

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

2017 SPRING NEWSLETTER

The brutal reality emerges with Jockey Club plan to close Kempton Park racecourse and build on the entire site



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The temperature of what was already a heated debate about the future of Kempton Park was turned up dramatically during the first week of the New Year, when the Jockey Club, who own Kempton Park, announced that they were planning to close the racecourse and make the whole site available for housing development. They did this in the context of Spelthorne's statutory "call for sites" in relation to the Local Plan.

Previously the development company Redrow had held an exhibition at the racecourse to introduce draft plans for what was already a huge development of around 2,000 houses with associated infrastructure on land surrounding the racecourse.

If the track were to be closed it would make it possible to build at least 3,000 homes there.

The Jockey Club claims that the plan is an essential element of a strategy to safeguard the future well-being of British horse racing. This strategy would entail using the £100m generated by the sale of Kempton Park for housing to upgrade Sandown Park racecourse in Esher, to which Kempton Park's Boxing Day showpiece race, the King George VI steeplechase, could possibly be moved, and building a new all-weather track at Newmarket, the nominal headquarters of British racing.

Quite how this would solve whatever perceived problems British racing faces is not exactly clear, and opinion within the racing industry is sharply divided on the matter. Many important trainers, owners and commentators strongly oppose the potential loss of a historic track with a long and illustrious heritage, and which serves a significant local audience. It is hard, they say, to see how the sport might be improved by closing a track which has a unique character, which offers both National Hunt and all-weather flat racing, and offers a different test for horses from

other courses within the region, like Sandown Park and Ascot, and purely flat-race tracks like Epsom and Windsor.

That, of course, is not the primary concern of local residents. The complete loss of a vital area of Green Belt, which performs a classic Green Belt function of preventing the continuous sprawl of suburban built-up area, to be replaced by a suburb which would be almost as big as Lower Sunbury (we deliver our newsletters to about 4,000 houses) is a frankly horrendous prospect.

There is a school of thought which says that this is just a ploy cooked up between the Jockey Club and Redrow to alarm everyone with an extreme proposal, so that when they subsequently relent and revert to the scheme for 2,000 dwellings while retaining the racecourse, they hope everyone will regard this as some kind of victory, and not oppose it with the same vehemence. If so, they are deluding themselves - their cynical attitude towards the site will serve to sharpen residents' resolve to oppose any kind of development on Green Belt.

After the well-documented controversy surrounding their initial dialogue with Kempton Park's representatives about the possibility of housing development there, Spelthorne Council have been admirably consistent on the issue during the last year or so since Redrow made it public that a specific housing plan for the site was being prepared. This broadly coincided with Sunbury East councillor, Ian Harvey, taking over as Leader of the Council. In response to the publishing of the Jockey Club plan, he said: *"I am fully aware of the views of local residents and have consistently made clear my strong opposition to development of this site and my determination to protect the Green Belt in Spelthorne. I made my position absolutely clear in an open letter which I wrote to Redrow homes in April 2016. Nothing has changed. The Council's finances are very robust and any suggestion*

that it needs money from new development is completely groundless."

As we have underlined in previous newsletters, as part of the consultation process for the new Local Plan, which is just getting under way (see separate article on P. 4), and with Spelthorne making its 'call for sites', site owners and developers will be lobbying for various Green Belt sites, including Kempton Park, to be released for housing. Alongside this, revised assessments of housing need will be made and debated, and those numbers will inform the consideration of the status of sites.

Ultimately, the final decision on these issues will rest with the Planning Inspector at the Examination in Public of the new Draft Local Plan, and our task is to ensure that Spelthorne Council maintain their tough line on the issue, and also to make our own strong representations on the subject.

The process of drafting the new Local Plan, and consulting on it, is likely to take two or three years, maybe longer, and it is important for us to retain our focus during that period.

These are complex and contentious issues, and we will need to invest resources in getting professional legal advice to help mount our case and pursue it. We have already taken the first steps in this direction, so we hope that, when we make appeals over the next year or two for extra donations to enable this battle to be fought effectively, residents will be prepared to support the cause.

Residents can be assured that LOSRA will keep this topic high on its agenda and will work closely with Keep Kempton Green, the local organisation with a specific focus on the issue, to co-ordinate opposition to unacceptable plans for the site as they arise.

Solid progress continues at Sunbury Health Centre

It was evident from the recent open meeting under the auspices of the Patients Participation Group at Sunbury Health Centre that there has been real progress taking place at Sunbury Health Centre (SHC).

In our last newsletter, we reported that SHC was on the brink of launching their revised appointments system. They are now four months into the new system, and all the indications are that it has been a huge success. Credit must be given to the staff, supported by the Patient Participation Group (PPG), for achieving their aim to eliminate the need for patients to queue early in the morning to get an appointment on the day.

The work needed to achieve this should not be under-estimated. Many will remember the Daily Mail headline a couple of winters ago of 'The queue that shames Britain'. Referring to SHC, the article echoed the poor state of the NHS at a local level across the UK with seriously under-resourced facilities and overworked staff.

At SHC there certainly appears to be a driving 'can do' attitude that is reaping

dividends at a time of ever increasing cuts and pressure. Close partnership working and engaging with Spelthorne and Surrey Councillors and Kwasi Kwarteng MP, as well as investment in staffing and IT systems, is quite clearly making a real difference.

Many of the changes that are improving services for patients have taken place in the background, but users of the Practice will have noticed the redecorated Waiting Room, enhanced by local artwork and an information screen that shows current appointment waiting times and local information rather than the bland NHS messages telling us to eat 5-a-Day! By the end of this summer, the long awaited building of the new Reception area should be well under way.

SHC management recognise that there is still much to be done, but they are keen to assure everyone that Sunbury Health Centre is working with the community to provide the best services possible, for the community.

Check out the March edition of 'Sunbury Matters' magazine for an in-depth article about the Health Centre.

Second Application for Controversial Sports Hub Approved by Elmbridge Council

A second application for the controversial £19 million Walton Sports Hub has been approved the day after a High Court judge quashed the original bid in which Elmbridge Council had made and approved the application to itself.

The development, on the banks of the Thames opposite Lower Sunbury, has the potential to cause significant light and noise nuisance to riverside residents.

Members of a full Planning Committee, perhaps unsurprisingly, voted by a majority that the Waterside Drive project was 'not an inappropriate development within the green belt'.

Amongst others, two important conditions have been attached to the new plan's approval. These provide for a Noise Management Plan, with appropriate noise control measures, and a lighting strategy which will limit lighting between the hours of 22.00 and 07.00, with particular regard to the well-being of wildlife.

The implementation and observation of these conditions will doubtlessly be scrutinised by residents to ensure absolute compliance.

LOSRA instrumental in getting air quality monitor installed at Sunbury Cross

Over the last couple of years, LOSRA has been campaigning through Spelthorne Council for the installation of an air quality monitoring station at Sunbury Cross, to replace the one which was removed without announcement a few years ago as an economy measure.

It is well known that Sunbury Cross, with the concentration of traffic in the area, is one of the two most polluted sites in Surrey, so in our view it is essential that as much data and information as possible is available to monitor just how bad the situation is at this location. The whole of Spelthorne Borough is designated an Air Quality Action Zone.

When we met our MP Kwasi Kwarteng last year, we stressed the importance of this issue, and he approached Heathrow Airport to ask them if they would be prepared to help fund the installation, to which they agreed. Discussions proceeded, and towards the end of last year, Spelthorne Council sent out the following press release: "Spelthorne Borough Council has commissioned environmental consultants Ricardo-AEA to reinstall an air quality monitoring station near Sunbury Cross for an initial period of 12-months.

"The monitoring station, which has been

funded jointly by Spelthorne Council and Heathrow, will contain equipment that continuously measures levels of the common pollutants emitted by vehicles.

"The monitoring station complements the ten diffusion tubes measuring Nitrogen Dioxide in and around the Sunbury Cross area. The information will help the Council understand how pollutants behave and their relationship with the weather and enable it to make informed policy decisions. The monitoring results will be uploaded in real time to the Heathrow Airwatch website <http://www.heathrowairwatch.org.uk/> so anyone who is interested will be able to view and download the data.

"The data collected from the monitoring station will be compared to results collected previously. Its continued use will be reviewed after the 12-month period".

This is excellent news, since this monitor will measure the most harmful particulates. While we are aware that the situation in inner city locations is undoubtedly worse than we suffer, it is essential that we know how rapidly air quality is deteriorating in our area, so that at least a discussion about mitigating measures has some accurate context.

LOSRA successfully opposes huge advertising sign at Sunbury Cross

An application for a massive advertising sign at Sunbury Cross has been refused, with LOSRA among the parties who strongly objected to it.

The application was for "Display of a free-standing double sided digital advertisement display and associated logo boxes with a maximum height of 17.15m".

The sign was intended to be sited on the piece of ground adjacent to the Chubb building, newly converted into an apartment block, at the point where the slip road from the northbound M3 meets Sunbury Cross roundabout.

At well over 50 feet high, and with internal illumination, it was clearly intended to be visible to people travelling on the M3 flyover at this point, as well as to everyone in and around the Sunbury Cross area, both on foot, in cars, and in their homes.

It would have been both obtrusive and dangerous, because of its potential to distract. People moving into the new residences in the block close by would have had the tower only a handful of metres away. In our view, it was important to make every effort to oppose it.

Spelthorne's bid for two fire appliances at new fire station rejected by Surrey

At the last Meeting of Spelthorne Council, the following motion was passed: "That Spelthorne Borough Council request that the new Fire Station proposed by Surrey County Council to be built at Fordbridge Roundabout, has two pumps/appliances/fire engines. To do otherwise would seriously endanger and disadvantage the lives and property of the residents of Spelthorne, which is an area of high demand for both Fire and Rescue Services and one of elevated risks due to many factors."

For some reason the original motion was amended to remove the wording "each fully manned by trained Fire Fighters whole time (full time at all times, 24hrs a day, 7 days a week)".

However, that submission clearly fell on deaf ears at Surrey County Council, which evidently sees Spelthorne as the poor relation of the County, where anything that the leafy boroughs of the stockbroker belt don't want (like the 'EcoPark') can be dumped, while starving it of essential resources.

This week Cllr Ian Harvey, Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council, released this statement: "It is very disappointing to learn today that Surrey County Council has decid-

ed not to provide two full time crews for the planned new fire station at Ashford. As this will be replacing Staines and Sunbury fire stations – two of the busiest in Surrey - we believe it is essential that Spelthorne has two fire appliances, each crewed full-time, to protect the safety of residents. On behalf of all Spelthorne residents I call upon Surrey County Council to reconsider this decision as a matter of urgency."

It seems not to occur to Surrey that, quite apart from having to address emergencies in a borough where traffic congestion can add crucial minutes to journeys, Spelthorne is adjacent to Heathrow Airport, and Spelthorne-based emergency services would be vital in dealing with a major incident there.

The possibility of any kind of emergency at the 'EcoPark', which is an incinerator and gasifier using unproven technology, simply does not bear thinking about with such limited resources available.

It seems extraordinary that in a world where so much is now possible, and almost unthinkable technical progress has been made, it is beyond the capability of national and local government to provide such basics as emergency services at a level we might once have regarded as a bare minimum.

'EcoPark' development continues to restrict recycling facilities

The massive building works at the 'EcoPark' and Charlton Lane Recycling Centre, continue to make life extremely difficult for members of the public using the facility, especially at busy times such as weekends. We are told that there is no prospect of things getting better any time soon, if at all.

Although there are two lanes available on the entrance road, the staff regularly insist on vehicles merging into one lane, with vehicles being stopped so staff can check windscreen stickers and ask what is being disposed of. It was not clear why the left hand lane could not be used for the skips at the end of the site, allowing the right hand lane to be used for the central area.

In all their reports on the way things are going at the site, SUEZ and Surrey County Council management boast that they have received very few complaints from members of the public. This is something of a self-fulfilling prophesy. Having made the place so inconvenient to use, they have discouraged people from even bothering to go there, while other people are completely resigned to being ignored by SCC.

However, there's no reason why there should get an easy ride. If you experience unnecessary queuing there, please complain to Richard Parkinson, Surrey's Waste Operations Group Manager, at richard.parkinson@surreycc.gov.uk

Councillors' windfall grants from BP deal set to benefit local facilities

As a result of Spelthorne's deal in relation to the BP site reported in our last newsletter, windfall grants have been made available to councillors to fund investment in each ward which will have lasting benefit. A sum of £20,000 is available to each ward in the borough.

Applications for funding closed on 21st March, after which they will be scrutinised and final decisions made, but we understand from discussions with councillors that Sunbury East and Sunbury West and Halliford councillors that it is likely they will join forces to use their grants to fund significant improvements to Cedars Recreation Ground in Green Street, which lies on the boundary between the wards.

These enhancements are likely to include the laying of a perimeter path to make the Park easier to use, especially for children using it as a route to school.

Streets to be turned off at night in Surrey County Council cost-saving scheme

During March, Surrey County Council will be switching off over 400,000 street lights across the county between midnight and 5am as part of a £210,000 cost saving measure. Residential streets have apparently been visited by the Council's Engineers to ensure they are suitable for part-night lighting and are also being reviewed by the Council's Road Safety Team, and Surrey Police.

The Council have developed a set of 'avoidance criteria' and if one or more of these are present in a road, the lights will not be switched off (in the case of traffic calming and formal pedestrian crossings, some lights may be turned off with those closest to them being left on). Lights on roads which are considered to be traffic routes will not be switched off.

For example, 'traffic routes' will be excluded - these will mainly be A, B and C classified roads, although some lower used roads in this group may be included and equally some more highly used unclassified roads may be excluded.

Other criteria are where traffic calming measures (speed cushions or humps, chicanes etc.) or formal pedestrian crossings such as zebra crossings are present and they require illumina-

tion; locations where Council or Police CCTV is in operation to reduce crime; and places where the Council's Road Safety Team or Surrey Police believe that implementing part-night lighting could have an adverse effect on either crime or road safety. In cases where buses or trains run beyond the proposed switch off time, roads will be assessed and may either be excluded from part-night lighting or have a later switch off time.

Most roads in Sunbury are on the initial list before the application of the exclusion criteria. If residents in a road object to the switch off, there is a reviews process available – details are on the SCC web site, with a downloadable form for requesting a reviews, at <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/road-maintenance-and-cleaning/street-lights-traffic-signals-and-signs/part-night-street-lighting/reviews-process-for-part-night-lighting>

We appreciate the need for local government resources to be carefully managed, given current funding issues, but it seems to us that there are many potential downsides to this, most obviously that of safety for residents using the streets at night. If you have concerns of any sort please use the review process—it is down to residents of individual roads to do so.

Work on Local Plan delayed by resource issues

In our last newsletter we highlighted the complex process which is now under way for the preparation of the new Local Plan. The work on that process has been delayed by a difficulty in identifying and procuring the right personnel resources to undertake aspects of the work, we understand.

John Brooks, Spelthorne's Assistant Head Of Planning (Policy), has confirmed that they are resolving the resourcing issues, but work on the Plan is progressing only slowly. This is compounded by the range of other issues they face, which include current consultations on the expansion of Heathrow and other related aviation matters.

Mr. Brooks told us: "Following consultation at the end of last year on a methodology for a Green Belt Assessment consultants are now about to commence the technical work for us. In January, Spelthorne completed a 'call for sites' and the response will feed into a wider piece of work called the Strategic Land Availability Assessment. When complete this will give a good idea of what appropriate capacity we have in the Borough for development. Neither document is likely to be completed for publication until the autumn at the earliest.

All the work on what we call the 'evidence base' for the new Local Plan will inform a document setting out the issues facing the Borough and the options available to deal with these. A public consultation on the 'Issues and Options' is not expected now before 2018."

All of that underlines what a complex and lengthy process this is, but one where we dare not take our eye off the ball, as this will set the strategic context for housing and other development in the borough for the foreseeable future.

We will be making relevant submissions as the various stages of the consultation proceed, and will alert residents when we need support or objections from individuals.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

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Pam Ibrahima	36 Maryland Way	07715 808666
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George Rushbrook	8 Meadows End	788471
Paul Thompson (Chairman)	12 Brackenwood	07788 107500
Paul Watts (President)	87 The Avenue	788449

Friends of Sunbury Park

Cows to return to Sunbury Park in April

The planned programme of grassland and biodiversity management in Sunbury Park continues this year with the grazing of cattle during the summer months. At this stage, Spelthorne Council officers do not know the exact date - it will depend on when the animals become available from their current grazing site - but it is likely to be about the middle of the month, although Easter may intervene. They are keen to get the cows on the grass before the growing season gets too far under way.

Equally, we do not know the exact number of cows that will be coming. The plan is for it to be a few more than last year, in order to have a more noticeable impact on the grass. If we get enough notice of their arrival date (they rather took us by surprise last year) we will post a story on the LOSRA web site.

Can you help with a litter pick in Sunbury Park on Saturday 8th April?

Although the contractors do a good job in maintaining Sunbury Park and Orchard Meadow, some Park users are inconsiderate in the way they throw litter away, and items tend to accumulate in many of the bushes and undergrowth.

The Friends of Sunbury Park are organising a litter pick on Saturday 8th April, meeting at 10.30 a.m. in the Green Street car park. Spelthorne Council will be providing litter picking tools, protective gloves and plastic sacks, so if you would like to help keep the Park litter-free, the Friends would be delighted to see you there, and your help would be greatly appreciated.

Friends of Sunbury Embroidery Forthcoming events

The Friends of Sunbury Embroidery have two social and fund-raising events during the spring and summer, so make sure you put the dates in your diary. They are:

Friday 12th May Springtime Social

The third in the Friends' Gallery Gatherings takes place on Friday 12th May (7.30 for 8pm) and once again offers a friendly and relaxing evening with gentle jazz courtesy of Café Society, a trio featuring Jonathan Whines (saxes and flute), Gerry Cook (guitar) and Roger Harding (bass). Tickets are £5.00, including a glass of wine, and are available from the Gallery, or simply turn up and pay on the night.

Saturday 8th July Picnic In The Park

The Friends have reverted to a July date for this year's Picnic In The Park, and it takes place on Saturday 8th July. The band who will be providing the 'live' music is still being finalised, but please make a note of the date and keep an eye out for further publicity, and ticket availability.

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 2017. In addition, I would like to make a donation of £..... (SPR17)

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