no final design exists, is beyond belief. We presumably would all support genuine renewable and sustainable energy initiatives, but this is a sham, cooked up between government (local and national) and corporate vested interests.

Surrey got themselves into this when

Any mention of residents' groups, communities, those with non-economic interest in land? Of course not. So the vested interests will sit in judgement on their own claims for development status. We have asked to be included as a stakeholder, but don't hold your breath.

On a similar topic, and going back to Redrow Homes, we learnt from a story in the Surrey Advertiser that Redrow had had a meeting with Spelthorne Council "*for discussions regarding the council's local plan process and 'how the possible development at Kempton Park could support any identified housing needs in the borough'*". Sound familiar?

LOSRA has contacted Spelthorne's senior planning officers to ask for a meeting with them to discuss the same subject, in order that they could be seen to be operating in an even-handed and impartial manner in dealing with interested parties. Our Chairman and other officers and committee members will be meeting Spelthorne near the end of the month, so we have set down that particular marker that we will not tolerate being excluded from the process.

The whole Local Plan/Green Belt issue is going to be a major pre-occupation. We can see where the vested interests (not to mention central government) want it to go, and it is going to be a big fight. It will be highly revealing to see how robustly Spelthorne defends its Green Belt in the face of the onslaught from the corporate big hitters.

they spotted the opportunity of using PFI money and green energy subsidies to deal with waste disposal issues, but did not have the expertise to understand the potential problems. When it became clear that it was a potential disaster, their pride and chutzpah and a weird desire not to be seen to be giving in to clued-up residents, they ploughed on regardless, and a skewed planning system has enabled them to get away with it. The only hope is that the withdrawal of advantages offered by the feed-in tariff to "green" energy suppliers (both genuine and dubious) might make the project unviable as costs escalate.

The fact that no operator has yet addressed the practicality of using variegated domestic waste in such plants, as opposed to homogeneous biomass, could also mean that the plant will prove physically and financially inoperable.

There remains a whole litany of other problems which have not been solved or answered, any of which could prove make-or-break issues for the operators. The project remains a landmark example of disastrous governance, which will surely come home to roost at some stage. Whether it ends up ever being built or working to some level or another, it will have been a costly lesson in how not to do things, but from which no doubt the "great and good" will learn nothing.

## Orchard Meadow children's playground scheme attracts surprising opposition

What, on the face of it, looked a completely uncontroversial and positive initiative, for a small rustic children's playground in the corner of Orchard Meadow, has become the subject of controversy during the summer.

The proposal, promoted by Sunbury East councillor Ian Harvey, has met with vocal opposition from a group of protesters, whose objections delayed the building of the playground in time for the summer, and has embroiled the Council in significant cost in preparing a substantial statement to justify the scheme, which will be considered at the November Planning Committee.

The objections to the proposal for a playground about 15m square, comprising half a dozen natural wood features, in the area of overgrown land adjacent to the Park entrance by the Orchard Meadow car park, revolve around three main issues.

One is the noise nuisance from the maximum of a dozen or so children which the playground could accommodate. The nearest house, at the bottom of The Avenue is over 80 yards away. Just imagine— we can sit in our gardens in The Avenue on a Sunday, hear the noise from the M3 and the planes flying over, the motorbikes going up and down the road, the bloke next door mowing his lawn, and the people the other side having a boozy BBQ— heaven forbid, the noise of a few children laughing in the distance would be the last straw. Soon, no doubt, the brass band in the Walled Garden will attract complaints.

Another objection relates to the environmental impact of loss of habitat through re-

moval of vegetation. The Friends of Sunbury Park's own in-house expert has stated that any loss of habitat and environmental impact would be negligible in comparison to the positive benefits of the playground.

The third objection relates to the possibility that Avenue residents with parking permits might not be able to park in the Orchard Meadow car park because of the dozens of people parked there using the playground. As we always said when the yellow lines went in at the bottom of The Avenue—be careful what you wish for.

There are now a lot of young families living here and there is no children's play area within the distance specified in planning guidelines. The Cedars and Old Bathing Pool sites are the nearest options.

Of course, people are perfectly at liberty to protest and object if they feel that their quality of life or amenities are being threatened. But it is really quite surprising that residents have taken up the cudgels in such a forceful and vehement way on this issue. Neither LOSRA nor Friends of Sunbury Park saw any reason to object.

Are we really such self-regarding kill-joys that a project as modest and with entirely positive motivations as this can attract such anger?

However you feel about this topic, your views will still be taken into account if you register them before the Planning Committee on 18th Nov., so search out the details at [www.spelthorne.gov.uk](http://www.spelthorne.gov.uk), and submit your opinions.

## Walton Sports Hub development: Environmental Impact Statement submitted

The proposed development of a big sports complex on the banks of the Thames in Walton, right opposite Lower Sunbury has attracted significant opposition on this side of the river because of its impact in terms of noise and light pollution and visual amenity.

The 14-acre "Sports Hub" will, among other things, become the home of Walton & Hersham FC, an important amateur football club, since Elmbridge Council have plans to build on the site of the club's long-established stadium in Stompond Lane.

There are two floodlit pitches, with 18m. high floodlight stanchions. No provision of new light or noise barriers is proposed within the current plans, despite the fact that the facilities are proposed to be available for use until 10pm every day of the week. Riverside residents in Sunbury current regularly suffer noise nuisance from the much more modest leisure centre and sports field currently on the site.

The developers, Wilmott Dixon, did

not feel that it was necessary to provide an Environmental Impact Statement when the planning application was first submitted, but pressure from residents ensured that they were obliged to deliver one, and it is has now been submitted.

Wilmott Dixon, have contacted interested parties to say that the EIS is available the ludicrous price of £500 for a hard copy or £30 for a digital copy "while stocks last" (eh? A limited stock of digital copies?). They clearly wanted to discourage ordinary objectors from viewing it.

We have pointed out to Elmbridge that the EIS is part of the planning application, and must therefore be freely available as part of the on-line documentation. This was confirmed by Elmbridge, which makes Wilmott Dixon look as ignorant as they are arrogant.

The application reference is 2015/0949, and you can search out the documents at [www.elbridge.gov.uk/planning/comment.htm](http://www.elbridge.gov.uk/planning/comment.htm)

## Nursery building plan at The Cedars attracts opposition

This topic came to our attention rather late in the day, so we haven't been able to communicate it as effectively as we might have wished.

A planning application is going through the system for a "modular building" to house a day nursery on the Cedars Park in Green Street. A modular building means some kind of Portakabin type of structure.

The plan is for it to be located on the north side of park just to the right of the entrance from Green Street. This will be a commercial enterprise, although we do not know the type of business or operating model the nursery would follow.

There have already been a number of objections, on the basis that it is inappropriately obtrusive in such a highly visible part of the Park, and given that the car park is very limited, and already gets heavily used as an overflow from the health centre, and especially around school times, it is likely to create access and parking problems.

The date for registering objections or opinions has technically passed but it is not on the agenda for the October Planning Committee, so will presumably be in November, so you can probably still register views via [www.spelthorne.co.uk](http://www.spelthorne.co.uk). The case reference is 15/00614/FUL.

## Housing plan consultation takes place for Page Aerospace site

As previously reported on the LOSRA web site, the Page Aerospace site in Anvil Road, just behind the parade of shops in Green Street, has been acquired by Fairview Homes for housing development, after Page moved the operation overseas.

Fairview contacted local residents inviting them to a drop-in session in late September to present and consult on their plan for 28 dwellings on the site. It is a brownfield site, so housing is obviously an acceptable use in planning terms.

The plan was not seen as controversial by those residents who attended the session, and it is of a reasonable density.

Since then, Fairview have had further conversations with Spelthorne's planning officers, and been advised that the development needs to include more affordable homes, so the plan is likely to comprise 32 dwellings when it is eventually submitted.

The loss of a high quality business with associated jobs in Sunbury is unfortunate, but at least it looks as if this development will proceed to ensure a reasonable outcome.

## Consultation shows overwhelming support for concept of River Thames cycle/footbridge at Lower Sunbury

We are very grateful to all those who took the trouble to complete the ballot paper enclosed with our Spring newsletter and for those who used our Website online facility in order to register their views on the idea of a bridge for pedestrians and cyclists across the Thames at Lower Sunbury.

The total number of respondents came to a very impressive 911, the majority 92.9% of whom were supportive of the proposal for such a bridge, with 2.9% against and 4% who were undecided or did not make their preference clearly.

Of the various options for a potential site for the bridge, the one that attracted the most support was the one from Flow-erpot Green.

The full report and executive summary which was formerly presented to the Local Spelthorne Committee on 28th September may be seen on our website by clicking the banner on the top of the Home Page.

Obviously, any such proposal would need to attract substantial funding in order to be feasible, but it is encouraging that a project of this kind recently opened at Reading, so it proves it can be done.

## Campaign under way with on-line petition to get Sunbury station on to the Oyster network in Zone 6

There's no room to cover this in detail, but a number of local people are campaigning to get Sunbury station, from which many people at much higher cost than those in suburbs further from London which are in Zone 6, included in the Oyster card network.

There is an on-line petition for interested people to submit their details to, and there is a link to it from a more detailed story on the subject on the LOSRA web site.

### THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

Shirley Agar (Membership Sec.)	87 Manor Lane	765517
Neale Brickwood	16 Lime Crescent	07798 854867
Tony Crabb	38 The Avenue	782083
Colleen Cuthbert (Secretary)	8 Maryland Way	783606
Iain Findlay (Treasurer)	58 Thames Street	783739
Peter Francis	Linden Lodge, Woodlands Drive	770661
Michelle Gillham	11 Montford Road	07989 868101
John Hirsh	21 School Walk	07515 637474
Neil Huntingford	Summer House, Wheatleys Ait	783761
Mark McCartney	2 Forge Mews, Forge Lane	07557 121844
Oliver Parr	Orchard House, Thames Street	765229
George Rushbrook	8 Meadows End	788471
Paul Thompson (Chairman)	12 Brackenwood	07788 107500
Paul Watts (President)	87 The Avenue	788449

## Walled Garden wins Best Small Park Gold Award for second year running

We are delighted to report that for the second consecutive year in The Walled Garden in Sunbury Park has won a Gold Award and the title of Overall Best Small Park in the South & South East in Bloom Awards recently. Also, for the fifth year in a row, it received a Green Flag Award for the consistent overall quality of what it offers to the community and the standard of maintenance.

As we said last year, this would not have been possible without the continued and unstinting support of Spelthorne Council, especially in these straitened times, and the professionalism of their gardeners. Congratulations also to the staff at the Embroidery Gallery for their contribution in maintaining the Walled Garden's reputation as the landmark feature of Lower Sunbury.

## Arrangements for Lower Sunbury Christmas Market still undecided

It seems that there is still some uncertainty about whether or where the Christmas Market, which has taken place in Avenue Parade for the last few years, is going to take place this year.

We understand that the Business Community do not think that having the stalls on the parking spaces outside the parade of shops, is an ideal or satisfactory way of approaching it and have suggested that it be held in Orchard Meadow.

There are, not surprisingly, some potential difficulties with this, which are being discussed with Spelthorne Council, which include logistical problems of power and lighting, not to mention access by a fair number of vehicles, at a time of year when the ground is likely to be wet, and damage to the Meadow and its carefully-nurtured bio-diverse grassland could occur.

Another option that has been mentioned is to use the Orchard Meadow car park in The Avenue opposite the shops, but this also has question marks associated with it. As soon as we know anything more concrete, we will post the news on the web site and in the e-bulletin.

Unfortunately, it is certain that the Carols In The Meadow event will not take place again this year, because of insurmountable difficulties which the event poses for Friends of Sunbury Park, who organised it in the past.

## Sunbury Cricket Club 1st XI wins Surrey Championship Premier Division

Congratulations to Sunbury Cricket Club, whose 1st XI won the Premier Division of the Surrey Championship this season, for the first time since 1998 when West Indian Test cricketer Jimmy Adams was playing for the Club. The 3rd XI also won the top division of the Championship's 3rd XI league, so the Club had an outstanding season. The Surrey Championship is one of the UK's toughest leagues, and Club won it with a side which mainly comprised players who came through the Club's top class Colts' set-up.

## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Please find enclosed my annual subscription of £5.00 for family membership of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association for the calendar year 2015. In addition, I would like to make a donation of £..... (AUT15)

Name:..... Address : .....

.....Tel. no. : ..... E-mail address.....