

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION 2012 AUTUMN NEWSLETTER



www.losra.org

Residents' campaign secures good chance of positive outcome for Police College development

A determined and well-executed campaign mounted by local residents with the close involvement and support of LOSRA has ensured that there is a strong chance of the community achieving about as good a result as could have been hoped for in respect of the Police College development.

The site of the redundant College on the corner of Thames Street and Green Street, in a prominent key position in the Conservation Area, was always likely to be developed for housing, especially once the land was bought by Linden Homes, the company with whom residents have been at loggerheads over the Environment Agency site.

Their initial proposals, shown at an exhibition at the Arts Centre, seemed to have been reasonably well received, but it soon became clear that there was strong opposition from residents in the immediate area, concerned about both the proposed vehicle exit on to Green Street and the density of the development. These residents formed the Police College Development Action Group (PCDAG), and LOSRA sat alongside the PCDAG, which was driving the opposition, in order to guide and advise on working within the planning process.

The original plan provided for 49 dwellings comprising houses and flats, although after discussions between Linden Homes, the residents' groups and Spelthorne Planning Officers, this was reduced to 44, which still involved an inappropriate level of density.

It also soon transpired that whereas residents had been told at the exhibition that Surrey County Council's traffic officers would not allow an exit on to Thames Street as it did not comply

with regulations, no such stipulation had in fact been made. The exit on to Green Street would have required drivers leaving the development who wanted to use Thames Street going all the way round the Green Street/Church Street one-way system, creating quite unnecessary traffic on these narrow residential streets.

The 44-dwelling proposal with the Green Street exit nevertheless went before the Planning Committee, with Spelthorne's Planning Officers recommending approval. The Planning Committee, however, were persuaded by the arguments put forward by the residents and by four ward councillors who spoke against the development, and refused permission on a 10-5 vote.

Unsurprisingly, Linden Homes appealed against the refusal, but their attitude was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that they had fought, and lost, an appeal on the refusal of their plan for the Environment Agency site, and also had the additional burden of having already purchased the Police College site, so every day it was not developed was costing them money.

Discussions were therefore opened with Linden Homes on the basis of achieving a revised proposal which would reduce the density of the housing and also provide for vehicle access to and from Thames Street. The upshot of this was a new plan for 28 homes based around the revised access point, and a greater provision of off-street parking.

The complicating factor was that it was not practical from a financial point of view for this plan to include provision for affordable housing. LOSRA and PCDAG felt that this

revised plan was about as good a solution as could be achieved and lobbied strongly for a way to be found to make it work.

When the new plan went before the Planning Committee, it was approved, although Spelthorne were looking to Linden Homes for a £1.1m payment in lieu of the lack of affordable housing. Fortunately, this unrealistically high demand was replaced by an amendment proposed by Sunbury councillor Alf Friday providing for Spelthorne and Linden Homes to reach agreement on a financial arrangement within three weeks.

We are pleased to say that this agreement has been reached, so the 28-unit development can go ahead. Despite that, the Public Enquiry into the appeal against the refusal of the 44-unit plan went ahead in October, in order for Linden Homes to protect their position in the unlikely event of a judicial review on the 28-unit permission.

PCDAG and LOSRA were obliged to oppose the appeal, and PCDAG had already hired a barrister at significant cost. If you feel able to make a contribution to these costs, please send a cheque, stating that it is for the Linden Homes Appeal, made out to LOSRA, (Lower Sunbury Residents Association), to: Colleen Cuthbert, The Secretary, LOSRA, 8 Maryland Way, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex, TW16 6HR. Our thanks to those who have already donated.

Assuming the 28-home plan goes ahead, the residents' campaign will have achieved a much more positive outcome for the village than would otherwise have been the case, and we thank all those involved.

Plan for huge riverside stadium that will blight river views approved by Elmbridge but battle goes on

The view from King's Lawn and St Mary's Church in Sunbury is under threat from Elmbridge Borough Council's Outline Planning Permission for a 'sports hub' to be built in the Green Belt just 50 metres from the banks of the Thames at Sunbury Weir. It may be across the river from us, but it would have a profound impact on the aspect from the Conservation Area.

The complex includes an Athletics Stadium, four more football pitches in addition to those already there, a huge spectator stand and parking for an extra 250 cars and coaches. There will be 28 floodlight masts, towering 18-metres high, spreading light pollution at night from an area that stretches from the Xcel Leisure Centre downstream to the Weir Pub, which is just about opposite St. Mary's Church. The floodlights will clearly be visible from Sunbury particularly in the winter, when the trees lose their leaves, and will be significantly taller than the existing trees. The operation of these floodlights has been approved until 10pm every day. It may affect night vision for boat users, and the Thames is essential as a 'dark wildlife super-highway' for birds and nocturnal mammals. Elmbridge Borough Council do not seem to understand or comply with their own policy (CS12) to 'protect and enhance' the River Thames – they have previous form on this, and seem to regard the river bank as a suitable place to shove things that they don't want near their own residential areas.

In addition, this land was used as landfill for 30 years and is heavily contaminated, containing the high-

est level of the most toxic and dangerous waste in Elmbridge according to the Environment Agency's website. No Environmental Impact Assessment has been conducted to assess the full impact of the sports hub.

The plans include moving Walton Athletics and Walton & Hersham Football Club from their existing grounds in Stompond Lane, Walton-on-Thames, which would result in additional noise from frequent football matches. Spelthorne BC requested a Noise Assessment report of the impact on Sunbury residents before the application was decided, but this was dismissed by Elmbridge BC.

The football club are in a legal battle with Elmbridge BC to renew their lease at Stompond Lane as they do not want to move to this 'out-of-town' location which lacks public transport. Elmbridge BC simply appear to want to profit from selling the vacated land for housing.

This is a beautiful and unique stretch of the river Thames enjoyed by residents, visitors and boat users all year round, and the sports hub will have a hugely negative impact on the setting of the river Thames, its role as a wildlife habitat and the peaceful Sunbury Conservation Area. LOSRA suggests that the riverside site is the wrong location for such a development, and that, if such facilities are needed, other more appropriate sites could be found. Despite the granting of outline permission, there are avenues still to be pursued, so the battle is not yet lost. There is a petition in Skinners newsgazettes to save the view of Sunbury Weir which now has over 1200 signatures. Please join us in calling on Elmbridge BC to find another site for their sports hub.

Planning application submitted for gravel working at Watersplash Farm

As expected, Cemex have submitted a planning application to Surrey County Council for the extraction of gravel from Watersplash Farm adjoining Fordbridge Road between Sunbury and Shepperton.

Since the outcome of the Surrey Minerals Plan consultation process which resulted in Watersplash Farm being identified for working for gravel, despite a strong campaign by SSAGE (Sunbury & Shepperton Against Gravel Extraction) we have been in contact with Cemex, the owners of the site, to ensure we are in touch with the process.

Discussions have clarified that, contrary to SCC's original plan, there will be no aggregates recycling plant at the site, which is good news. In addition, the plan for re-instating the site has been clarified. It would be returned to top quality agricultural land with the current market gardening company working it, while the eastern end of the site along the course of the River Ash would become a nature reserve with enhanced

public footpath access. Working would last a total of five years.

We received word as we went to press on 22nd October that SCC has validated the application, which was unexpected as it usually takes longer. There is now, in theory, a period of 28 days when representations and comments on the application can be made. Thereafter, the planning authority then have 16 weeks to determine the application. The reality, however, is that the application is not expected to go before the Planning Committee before the second half of 2013, and comments will be accepted for way in excess of the 28 days and virtually up until determination takes place.

However, now that it is validated, we are working with Cemex for them to stage a further exhibition of the plans so that residents are fully informed. This is likely to be before Christmas, but obviously there has been no opportunity to organise it yet,

so please keep an eye on the web site for details of this and how to make comments or objections. We will try to ensure that there is plenty of other publicity as well. There is a lot of information on the Cemex web site at www.cemexcommunities.co.uk in the "Shepperton" section.

One of the main issues remains the access to and from the site on to Gaston Bridge Road, and the effect on local residents, and this is still under discussion.

In reality, having fought our case on this for several years through the consultation, we do not think there is a realistic chance of planning permission being refused, and our objective would be to mitigate the impact as much as possible. This is not a position of weakness or abdication of our responsibilities. There is no way that in the long run we can resist the working of gravel on this site. That battle has been fought several times over the last 30 years, and has now been lost. The best we can do now is to work with Cemex to achieve the best possible outcome for residents.

Environment Agency grants operating licence for EcoPark despite strong case made by residents

You will remember that LOSRA and the other residents' groups opposing the so-called EcoPark development in Charlton Lane have been in close touch with the Environment Agency to ensure that they have full information in their consideration of whether to grant an operating licence. However, and dare we say somewhat predictably, The Environment Agency (EA), on 8th October have given SITA (The Applicant) a Permit to proceed with the design, construction and operation of two new processes at the existing Charlton Lane waste transfer and community recycling centre.

The two new installations are:

An Anaerobic Digestion (AD) plant along with Combined Heat and Power Plant and Flare.

A Gasification Plant along with the generation of electricity using a steam turbine.

As noted, this approval has been given despite intense opposition by local residents' associations, SATEP, Spelthorne B.C and local MP Kwasi Kwarteng.

The EA, in their 196 page explanation document, where they answer questions posed by local authorities and the 167 questions submitted by 49 members of the public, state that their investigations have shown that theoretically pollutants generated by the proposed plant will fall within allowable levels. They estimate that the new installation will result in a small increase in local nitrogen dioxide from an already high 93% to 94% of the allowable level. It does not address the possibility of levels becoming higher due to other local activities.

The EA quote the Health Protection Agency (HPA) position in 2009 '*While it is not possible to rule out ad-*

verse health effects from modern well regulated municipal waste incinerators with complete certainty, any potential damage to the health of those living close-by is likely to be small, if detectable'

The doubt that the operation of a gasification plant cannot be equated to a well regulated municipal waste incinerator has been dismissed by the EA as they have been assured by SITA that the problems that have dogged a similar plant in Scotland, resulting in it being infamously designated the worst polluter in Scotland for the last three years, and leading to a moratorium being placed by the authorities on all future gasification plants in Scotland, will be overcome in the design now proposed for Charlton Lane, this despite the fact that SITA have no experience in the design or operation of gasifiers - a triumph of hope over experience.

The question on whether the plant will pose a danger to visitors and the general public using the Community Recycling Centre has been left to the expertise of the designer, with SITA having to advise the EA that a Hazard and Operability study has been conducted before the plant is commissioned. The EA have no plans to review or determine the validity of its findings and assume that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will attend to this; however there appears to be no formal procedure for this.

With reference to whether the proposal has financial merit and is it the most efficient method of disposing of municipal waste, is not addressed as it does not come within the EA's remit. This remains a classic example of government and vested interests forcing an inappropriate development through for political and financial reasons.

Development plans for London Irish and Hazelwood site approved

As you will know, in June Spelthorne's Planning Committee approved the amended plans for housing development on the London Irish site in The Avenue and for the rugby club to move to Hazelwood golf course.

With the approval of the plan for a reduced density housing plan, the denser scheme has been withdrawn, which is a modest positive outcome. It remains to be seen whether conditions to be attached to the Hazelwood permission affect the scheme's viability.

This has been a bitter and hard-fought campaign where our initial victory proved to be a hollow one because of the Government's new Planning Policy Framework and the small print of the Secretary of State's report on the appeal refusal. It's sad to have to succumb to being beaten by the big business bullies who are behind this.

Concern over mooted hydropower scheme for Sunbury Weir stream

Earlier this year, representatives of a scheme to create a hydropower scheme on Sunbury Lock Island, using Archimedes screw technology between the lock cut and the weir stream, made an initial presentation to the LOSRA committee.

Since then, riverside residents and fishermen have expressed concern about the scheme's potential impact, although the scheme is still embryonic. However, it is likely to become a 'live' issue fairly soon.

LOSRA has no specific views either way at this stage, and will ensure that any plans, as soon as they exist, will be made public via an exhibition and on the web site, so that a proper consultation exercise can take place and everyone is fully informed.

Page Engineering works to close?

We understand from an employee of Page Engineering who has received a round-robin letter from the company's management that their works in Lower Sunbury adjacent to the cemetery will be closed at some stage in the foreseeable future.

Apparently, the work which is done there will be transferred to overseas locations. If this happens it would be very unfortunate for the many Sunbury residents who work there, as it is a long-established part of the local infrastructure.

It also means, we suspect, that it will mean another brownfield site becoming available for housing development. We will post any further news on the web site as it arrives.

If you find our newsletters useful, but you don't pay a LOSRA subscription, please may we give you a polite prod?

Sometimes when we ask people if they are LOSRA members, they say "Yes, we get your newsletters". Can we just clarify that we deliver our newsletters to well over 4,000 houses in Lower Sunbury regardless of whether people are members or not. We do this so that we can achieve maximum effectiveness for what we do and to encourage more people to subscribe.

At the moment, we have about 500 members who have paid their £5 for 2012 or £100 for Life Membership. That's not much more than 10% of the people that get the newsletters and also, we hope and would like to think, derive some benefit in terms of protecting the local amenities and quality of life from what LOSRA does.

We will continue to deliver the newsletters via our much-valued network of volunteer deliverers, but obviously it would be good if more residents felt that what we do merits a contribution of £5 a year to keep the work going. Please see the slip at the bottom of the page if you wish to join.

Thames corner site to be smartened up

LOSRA contacted Spelthorne Council to ask if anything could be done improve the look of the vacant building plot on the corner of Thames Street and French Street. As a result, the owners were contacted and they have agreed to clean up the site, get rid of the rubbish, and make it more presentable. Unfortunately, there is nothing that can be done to force them to build the flats that they have planning permission for, but it might improve the street scene to a modest extent.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

David Banks	38 Kenton Avenue	789652
Pamela Cabannes-Barrall	4 Forge Mews	761131
Elleke Carling	3 Croysdale Avenue	882726
Ziz Coltart (Treasurer)	161 The Avenue	782277
Tessa Cook	125 The Avenue	700264
Don Cunningham	2 Parkwood Grove	889033
Colleen Cuthbert (Secretary)	8 Maryland Way	783606
Peter Francis	Linden Lodge, Woodlands Drive	770661
Jenny Grant	Riverbank, The Creek	780682
John Hirsh (Chairman)	21 School Walk	781363
George Rushbrook	8 Meadows End	788471
Matt Thomas	7 Nursery Road	
Muriel Wallsgrove	Weir End, Parke Rd,	770236
Paul Watts (President)	87 The Avenue	788449
David Woods	47 Sunna Gardens	786806

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not paid your subscription for this year, could you please help us by paying your subscription either by using the secure PayPal facility on our web site at www.losra.org or dropping your subscription in to one of our two collection points using the tear-off slip below. You can deliver it to either of the following shops : Skinners Newsagents/Post Office in Avenue Parade; Twirltour Travel in Green Street. Our thanks to these businesses for their help in providing this service. You can also become Life Member at a cost of £100.

Please find enclosed my annual subscription of for family membership of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association for the calendar year 2012. In addition, I would like to make a donation of £..... (AUT12)
 Name:..... Address :
 Tel. no. : E-mail address.....

FRIENDS OF SUNBURY PARK

Carols In The Meadow and LSBC Christmas Market Thursday December 13th

Lower Sunbury's annual community carols event, Carols In The Meadow, takes place this year on Thursday 13th December at 6.30pm in Orchard Meadow. This is always a popular and well-attended kick-off for the Christmas season, with music led by the Salvation Army Band, and Father Christmas putting in an appearance for the youngsters.

This year, once again, it coincides with the Christmas Market in Avenue Parade under the auspices of Lower Sunbury Business Community, with arts and crafts, foody sampling and presents, jewellery and accessories for sale, so come and join in the fun and get into the festive spirit.

Cattle grazing in Sunbury Park

At the last meeting of Friends Of Sunbury Park, the proposal, mentioned in a 2011 newsletter, to graze a small number of cattle in Sunbury Park to improve the biodiversity regime, was discussed further, and it is intended that, during the winter, a pen will be brought into the Park for a weekend with a few of the cattle to introduce residents to the idea. We will update you via the web site when we know more.

Volunteers needed for Sunbury Neighbours

Sunbury Neighbours are looking for additional Drivers and Duty Officers will offer their help to continue this long established Volunteer Help scheme. Sunbury Neighbours organise car journeys for people unable to access their own or public transport for visits to local Doctors, Hospitals, shopping needs, Day Centres, Hairdressers and other local trips. Please ring John on 01932 784432 or David on 01932 787290 for an informal chat. We look forward to your call. We apologise if you have put your name forward previously but received no reply. This will have been due to the Sunbury Neighbours contact suffering a period of ill-health and hospitalisation, so do please try again.