

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION 2018 AUTUMN NEWSLETTER Results of Local Plan “Issues & Options” consultation published



www.losra.org

In our last newsletter before the Annual General Meeting we announced that at the AGM, Anne Biggs, Spelthorne’s Strategic Planning Manager, would do a presentation setting out key issues relating to the Issues & Options Consultation relating to how development in Spelthorne would be provided for in the new Local Plan.

Ms. Biggs did an absolutely excellent, thorough and lucid presentation which we know helped people in the audience to understand the factors which might influence how they responded to the consultation, which ended a few weeks after the AGM. We are grateful to her for her valuable contribution to the meeting and the whole process.

The Response Document relating to that consultation was published on 1st October summarising the preferences of respondents and comments that they made.

The Strategic Options for where development to meet housing need employment need should be focused, which were the subject of the consultation were:

1. Brownfield Focus: use existing urban areas, and increase densities
2. Green Belt Focus: amend Green Belt boundaries to accommodate needs
3. Staines focus: make maximum use of opportunities in and around Staines
4. A combination of these: use opportunities offered by all these options.

There were 247 responses, with 40 of them from Lower Sunbury, a disproportionately high percentage, which was noted in the report, and with detailed comments from those Lower Sunbury responses which were highlighted in the document.

There is insufficient space here to include very much detail - it is a 15-page report - but we will highlight some of

the main points. If you wish to read the complete document it is available on-line at https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/media/19003/Issues-and-Options-consultation-response-document/pdf/Issues_and_Options_Consultation_-_Response_Document.pdf.

More than 55% of respondents strongly agreed with the Brownfield option. More than 75% of respondents strongly disagreed with the Green Belt option. 44% strongly agreed with the Staines option, while the Combination option having a wider spread of opinion, although 55% with disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Broadly, these responses are encouraging from our point of view, in that they generally strongly oppose the idea of releasing Green Belt land for development, and support the idea of focusing on brownfield sites, and the Staines area.

Issues of concern most frequently mentioned in the comments added to the responses were the importance of ensuring adequate infrastructure to make development sustainable, the importance of protecting Green Belt, and the importance of retaining and improving open spaces.

It was noted in the section at the end of the report devoted to additional comments outside the Local Plan designations that there were 12 submissions by developers promoting specific sites, who presumably were much the same people who provided the 13 comments in favour of Green Belt development. There were double that number in this section who specifically opposed releasing Green Belt, as well as 14 expressing concern about Heathrow expansion.

The summary of key issues which were raised a number of times by respondents covered a wide range of topics included many which mirror issues where LOSRA shares such concerns. These included: concern about high rise development, while accepting the need for greater densities;

need for more affordable housing; concern over loss of Green Belt; objection to development of Kempton Park; concern of impact of development on infrastructure, especially health provision, schools and roads; support for compulsory purchase powers; need for more sport and leisure facilities; lack of parking provision; support for Staines as thriving centre; need to take account environmental issues such as flood risk, air quality and biodiversity; need to retain control of Local Plan within Spelthorne and its community.

There was some lack of understanding about the designation of Protected Urban Open Space (PUOS) and Local Green Spaces (LGS), but respondents generally supported LGS if they offer more protection than PUOS.

Respondents were asked if there were any areas of green space which should be designated as Local Green Space in the Local Plan, and 15 of the 17 sites which were nominated more than once by the 94 respondents who made suggestions are located in Lower Sunbury.

In general, the outcome of the consultation is positive, in that there is strong opposition to Green Belt development. The extent to which this affects decision-making remains to be seen, but it gives us solid evidence to cite in subsequent proceedings.

Many thanks to all those individuals and organisations who took the trouble to respond to the consultation—we suspect there will be more input of this kind we will need to give in the coming months.

There is a long way to go and we are likely to need to pay for further legal advice and representation. Along with Keep Kempton Green we will be embarking on further fundraising to ensure we have a fighting fund for this purpose well in advance so we can defend the community’s interests as professionally as possible.

Charlton Lane “EcoPark: We set out the grisly truth

As the so-called Eco Park at Charlton Lane approaches its completion nearly eighteen months behind schedule, now is the time to consider what we are getting for a project which has cost Surrey County Council £103,000,000 of rate-payers' money.

There are three principal components of the development. The first of these is the pre-existing Community Recycling Centre CRC. To accommodate the other components of the Eco Park this had to be reduced in capacity, with resulting increase in queuing and waiting times, an extraordinary thing to do when it is a nationwide priority to encourage recycling.

The second component is the Anaerobic Digester (AD); this is a process where food waste is converted into gas which is fed into gas engines that power electric generators. Generous government subsidies have resulted in an oversupply of these plants, some of which have been mothballed because of the lack of available food waste. The situation has resulted in keen competition for the available food waste with processing prices being driven down. Unfortunately, SCC is not in a position to take advantage of this as they are contracted to supply Surrey's food waste exclusively to the Charlton Lane operator.

Concern has been expressed about the smallness of the site which has resulted in the plant being uncomfortably close to the CRC, and in the case of the

AD plant has resulted in a plant with little or no safety margins. Any catastrophic explosion, (and these have occurred in existing AD plants), could result in the plant being swamped in a fermenting slurry of food waste, with possible loss of life.

The location of the low level emergency flare has also been questioned, since any low level gaseous leak could lead to an explosion. In addition, its height compared to surrounding tanks could cause hot exhaust to endanger personnel working on the tanks.

The largest and most controversial item is the misnamed Gasifier. It is in fact a two stage experimental incinerator - the first stage is gasification followed by complete combustion. Why has this experimental process been chosen rather than conventional incineration?

The answer is that the site is too small to accommodate a conventional incinerator and importantly Surrey County Council and the operating company Suez have always hoped that Government authorities can be convinced that it is Advanced Conversion Technology (ACT).

To promote ACT the Government has offered, through Redeemable Obligation Certificates, a subsidy effectively paying three times the going rate for any electricity generated. The authorities envisaged that if true gasification is achieved the gas produced would become feed stock for enhanced value added chemical processes or could be efficiently

converted to electricity, via gas engines.

This cannot be achieved in the process selected as it is anticipated that only 18 -20% of the potential energy contained in the municipal waste feed will be converted into electricity.

When compared to efficient modern incinerators, which can achieve 80% conversion, the Charlton Lane Unit does not appear to be a winner and does not meet the Government's targets for carbon footprint reductions. SCC claim that the plant will produce sufficient electricity to power 6,000 homes, far short of the 24,000 homes that efficient modern incineration should achieve.

On the positive side we can report that plant construction both in materials and workmanship are of the highest quality, as is the dedication of the operating staff. We now have to wait to see if the plant can be commissioned successfully to operate safely in the manner intended.

However, even if it is able to start operating, on the basis of what we already know, the facility is clearly a pointless waste of money, inefficiently producing expensive electricity, which is already a complete white elephant, involving unnecessarily blighting Spelthorne's Green Belt with a huge industrial plant that is totally out of proportion with its surroundings.

It represents a towering example of local governance at its very worst, and everyone who has been involved at Surrey County Council should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. Sadly, it seems unlikely that they will ever be properly held to account.

Royal visit to Walled Garden cancelled after Princess Alexandra breaks arm

Sadly, a planned visit on 25th October to the Embroidery Gallery and Walled Garden by HRH Princess Alexandra has had to be cancelled because she has suffered an arm injury.

The purpose of the visit, under the auspices of the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, was for Her Royal Highness to present a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service to the Spelthorne Natural History Society, after first visiting The Swan Sanctuary to present a similar Award.

The Walled Garden was selected as a suitable venue since the Natural History Society does not have a permanent home, and the Lord Lieutenant was aware of the Garden following the Queen's visit in 2000.

It's obviously a great pity, since a considerable number of local people and representatives of organisations had been invited, and it would have been a good opportunity to introduce some exciting development plans for the Gallery to the guests.

We congratulate the organisations receiving the Awards - we understand the presentations ceremonies will now be re-scheduled at another venue on a different date so hopefully they will still enjoy a prestigious occasion.

Would 20mph speed limits in The Avenue and Green Street make the village safer?

LOSRA has been approached by a local resident who is keen to drum up support for the idea of introducing a 20mph speed limit at the village end of both The Avenue and Green Street to reduce the speed of traffic and enhance safety.

There is a view that 20mph limits are a waste of time unless there are specific enforcement measures, whether that means speed cameras or physical installations like speed bumps or platforms. Indeed, Department of Transport research has confirmed that 86% of drivers exceed 20mph limits where there is no enforcement, travelling at an average of 26mph.

LOSRA does not really have a strong view at this stage as we are aware that some residents already think that Lower Sunbury has more than its fair share of such features, with associated street furniture, and that even travelling over them at legal speeds causes a degree of extra wear and tear on tyres and suspension.

Obviously, anything which might improve safety is to be welcomed, but it would only be worth doing if it is effective, which would almost certainly mean physical speed-limiting features. This, in turn, would require funding and in the current climate that might be another difficult issue.

We would welcome your views, so please feel free to message us via the web site.

Planning application for Bugle Nurseries rejected, but confusion over attitudes to Green Belt exposed

A planning application to develop the site of the Bugle nurseries in Upper Halliford Road was dismissed at a recent Planning Committee despite the proposal receiving widespread support from local councillors and residents. At first glance the decision to refuse may seem perverse not least because the site had already been illegally developed and was, by universal agreement, a blemish on the local landscape.

However, the inescapable fact is that the site is Green Belt. Given the general state of indiscriminate development which had already taken place at the Bugle Nurseries, the term Green Belt may seem a misnomer; but the creeping degradation of the site does not alter this designation. 'Green' as in Green Belt does not imply a description.

If it did, it wouldn't be long before unscrupulous owners of Green Belt land would contaminate or defile their holdings in the interests of compromising its status.

Perhaps even more to the point, if Spelthorne's Planning Committee had demonstrated a preparedness to take anything other than a thoroughly robust approach to protecting land with Green Belt status, developers and planning consultants would have seized on such a precedent and it would come back to haunt us time and

again in the context of applications for other sites and in the preparation of the Local Plan.

In short, had the Planning Committee approved the application, the implications for the whole Borough could have been very significant indeed and potentially disastrous.

What was something of a concern about the debate was that there were councillors who really ought to have a better grasp of the significance of issues like this who were prepared to ignore the implications of a decision to build houses on Green Belt land which is fulfilling a proper Green Belt function. Simply because of the way it looked.

As a result, the two hour debate on the subject at Planning Committee was an animated affair and did credit to those councillors who knew the planning law and were both prepared and able to argue the case cogently and convincingly, and properly represented the interests of local residents.

We appreciate that those councillors who spoke in favour of the application might have been representing the views of residents who were maybe unaware of the Green Belt implications and felt that housing would be better than what is there now, but as Planning Committee members they should perhaps be more aware of their priorities in terms of implementing planning law. It was a tightly fought contest but ultimately, and quite properly, the law won.

Planning application for Dart House in Conservation Area strongly opposed by LOSRA and local residents

A planning application (Application 18/01186/FUL) has been submitted for Dart House in Thames Street, in the Lower Sunbury Conservation Area opposite the Flower Pot pub. It provides for demolition of the building and replacement with seven flats with underground parking accessed via a lift and turntable. LOSRA supports the views of local residents that the proposed development is entirely inappropriate on this site and we have strongly objected to it.

Advice of this application was not made known to local residents and the required public notice had not been posted on the front of the building. A number of residents discovered simply by word of mouth. Objections are now closed but late submissions will be considered if received before determination. We have opposed it on these grounds.

A development of this size outside a town centre should include provision for at least 12 off-street parking spaces, but

the proposal shows six underground bays, accessible via a lift/turntable system from street level. This is inadequate and non-compliant with planning guidance, not least in view of the absence of available on-street parking.

While the architectural sketches make reference to the existing street scene, and the potential reuse of original brickwork, the concept design would introduce inappropriate and incongruous modern features to the building façade in the context of the Conservation Area.

The Lower Sunbury Conservation Area is a special feature of our village, and this site is the first riverside architectural feature on the western aspect of the Conservation Area and defines the character and appearance which LOSRA tries to preserve. It is part of a historic vista and we believe the site must be protected from this type of development, and that the proposal to demolish the building in these circumstances is wholly inappropriate for the Conservation Area.

Sunbury Neighbours: more volunteer helpers always needed

It's a while since we have given Sunbury Neighbours a plug, but as a great voluntary set-up that does brilliant practical work in the community, and which always needs more volunteers to help them function effectively, we are delighted to give everyone a reminder here.

Sunbury Neighbours is an entirely voluntary organisation which puts Sunbury folk who can offer help in touch with Sunbury folk who need assistance.

Duty Officers field requests by phone during a limited period each week day and then seek a volunteer to meet the request. The assistance needed usually involves providing transport for shopping, visits to Health Centres/Dentist, P.O., Library etc. for elderly residents.

Due to its limited resources the organisation can only deal with requests from Sunbury residents.

They are always looking for volunteers, to whom they pay expenses to cover fuel, on the understanding that whatever time they can offer is appreciated. There is no pressure and "no" is a perfectly acceptable response to a request for help.

If you can spare some time, or to find out more, please call the Duty Officer - Monday to Friday between 09.30 and 11.30 on 0795 682 2546.

The site is adjacent to listed buildings, including The Flower Pot Pub, Northolt, Thames Cottage and Riverside House and is in the immediate vicinity of the grade II listed St Mary's Church. Proposals for any sites affecting the setting of a listed building need to have special regard to the need to preserve its setting." This proposal clearly does not.

This site is by a busy roundabout, where there have been many accidents, including sadly a recent pedestrian fatality. We believe the proposed development is both impractical and unsafe.

The plans envisage a much larger building than at present, both in terms of footprint and height, and in our view constitutes an overdevelopment of the site with a negative impact on surrounding buildings and on Flowerpot Green

The Council's Listed Buildings and Conservation Officer opposed previous applications for this site on grounds which are equally applicable in this case.

LOSRA is not opposed in principle to the development of this site but this proposal represents an over-development in scale which is completely out of sympathy with the street scene and out of character in the Conservation Area.

River users and residents groups unite to address problem of illegal mooring of 'slum boats' on the Thames

Residents at Sunbury are working with an organisation called and Reclaim our Riverbank and the River Users Groups for Zone 8 (www.thamesriverusersgroup.org) which includes the Sunbury reach to try to get the EA to resolve the problem of unauthorised mooring, which is getting worse on our stretch of the Thames. They are seeking support from individuals and community groups for this effort, which will cover the riverbanks from Teddington to Molesey and from Molesey to Sunbury, bounded by the locks.

The aim is to bring the attention of this persistent and worsening problem to EA leadership and parliament as there are increasing numbers of these 'slumboats' which blight and pollute the Thames, and can make the towpath a hostile place.

There is a relevant web page about Reclaim our Riverbank at http://hamandpetershamforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Reclaim_our_Riverside.pdf, and if you want to know more or would like to get involved you can sign up for a newsletter or contact ROR by e-mailing reclaimourriverbank@gmail.com

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LOSRA subscriptions

Could we ask you to pay your subscription for 2018, if you have not already done so? The fact that, as we make clear in the front page article, there are likely to be calls on our funds for legal advice, means that we need to maintain our income to meet such substantial outgoings.

We are grateful to all members for their financial support via subscriptions and donations, and hope we can encourage more of you to help broaden our membership base and support what we hope you agree is important voluntary work.

Health Centre news Patient survey report published Flu vaccination clinics available

The responses to the 2018 Patients Survey at the Health Centre have been analysed and results published with commentary from the Practice. Here are some of main points.

Whilst the clinical care provided by the Practice continues to be rated highly by patients, access to appointments and waiting times to contact the Practice by telephone remain the predominant challenges.

The number of consultations has grown by at least 16% over the last seven years and the trend remains upwards. The Practice is evolving to meet this challenge through continuous analysis and improvement.

The feedback from patients who have participated in the Patients' Survey, responded to the Mjog text service and/or the recently published national GP Patient Survey is valuable in assessing the standard of service the Practice delivers and in setting priorities for the year ahead.

The Practice has developed several initiatives in the past year to meet the challenges of the increased demand for services. The addition of Training GPs, Nurse Practitioners, Health Care Assistants, a Clinical Pharmacist, additional Phlebotomy clinics, Extended Access Clinics (from September 2018) and the new Clinical Correspondence Team are adding to the capacity of SHCGP. Guiding patients to the most appropriate of these team members is a key objective for the coming year.

Studies have shown that approximately 25% of GP appointments could be dealt with by another healthcare professional. For example, prescription queries can be dealt with by the Clinical Pharmacist, Nurse Practitioners can provide treatment for minor illnesses and injuries, are able to write prescriptions and make referrals where appropriate. By guiding patients to the most appropriate team members, or to self-care, may enable Doctors to use their time more effectively. This is a focus area for the coming year.

Meanwhile, as we enter the flu season, Sunbury Health Centre Group Practice are again offering free flu vaccinations to all eligible patients. This is a much needed source of NHS funded income for the Health Centre and you are encouraged to use this service.

The Patient Participation Group and the administrative staff of the Health Centre will be providing cakes, mostly home-made, and fruit at the clinics in return for a donation.

This year, the money raised will go to the Multiple Sclerosis Society, a charity pertinent to the centre staff, with over £400 raised so far with three clinics still to go. The dates are 20th October and the 3rd and 10th November. Please book in advance.

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 2018. In addition, I would like to make a donation of £..... (AUT18)

Name:..... Address :

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