

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

2014 AUTUMN NEWSLETTER



www.losra.org

As Kempton Park housing issue rolls on, Local Plan review threatens 250% increase in housing targets

Since our last newsletter in the Spring, the controversy over the issue of a possible housing scheme at Kempton Park has rumbled on. Councillors and Spelthorne officers have made statements pursuing the line that Spelthorne has not been involved in any discussions with The Jockey Club about the possibility of such a development. LOSRA and others have been accused of being conspiracy theorists when, we are assured, no such conspiracy exists.

However, a steady stream of documents which have come into the public domain via Freedom Of Information requests made under the auspices of the pressure group Keep Kempton Green make it very difficult to understand how this line can be regarded as sustainable.

At our Annual General Meeting, Cllr. Tim Evans accused our President and Acting Chairman of “nasty journalism” in last autumn’s newsletter the contents of which, as we reiterated in our Spring newsletter, we believe to be supported by subsequent disclosures. Cllr. Evans also stated unequivocally that “there have been no meetings” between Spelthorne and The Jockey Club about possible housing development there.

LOSRA contributed an article in the August edition of Sunbury Matters, highlighting the unfortunate tension between LOSRA and Spelthorne Council on this matter, but re-stating our concerns. Cllr. Evans responded in the September edition, re-stating a position which, as noted on the LOSRA web site, required “an evidence-based rebuttal”, which was provided by our ex-Chairman John Hirsh.

The whole exchange makes interesting and enlightening reading, and we urge you to read it, as it makes it clear why we think the way we do. You can read all the documents, including our rebuttal to Cllr. Evans, on our web site at <http://www.losra.org/index.php?start=26>

Among other things, it sets out the dates of no less than sixteen meetings between 21st March 2012 and 20th Feb. 2014 involving senior Spelthorne officers and/or councillors and representatives of The Jockey Club. Can we really believe that these meetings managed to avoid a mention of a housing development? And if, as Spelthorne representatives have said so often, such a development would be contrary to Council policy, why was there more than a single meeting, at which The Jockey Club should have been told “We’re sorry but we can’t help you”?

Regrettably, Cllr. Evans's brief and dismissive response to John's letter did not help in dealing with an issue which is of existential importance to the future of Lower Sunbury. He has however demanded a statement from the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council as to what and when the Council knew about the Kempton Park scheme. The resultant statement, published on the Council website, failed to answer this central question.

The furore has resulted in the issue losing some momentum—we have attended a meeting with The Jockey Club’s PR consultants Cratus, at which it became clear that a planning application would probably not be submitted until after the General Election, an interesting comment on the political implications of the scheme.

Meanwhile, Redrow Homes has gained the right of first refusal on 70 acres of Kempton Park for residential development, and consultants for The Jockey Club have carried out surveys of traffic and utilities in the area.

What has now emerged is that the Council has decided to embark on a review of the Local Plan. The primary

implication of this, as we found out from a paper submitted to a September meeting of the Local Plan Working Party, from which the public was excluded, is that Spelthorne’s annual housing target is planned to increase from 160 to 400, an increase of 250%.

Where are these extra homes going to go? Conspiracy theorists might conclude that if current Council policy is that Green Belt is sacrosanct from housing development, then a new local plan with vastly increased housing targets might constitute special circumstances in which this might be relaxed. We are advised by the Planning Officer that this is not the case, and that revised targets could be met without touching Green Belt.

A recent Dept. of Communities and Local Govt. notice was very interesting and pertinent. It stated that if a housing needs assessment cannot be met because of constraints such as Green Belt then a Council may simply state that fact, because housing need cannot be used to justify development on Green Belt. We have in any event been investigating ways of ensuring that a “rush to judgement” on a new Local Plan can be stalled.

It’s a fascinating and absolutely vital saga for Sunbury and Spelthorne. To keep in touch, click on the Keep Kempton Green button at www.losra.org and subscribe for their regular e-mail updates and review the extensive archive of documents which give the background.

Some councillors have accused us of taking a political stance on this matter, to the extent that we have been obliged to write to the Leader of the Council making it clear that we are an apolitical organisation, and would be having the same argument with any Council that was doing what this Council is doing, whatever its political persuasion.

SCC approves amended application for EcoPark as battle moves to challenging the operating permit

On 24 September Surrey County Council Planning & Regulatory Committee voted 7/4 in favour of proceeding with the highly controversial 'Eco Park' at Charlton Lane. Excellent submissions were made by Peter Francis, LOSRA's scientific expert on the subject, and other equally well-qualified local residents, highlighting, among other things, that OFGEM have still not issued pre-accreditation advice for the granting of a Renewable Obligation Certificate (ROC) for the Gasifier/Incinerator, and noting the scientific basis for the fact that it does not meet the criteria required to be defined as a gasifier. They were also informed about the ways in which the design does not meet key safety criteria.

Needless to say, the majority of the Committee ignored them, those voting against including two Spelthorne County Councillors. Our MP Kwasi Kwarteng, and the Leader of Spelthorne Council, Cllr. Robert Watts, attended the meeting, but were obviously not allowed to speak. If you are interested in seeing what was said at the meeting the webcast is at http://www.surreycc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/144926. There were many concerns about some procedural aspects of the meeting which Spelthorne representatives are following up.

The Environment Agency is reviewing the responses from the public and the Health and Safety Executive to their 'Draft Determination for an Environment Permit', this being an essential prerequisite to the Eco Park operation. Concurrently, the HSE are to meet with SITA (the operator) to discuss their and the public's safety concerns with the current design and operational aspects of both the Gasifier/Incinerator and the Anaerobic Digester.

We have a copy of the document sent to the Environment Agency by the HSE in response to the Draft Determination of an Operating Permit for the Eco Park, setting out the considerations and requirements that the plant would need to meet in order for the EA to issue an operating permit. As far as we can see, there is no way that the plan as it stands can possibly meet these requirements.

Effectively should a Renewable Obligation Certificate (ROC) be granted, this would benefit SITA to the extent that they would receive three times the standard rate for any electricity they can export to the grid, which they estimate is equivalent to the power consumption of 8000 homes. By our estimation, however, the plant, as designed, could never achieve the energy output necessary to qualify for an ROC. Nevertheless, No matter what OfGEM's decision on the gasifier is, Sita will benefit just for burning municipal waste and generating some electricity.

It now remains to be seen what avenues are available in the way of legal challenges and the pressure group SATEP is continuing to investigate the possibility of a Judicial Review of the legal processes undertaken by the County during the process.

Thanks must be given once again to the local people who have devoted an enormous amount of time and provided a huge amount of professional expertise in the cause of opposing this dangerous and unjustified proposal, whose only purpose, it seems, is to generate financial benefits for the vested interests involved, and, as usual, treat as Spelthorne as Surrey's dustbin.

Plan for housing on tennis courts at The Ridings refused by Planning Committee

At the June meeting of Spelthorne's Planning Committee, the plan, reported in our Spring newsletter, for a residential development providing 17 dwellings comprising 2, 3, 4 and 5 bed houses with access, parking and landscaping on the site of the old St. Paul's School tennis courts at The Ridings, off Green Street, was refused.

Powerful submissions had been made by The Ridings Action Group, as well as LOSRA and a number of residents. Local councillor Ian Harvey also spoke against the scheme.

The applicant asked for deferral of consideration based on the fact that they had agreed to provide financial contributions in relation to education, transport, libraries and air quality to meet certain objections, and had also offered to contribute £55,000 towards off site affordable housing. This was not considered to alter the recommended reason for refusal relating to the provision of affordable housing, and it was resolved that the plan should be determined at the meeting.

The plan was refused on the

grounds set out in the report of the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy, relating to lack of affordable housing, small unit provision and impact on trees, and also for the following reasons:

A) The applicant has failed to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the County Highway Authority that adequate mitigation measures have been provided to address the potential conflict between pedestrian and vehicle movements.

B) The proposed development, by virtue of its height and siting, would have a poor relationship with adjoining properties resulting in overlooking, and having an overbearing effect on them.

This is about as good a result as we could have hoped for. Cala Homes have not yet lodged an appeal, and we suspect they are looking at the financial viability of a revised plan which meets the objections in terms of having more affordable small units, getting rid of the overbearing 2.5 storey (3-storey to you and me) houses and the problems relating to traffic. There will no doubt be developments to report in due course.

LOSRA AGM Review

It seems a while ago now, but we thought it useful to run through some headlines from our Annual General Meeting in June.

Some new officers were elected. Paul Thompson was elected Chairman, taking over from Actng Chairman Paul Watts, who remains as President. Iain Findlay was elected Treasurer, taking over from Ziz Coltart who stood down from the Committee, as did Tessa Cook, Jenny Grant and Dave Woods. We thank Paul and Iain for taking on these vital roles, and thank Ziz, Tessa, Jenny and Dave for their dedicated work during their time on the Committee. New Committee members elected are Shirley Agar, Tony Crabb and Oliver Parr. We are delighted to welcome them on board.

In the Open Forum they were some lively exchanges, which are referred to elsewhere on the front page.

We welcomed David Murphy from the Environment Agency, who gave a very useful and frank presentation about plans for further flood alleviation measures in the Thames Valley. Some long-term measures are planned, but the configuration of the river and surrounding areas means that it is impossible for new measures to help Sunbury, although they are designed to even out flows in time of flood. We will keep you posted as plans evolve.

Feasibility study goes ahead into sites for a Thames cycle/footbridge

Readers of our Spring newsletter (a copy of which may be viewed by visiting the LOSRA website: www.losra.org) will be familiar with the terms of reference for the feasibility study into the construction of a cycle/footbridge connecting Lower Sunbury to the Thames Path National Trail at Walton.

Since its publication, much progress has been made and we are delighted to say that the sum of £18,500 + VAT (£22,200) necessary to commission the study has been raised. It was obvious from the outset that the funds at our disposal would be insufficient and we were able to meet the cost by approaching Crest Nicholson and London Irish (Amateurs & Professionals) who kindly agreed to sponsor the study; together with a £5000 contribution from Cllr. Evan's Membership allowance.

Once the sum had been pledged, we were in a position to give the 'go ahead' to Ramboll UK, the nationally recognised bridge design engineers, to proceed with the feasibility study. Together with LOSRA members, the work started on the 1st October with a site visit to explore possible location options from

both the north and south banks of the Thames; and we are now optimistic that the completed study will be available to us before Christmas.

Encouraging though this news undoubtedly is, it should be stressed that we are merely undertaking a study of the various options together with advantages and disadvantages of each and on which we will, of course, be consulting widely through public exhibitions and a variety of publicity media.

Eventual construction is a different matter entirely and will depend on availability of funding which in these straitened times is only a remote prospect. We took the view that this forbidding outlook should not deter us from making a positive start.

Central funding for cycle routes is high on the political agenda of any party attempting to reduce the number of journeys taken by car; and we cannot predict when an unexpected funding stream will become available. We want to be ready for that moment.

Former Committee member Pat Smith dies

We are sad to record the demise of Pat Smith, a long-time stalwart of the LOSRA Committee, co-ordinating our newsletter deliveries for many years. He was also very active in organising Sunbury Neighbours, serving as duty officer and helping recruit volunteers. Our sympathy goes out to his wife Jenny and his family.

Sign the Campaign To Protect Rural England charter to save our countryside

There isn't room to deal with it in detail here, but CPRE has launched a campaign to highlight the threat which the National Planning Policy framework poses through development on Green Belt and countryside. They want people to sign up to a charter to prevent inappropriate development. With the Kempton Park issue under the microscope, it's obviously very close to home. You can find the full story in the news section of the web site at www.losra.org, with a link to the CPRE site and the charter.

Health Centre update

Our local Health Centre has been facing a number of challenges over the past year or so, including a number of staff changes, a constantly increasing patient population and having to provide services from a cramped and dated building. (It is interesting to note that SHC only have access to 45% of the building, with the remaining 55% being rented by Virgin Health Care).

With a revitalised Patient Participation Group (PPG) supporting and working closely with the Practice, it is safe to say that these challenges are being met head on with determination, and a number of initiatives are starting to see results.

New doctors and staff have joined the Practice and the appointment booking system, probably the biggest frustration for patients, has undergone a number of changes, and developments include four new telephone lines and on-line booking. The PPG has developed its own website for patients and also done what they can to improve the waiting room by decluttering and refreshing the notice boards. The first PPG Open Meeting on 27th October was well attended by over 30 patients, with a generally positive and supportive atmosphere. A number of important issues were raised and a number of suggestions were raised for the group to take forward.

That is not to say by any means that everything is as it should be. Despite constant pressure on the appropriate bodies, the doctors, staff and patients still have to put up with premises designed for 6,000 patients whilst actually serving nearly 19,000! With increased housing developments in the area, this number is predicted to rise to 23,000 in the next three years. An application in January 2014 to NHS England for new premises has still not been properly responded to, despite several meetings. In July of this year, a Capital Grant application to improve the current building has produced little response.

Spelthorne Council and the local MP are sympathetic and fully aware of the situation, meeting regularly with the SHC staff to explore options but it seems that the uphill struggle to provide a better primary healthcare infrastructure will continue for some time to come.

Take part in consultation on savings in local bus services

Residents will remember that a public consultation on local bus services was conducted some years ago. It seems that we have arrived at that moment again with the following (abridged) email which has been received by LOSRA from Surrey County Council:

As you know, Surrey County Council is subject to enormous pressures on our funding. Increased demand for essential services such as adult social care and school places, coupled with reduced Government funding, means we need to review our spend on all the services we provide for the county's residents.

We are therefore carrying out a review of local transport services in the county, with the aim of making significant savings in this area over the next three years. The views of residents and partners will form a key part of the review, and we have therefore launched a consultation. The review will focus on the following three aspects of local transport:

- *The council's subsidy of all local bus services.*
- *The provision of community transport in the county, and how this can be made more commercial.*
- *SCC-funded discretionary concessions:*

To help achieve this, the public consultation will run from now until 14 January 2015. Plans will only be drawn up after residents, partners, bus-user groups and other stakeholders have had their say.

To take part in the consultation residents and stakeholders can complete the online survey, which will be widely promoted via our website and other digital channels. If you're unable to access these links, please click on the link below:

A hard-copy of the survey will also be available, from early November, from libraries, district and borough and parish council buildings and bus stations, and we will advertise the consultation via a poster campaign at bus stations, on buses and in other public buildings throughout Surrey.

- Visit: www.surreycc.gov.uk/transportreview

- Email: localtransportreview@surreycc.gov.uk

- Write to: Local Transport Review | Room 365 | County Hall | Kingston Upon Thames | KT1 2DN

Update on cattle grazing in Sunbury Park

An update was received at the September meeting of The Friends of Sunbury Park regarding the pilot project of cattle grazing in the Park as part of the grassland and biodiversity management programme. As those who use the Park will have seen, the fencing and gateways have been installed in preparation for the proposed implementation in the autumn.

However, there have been two complications:

- The kissing gates that were originally fitted did not allow for use by mobility scooters, and it turned out that the suppliers had sent gates of the wrong specification, so replacements are being awaited..

- Having got all the way to this stage, it now appears from a meeting that Spelthorne officers and FoSP Chairman Gerry Ceaser attended with the Surrey Wildlife Trust - who originally proposed the programme - that SWT have expressed concern about the fact that dogs run freely in the Park, despite that fact that this is coming from the same people who surveyed the Park in the first place and made the original recommendation.

As a result, Spelthorne are having discussions with an alternative grazier to explore other options. Whatever the case, it is certain that there will be no cattle in the Park until next Spring.

A recent fascinating presentation by Phil Cribb, Fellow of Kew and local resident, about the flora and fauna of Sunbury Park, as part of a brilliant exhibition of photographs in The Embroidery Gallery, highlighted the need for proper biodiversity management, especially of the grassland, and the cattle grazing plan is very much part of that.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

Shirley Agar	87 Manor Lane	765517
Elleke Carling	3 Croysdale Avenue	882726
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
John Hirsh		07515 637474
Neil Huntingford	Summers House, Wheatleys Ait	783761
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 Gold Award

We are delighted to report that The Walled Garden in Sunbury Park won a Gold Award and the title of Overall Best Small Park in the South & South East in Bloom Awards recently. 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.

Date for Carols In The Meadow still unsure but Christmas Fair is Thurs. 11th Dec.

This year's Carols In The Meadow, which was originally scheduled for Thurs 11th Dec. to coincide with the Christmas Fair in Avenue Parade, cannot take place because there is an event at Riverside Arts Centre, which prevents them from supplying the lights.

Please keep an eye open for announcements on our web site, in Sunbury Matters, or on posters etc. for a revised date for Carols In The Meadow, assuming that suitable date can be found.

Nevertheless, the Christmas Fair is always a really enjoyable community occasion, with our local shops and other traders getting into the festive spirit with stalls in Avenue Parade - we even had reindeer last year - so bring the family for a fun evening out.

Please pay your 2014 subscriptions and sign up for LOSRA's e-bulletins

Just a reminder that we are reaching the end of the year and if you haven't paid your LOSRA subscription for 2014, please could you do so as soon as possible.

The calls on our finances are significant these days, as we increasingly find ourselves needing to take legal advice in complex and difficult planning and procedural matters, so your subscriptions are vital, quite apart from appeals for special donations.

The £5 membership, which has not changed for eight years, may be paid by the secure Paypal facility on the Home page of the Website. Please see the form below for other details of how to pay

With the pace of events also increasing, it's never easy to reach all residents all of the time. Currently, we attempt to do this via our web site, periodic newsletters, the pages of Sunbury Matters and by our e-bulletins. The e-bulletin service has been frequently publicised in the past but we are not convinced that everyone is aware of it or, if they are, how to go about receiving it and be kept up to date on all that is going on in the Lower Sunbury area.

Well, from now on it has been made incredibly easy. All that is required is for you to insert your e-mail address under 'Join our mailing list' in the top left hand corner of the Home Page of our web site at www.losra.org and press 'Subscribe'

If you are already subscribed but have not received an e-bulletin recently, your contact details may have got lost when the new system was installed. To be sure, please enter your email address once more.

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 2014. In addition, I would like to make a donation of £..... (AUT14)

Name:..... Address :

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