

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

2019 NEW YEAR NEWSLETTER



www.losra.org

Concerns growing about levels of crime and police ability to investigate

Many local residents will be aware that over the last few months there appears to have been an increasing incidence of break-ins, burglaries, thefts of vehicles and components from vehicles parked outside houses and break-ins to cars in local car parks.

During November 2018 there were 52 recorded house burglaries in Spelthorne compared to 15 in December 2017, 18 in March 2018, 15 in June and 21 in October. Worryingly, we know of two recent cases in Lower Sunbury of assaults on residents during break-ins.

This may have been a temporary one-off spike, but there have also been increased incidences of other types of crime notified to Neighbourhood Watch groups, especially the theft of catalytic converters from vehicles outside houses.

We also have learnt of the theft of a mobile home from a Lower Sunbury driveway without the house being disturbed to steal keys - the vehicle apparently had tracking devices and we understand that it was eventually recovered from a travellers' site in Birmingham.

There have also been thefts from vehicles, including a particularly brazen break-in at around 1pm on a weekday lunchtime in Orchard Meadow car park in The Avenue - hardly a secluded or quiet spot—when a car window was broken and bags stolen.

At the same time, concerns are also being voiced that with continued cuts in police funding, Surrey Police simply do not have adequate resources to devote to the investigation of such crimes.

At a recent meeting of the local River Users Group set up under the auspices of the Environment Agency, at which a topic for discussion was thefts of and from boats, the police officer in attendance put the problem in wider context when she observed that it was now normal practice for the Police not to follow up reports of burglaries or investigate

them with a view to identifying those responsible, unless there are obvious lines of enquiry available, such as CCTV.

Given that context, we felt that this is a subject which LOSRA needs to address, and we contacted the Borough Commander, Insp. Maxine Cilia to ask for her comments on the situation and what plans there might be to address the issue. Her report is too long to be included in its entirety here, but the full version is available on our website. We would highlight the following key statistics and comments in the report.

Figures for total crime of all kinds in Sunbury went down in 2018 compared to 2017 from 1,287 to 1,239. However, the area where there was an increase was in violent crime - Insp. Cilia says the increase is in line with national trends and does not give local police a cause for concern. We might not be quite so sanguine about this trend, given that the numbers have gone up from 363 to 402, which seems an awful lot of violent crime.

Insp. Cilia states that "Surrey Police investigates crime where there are key priority lines of enquiry. Key lines of enquiry will include a witness, CCTV, forensic opportunities or recovered property etc. We prioritise certain crime types which include dwelling burglary (which now includes sheds and garages) domestic violence and hate crime." It seems to be the case that there are times when incidents are simply filed at the time of reporting as there are no priority lines of enquiry or the victim of the crime is not supportive of further action.

The report states that the number of domestic burglaries in Sunbury fell from 116 to 105, which Insp. Cilia states "has been down to endless pursuit of suspects and also the Neighbourhood work around making people safer in their homes." This is a topic where we might be inclined to ask some further detailed questions to clarify the background to the statement.

One positive development which Insp. Cilia highlights is that a dedicated PCSO,

Colin Gibbons, has been moved into Sunbury to work with the current PCSO Steve Walters and Neighbourhood Support Officer Adam Saunders who cover the area.

We also asked the Police and Crime Commissioner, David Munro, for his comments and he volunteered the following:

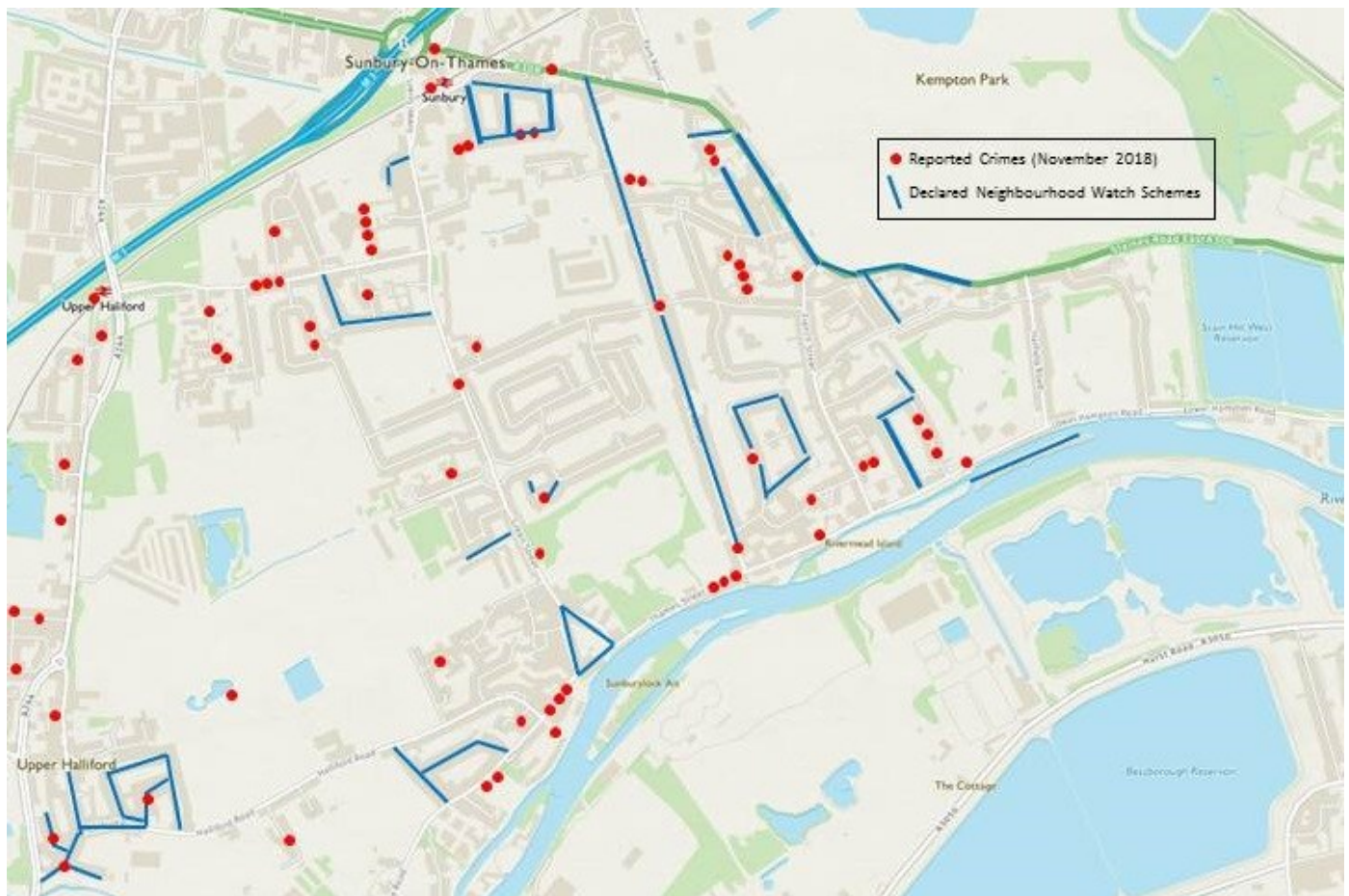
"As the elected PCC for this county I am really keen to hear the public's views on policing in their local area. I will be attending either a planned residents meeting or the LOSRA AGM in June to hear first-hand people's concerns and views on policing in your local area."

Recorded crime has risen nationally and we are not immune here in Surrey however the Force has worked really hard and are making great progress in reducing burglary rates across the county. We have seen rises however in vehicle crime and I have already raised this with the Chief Officer team who are working to tackle the issue and raise awareness of crime prevention."

Residents often tell me how much they value their local police and find that visible presence in their communities reassuring. I am currently consulting with the public on my proposal to raise the policing element of next year's council tax by an extra £2 a month for a Band D property in return for an additional 100 police officers in Surrey."

The proposed rise would mean doubling the number of officers in our dedicated neighbourhood teams which support area policing teams across the county while also helping Surrey Police invest in specialist officers to tackle serious organised crime gangs and drug dealers in our communities."

Surrey is a safe county to live in and residents have their part to play in making sure they take precautions to ensure their property and vehicles are as secure as possible. Equally, our public can be the eyes and ears of the police and I would urge anyone that witnesses any suspicious



activity in their neighbourhood to contact police so that action can be taken to make our communities even safer.

What is clear is that, even if there proves not to be a continuing pattern of increasing crime of this kind, it is reasonable to assume that Lower Sunbury is always likely to be an area which is targeted by criminals as providing opportunities for breaking into houses, often from the rear, with the chance of finding cash, jewellery or other valuable items. The same applies to sheds and garages - often even easier to get into.

At the same time, with the best will in the world, we probably need to accept that we are unlikely to see a greatly increased visibility of police on the streets in the form of beat officers or vehicle patrols.

In these circumstances, LOSRA feels that residents need to take at least a measure of responsibility to make life more difficult for those looking to carry out such crimes, and help the police in any way they can. It seems to us that the first and most obvious initiative would be to revitalise the Neighbourhood Watch network in Lower Sunbury. The scheme has been in place for a long time, and has maybe lost some momentum, as well as organisers, over the years.

The map above plots incidents of crimes in Sunbury against the location of Neighbourhood Watch groups. It is hard to draw too many conclusions from this, but if nothing else it shows that such crimes happen all over the district and that there are plenty of opportunities for new or re-activated NW groups to fill in gaps in the network. If details of anything suspicious can rapidly be circulated within active NW groups, residents can be more aware of current threats or patterns of criminal activity.

If you are aware that there is no Neighbourhood Watch in your street and are willing to be a Co-ordinator, or if you want to find out more about Neighbourhood Watch, you should contact Richard Dunn, who is not only a Watch Coordinator himself, but is also on the Spelthorne NHW Steering Committee and is the liaison for Sunbury East. He is responsible for setting up new watches, getting leaflets etc. His details are: Phone 01932 787854 or email dunnnodepoint@aol.com

Quite apart from NW involvements, residents generally can help themselves, and deter criminals by ensuring that access via side gates is made as difficult as possible, that doors and windows are locked, and that sheds and garages are also made secure.

In addition, residents who are walking, cycling or driving around Sunbury should keep their eyes open for anybody who is acting suspiciously - people knocking on doors or seeming to be taking an undue interest in houses or gardens etc..

In particular, if anyone calls at your house with some kind of spurious inquiry or purporting to represent some official body or utility, in no circumstances let them in unless they have proper credentials. If necessary, ask for the number of their office so that you can call to check them out. Anything that looks wrong should be reported to the Police and Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators.

We are not suggesting that we should introduce a vigilante culture, but extra awareness and vigilance will help highlight potential problems. If criminals targeting the area can be challenged by Police as a result of intelligence supplied by residents, it helps create a perception that our locality is too difficult for them to operate in.

If you are concerned about and interested in crime matters, you can get regular news and updates by signing up to the <https://www.intheknow.community/> web site to find out what is happening in your area - witness appeals, crime updates, crime prevention advice and news. It's specific to individuals' interests and local area, comes from reliable sources and you're in control of how often you are contacted and who you receive information from.

LOSRA is of the view that this is a subject where we need to keep a close watching brief and do whatever we can to ensure that residents feel as safe as possible. We are considering the possibility, if this turns out to be a hot topic, of having a public meeting, which we hope would be attended by the Police & Crime Commissioner, the Spelthorne Borough Commander for Surrey Police and local councillors - please feel free to register your interest by contacting us via the web site. Alternatively we will certainly consider this as the subject of our special presentation and discussion at our AGM in June. Whatever the case, it's a topic on which LOSRA will focus during coming months to ensure measures are in place to minimise the impact of crime on local residents.

Watersplash Farm gravel extraction planning application re-submitted

Many of you will have seen an article published in Sunbury Matters regarding the planning application submitted by Cemex to extract gravel at Watersplash Farm on Fordbridge Road between Sunbury and Shepperton.

LOSRA has been involved in this immediate topic since the consultation of the last version of the Surrey Minerals Plan began, at least 12 years ago. It is perfectly reasonable to suppose that with the passage of time, people may have moved into the area who are not familiar with the history, so maybe some clarification is helpful.

LOSRA has taken a long-term interest in this important strategic subject since the Association was founded over 40 years ago. At successive Public Enquiries on the various Minerals Plans, we successfully argued against gravel working on various local sites, and managed to have Watersplash Farm pushed down the list of likely sites for as long as possible.

However, as other nearby sites like Laleham Farm and Hurst Park Reservoirs were brought into commission and worked, it became very difficult to resist the pressure. The availability of gravel for major building works, especially given our proximity to Heathrow, is a matter of national infrastructure strategy and local concerns are readily overridden.

During the lengthy consultation process on the last version of the Plan, where Watersplash and Vicarage Farms were top of the list for being worked in the immedi-

ate future, LOSRA, working in partnership with the dedicated pressure group SSAGE (Sunbury & Shepperton Against Gravel Extraction) managed to get Vicarage Farm removed from the plan, along with some peripheral parts of Watersplash Farm.

That included putting pressure on Surrey Council Council's Transport officers to oppose the scheme, and they attended site visits with us as part of that. However, it is frankly very rare that this department ever opposes anything on traffic grounds - if they did nothing would ever get built. Their own 20-year-old statistics tell them that the A244 past the site operates at over 100% of capacity at peak periods.

In addition, as it became increasingly obvious that we were not going to be able to get the site pushed down the list again, we worked with the representatives of Cemex to mitigate the effects of gravel working at the site as far as possible and ensure that the post-working restoration scheme was as good as it could be for residents.

The immediate background to the recent planning application is that the original application in 2012, which itself followed the strategic Minerals Plan consultation, went through all its consultation processes, but there was a long-standing potential objection from the Environment Agency associated with the geological barrier which has now been dealt with and withdrawn. Because the application was over three years old, some aspects and consultations needed to be revisited hence the new application.

We asked Cemex to give us their comments on the issues raised in the Sunbury Matters article, and they answered:

This application has been the subject of detailed consultation, discussion and scrutiny with the local authority, statutory agencies and local residents for some considerable time. The assertions made in the article generally cover matters which have been dealt with during the consultations and are addressed in the application. and it is now the responsibility of the local authority to bring forward a decision and, where appropriate, to set out conditions associated with any permission that may be forthcoming.

We operate within a highly regulated environment and endeavour to act in a responsible and sensitive manner to meet the needs of the community, our customers and the regulatory authorities.

Our experience has been that the people at Cemex are very approachable and ready to hear residents' concerns. They have done exhibitions and public consultations and have amended plans based on our concerns.

One or two people over the years have suggested that because we talk to them we are in some way in league with the enemy. The fact is that we have simply tried to make sure that in the face of what experience tells us is the inevitable, you get the best result you can.

If any residents coming fresh to this topic would like to meet representatives from Cemex, we are happy to arrange such a meeting so that any new or outstanding issues can be discussed. Cemex have said they are happy to take part. If this is of interest, please send a message via the web site or contact LOSRA President Paul Watts on the phone number on P4.

Plans for Sandown Park housing development do not reduce the threat to Kempton Park

There was an article in the Racing Post before Christmas that held out the hope that a proposed housing development at Sandown Park Racecourse six miles away across the river in Esher would reduce the threat posed by the potential massive development planned by the Jockey Club for Kempton Park, which would see the end of racing there and the destruction of a huge area of strongly performing classic Green Belt.

However, other commentators have pointed out that the two projects are of very different scale and value. The Sandown Park project involves 300 homes on smallish pockets of land round the edge of the site. It will make a significant amount of money, but nothing like the £100m, and probably more, that the Kempton Park project, which could involve several thousand homes, would raise. The Jockey Club would spend the money on more upgrades to Cheltenham racecourse and a completely unnecessary all-weather track at Newmarket.

It means that we need to maintain constant vigilance in monitoring and providing our input into the preparation process of the new Spelthorne Local Plan (see P4) to ensure that Kempton Park does not get included in the schedule of sites identified for possible development in the Plan.

That is the absolute minimum we need to achieve to, at the very least, forestall further consideration of development there for the duration of the period covered by the Plan.

Possibility of a ferry across Thames at Sunbury being investigated

We are aware that interest has been expressed within the Lower Sunbury Business Community group in the possibility of introducing a passenger ferry across the river from Sunbury village to Sunbury Lock Island. From there of course, there is pedestrian and informal cycle access across a footbridge to the Thames Path on the other side.

There are many aspects to be considered. Presumably there are many health and safety issues involved in the operation of commercial or semi-commercial ferry service, governing the type of boat used, competence and qualifications of the operator, insurance and other matters.

There are other ferries on this part of the Thames which point to the potential of a service here. One is operated by the Nauticalia river-based business in Shepperton, which has the advantage that they are at the point where the Thames Path moves from the north to south bank. There is also one from Hampton Church across to Hurst Park.

The ferry suggestion is now one of a number of work streams be explored by Spelthorne Council's River Thames Task Group. This is a group comprising Councillors, Officers and members of the local community (including LOSRA) to explore better utilisation of the Thames as a valuable community and business resource. Ferry usage would also shed some interesting light on the interest in a footbridge on the lines LOSRA envisaged in its positively-received public consultation a year or two ago.

Heathrow Airspace & Future Operations Consultation - your chance to respond

Spelthorne Council is urging residents to respond to Heathrow's consultation on proposed changes to airspace and future operations.

You can respond by filling in the survey form on the web site at: <https://afo.heathrowconsultation.com/>. It covers airspace design both for the current two-runway airport design and for an expanded three runway Heathrow, plus how a three runway airport will be operated including directional preference, night flights and runway alternation

Proposed changes will see Heathrow increase flights by 25,000 up to 505,000 a year, including more early flights, made possible by the switch from radar to satellite navigation, will mean that the number and direction of flights will increase/change irrespective of whether or not a 3rd runway is built.

Included in the consultation are broad areas of where future flight paths might be positioned. Flight paths have not been changed since the 1950s so any alterations may have an impact for many years.

Cllr Ian Harvey, Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council and Cllr John Boughtflower, Spelthorne Cabinet Member for Heathrow make the points that changes will impact the whole Borough, not just areas near the airport, that it's not just about expansion but will affect operations of the existing airport, and that while the Council aims to get the best outcome possible, it's crucial that people understand the full implications and have their say.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

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LOSRA subscriptions

Could we ask you to pay your subscription for the calendar 2019, which are now due? The fact that there are likely to be calls on our funds for legal advice on future Local Plan issues, means that we need to maintain our income to meet such substantial outgoings.

We are grateful to 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.

Latest stage in Local Plan process reached as "Draft Site Selection Methodology" is published

We noted in the Kempton Park article on P.3 the importance of influencing the sites identified for development in the Local Plan, and that's one of the reasons we are devoting such a large amount of time and energy to the Local Plan process, and why we cover what are fairly dry and impenetrable matters in our newsletters. Few subjects are likely to have such an impact on the future of our area than this, so we make no apologies for keeping it in front of everyone.

The latest stage has been reached with the publication of the Draft Site Selection Methodology, setting out the process and criteria by which sites will be selected. It's a 26-page document, which is very thorough, but also readable and clearly set out. If you're interested and have time it's worth a look.

It notes that the outcome of the "Issues & Options" consultation with residents was a preference for Option 4, a hybrid strategy that combines town centre development close to transport hubs with selective development of weakly performing Green Belt where Green Belt integrity would not be prejudiced, and making use of a master plan for Staines. It allows a balanced approach across a wide range of available sites.

The proposed methodology is also sound, setting out the process for meeting the assessed housing need in Spelthorne of 590 dwellings per annum. It starts with the sites identified in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and the Green Belt Assessment, and assesses their sustainability for development against the key economic, social and environmental criteria.

The process then drills down to measure sites against a range of other relevant topics, all of which seem on examination eminently reasonable and represent a thorough range of considerations. Potential sites for development would be assessed for potential capacity.

Crucially, it concludes that, although this is a fairly scientific exercise, the eventual decision on sites will be based on officers' judgement.

Our view is that the Methodology is sound and we have responded to the Consultation on this basis. In general, it is part of a pattern which gives us confidence that the preparation of the Local Plan is being very well handled by Spelthorne's planners, and is being done in a thorough, open and fair way.

In some ways, the odds are stacked against residents by virtue of the sheer size and scope of the documentation and the sometimes rather short response times for consultations, but it is a complex business that needs doing properly, so it's hard to complain too much.

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 £..... (NY2019)

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