

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION 2020 SPRING NEWSLETTER



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Kempton Park - a reprieve of sorts or a devious plot? We know what we think

There was a significant development in the saga of The Jockey Club and Redrow Homes desire to build a large housing development on Kempton Park, which, under original proposals, would be closed as a racecourse.

On the last day of the Consultation into the Preferred Options stage of the Local Plan process, The Jockey Club submitted a proposal providing for a smaller-scale development of about 500 homes on land on the site which they describe as previously developed.

These areas comprise the car parks, old enclosures and various buildings and hard standing fronting Staines Road East, and areas towards Kempton Park railway station. The plan provides for about 500 dwellings, which would presumably mostly comprise houses at the smaller end of the scale, along with flats.

On the face of it, this is positive news, on the basis that it would be preferable to a wholesale development of the site involving around 3,000 homes, and horse-racing would continue there.

That, of course, is the reaction that The Jockey Club and Redrow want people to have, in the hope that everyone drops their guard somewhat.

The local pressure group dedicated to opposing development at Kempton Park and protecting its Green Belt status, Keep Kempton Green, had this to say about the announcement:

"This latest manoeuvre is aimed more at placating that substantial membership of The Jockey Club who oppose the planned closing of Kempton Park racecourse. And it assumes local opinion will be mollified by a smaller development. But both groups should beware.

We don't believe for one second that this will be the end of it. The Jockey Club and Redrow will be back.

Our position remains the same: We don't want ANY houses on Kempton Park.

Arup and Spelthorne Council have twice assessed Kempton Park, and twice concluded it is "strongly performing" Green Belt. That includes the area taken up by the racecourse, the grandstand, and all the other buildings – "the previously developed land" as The Jockey Club puts it. Green Belt does not mean green space, as they well know.

As the Jockey Club itself says, this schoolboy gambit of theirs has been submitted alongside their original proposals for 3,000 dwellings on Kempton Park. i.e. they still want the Green Belt status of the entire estate to be lifted.

Always remember, they could build far more than 3,000 dwellings even given current density guidelines, and those guidelines will rise in the future. The Jockey Club has been playing with the numbers they want to build for years, saying one thing to some people, and another thing to others."

It will be no surprise to anyone that LOSRA shares KKG's scepticism about the motives and thinking behind this latest manoeuvre from The Jockey Club

It is no coincidence that the proposal was submitted when it was, i.e. at the absolute eleventh hour in the consultation period into the Preferred Options paper, which set out Spelthorne's thinking regarding the sites which would be identified in the Local Plan as the likely places where housing would be developed.

We dealt with this in our Autumn newsletter and there is an update about the Green Belt sites in our area which are under threat on Page 2 of this newsletter.

The timing seems to have been designed as an attempt to somehow blind-side Spelthorne and throw a complicating factor into the next stage of the process.

As far as we can see, as part of the earlier "Call For Sites" process when Spelthorne asked landowners to offer land for potential housing development, The Jockey Club put forward the whole of Kempton Park. Quite rightly, on the basis that Kempton Park is "strongly-performing" Green Belt, Spelthorne did not include it in the Preferred Options.

On that basis, this latest move by The Jockey Club is possibly pretty much irrelevant to the current situation, since it relates to a site that is not in the Preferred Options to be included in the Plan.

What they are no doubt hoping, however, is that Spelthorne might be persuaded to revisit the Plan and include the "previously-developed" areas of Kempton Park, on the basis that although it is part of strongly-performing Green Belt, such land might be regarded as less sensitive. They might also hope that the lure of a site that delivers 500 homes, combined with an apparent "victory" of avoiding a bigger development on the site, would be a tempting prospect for Spelthorne and residents.

What we would say is beware the siren voices of corporate vested interests motivated solely by profit. Remember that Heathrow, when they applied for permission for Terminal 4, assured everyone that this would be last development they would need and that there would be no more. Yeah, right. Then came T5 and the third runway.

We will, of course, be urging Spelthorne to maintain the tight line on Kempton Park and not give an inch.

However, you can guarantee that Redrow will be hoping to find a chink in Spelthorne's armour and try to use this to find some device to undermine Spelthorne's position when it all goes in front of the Planning Inspector.

Spelthorne Cabinet responds to residents' petitions about Green Belt sites possibly earmarked for housing

The Spelthorne Cabinet meeting on 29th January, they received petitions from various residents groups and offered comments on them. Among the petitions was one signed by 534 residents opposing the inclusion of land at Stratton Road in the Preferred Options stage of the Local Plan process.

LOSRA is, of course, implacably opposed to all proposals to develop Green Belt, but is especially unhappy about the inclusion of Stratton Road land, as it is a site which we have steadfastly defended over the years at successive public inquiries.

In the original Arup consultation into Green Belt sites, the Stratton Road land was part of a larger Local Area classified as "strongly performing". In the second stage assessment they subdivided the Local Area and the Stratton Road site was classified as 'moderately performing' considered in isolation. As only 'weakly performing' sites were being considered for potential development, Stratton Road should have been excluded.

However Arup judged that the Stratton Road site was 'less critical' in maintaining the Strategic Green Belt gap, and solely on the basis of that, the Stratton Road site was included for potential development. We regard this judgement as questionable, in that the site performs a classic green belt function and does perform that 'critical' role.

We will certainly be working closely with the very active and well-organised local group to oppose the inclusion of Stratton Road in the Local Plan.

The Cabinet members' statements were enlightening in terms of their attitudes and the difficult position they are in terms of finding ways to meet the government-imposed "housing need" assessments.

We have reproduced key parts of those statements here, omitting sections not immediately relevant to Lower Sunbury for reasons of space. Cllr. Ian Harvey, the Leader of the Council made these points:

We have petitions from Charlton Village, Shepperton, Sunbury and Stanwell. These are understandable and we are sympathetic to the individual circumstances relating to each site. We all have made a public commitment to the Green Belt – we do not wish to see development on the Green Belt.

This consultation follows our Issues and Options consultation which highlighted issues facing the Borough including the possibility of the loss of Green Belt or the option of intensifying uses in the town centres.

The Council is still consulting, and no conclusions have yet been reached. All views will be taken into account. I would however caution residents with regard to the Local Plan – there are no simple answers. If anyone thinks that, then, with respect, you may not have understood the difficult circumstances we find ourselves in. As councillors we have to take into account the interests of all residents, present and future. We have to find housing solutions for children who are still at school and who are not present at

this meeting. This means as we have to make difficult decisions in the public interest which stand the test of time.

We have objections to the housing numbers given to us by government and we are seeking to negotiate a better solution for the Borough. That is a priority and I have given my personal commitment to that task.

All of the proposals here tonight are rightly looking out for what they see as the public interest. All those views are valid, but some of the implications of your submissions will be unpalatable to others. For instance, if we accepted all these proposals we could be asking residents in Staines and Ashford to take more high-rise blocks. There will be many people opposed to that option too.

The Council has hard decisions ahead. We need the involvement of the whole community to find the right answers and so your participation and presentations are very gratefully and humbly received.

The Strategic Planning portfolio holder, Councillor Ian Beardsmore commented as follows:

Thank you all for your efforts. First, the most important thing to say is that no Spelthorne councillor wants to build on Green Belt. We have been forced to potentially consider some weakly performing Green Belt sites for housing because of the huge increase in demand for the provision of new housing, forced on us by central government. Not surprisingly, many residents across the borough have reacted strongly to proposals in their own area.

Weakly performing Green Belt was identified via the Green Belt Assessment and methodology agreed by the council last year. The rules for Green Belt can be found in the National Planning Policy Framework para 135—these are the rules and criteria we have to use. Again this is publicly available online.

Occasionally other reasons can be found to reject a weakly performing Green Belt site, but these are few and far between, which does not mean we will not make the effort, which is where your representations and any new evidence they supply is so important.

I need to dispel a few misconceptions that still exist.

The council does not own any of the sites referred to in the petitions. In fact we own hardly any of the sites in the entire consultation. Spelthorne has not submitted any of these sites for building, the landowners have. We will not be making any money from them, the landowners and developers will.

Despite our best efforts, it is still being said that we have a huge number of Brownfield sites we are not considering. Wrong. There was a previous

Housing Land Availability Assessment which identified sites for approximately 5,500 houses, all on Brownfield sites, so those sites have already been included. This includes 29 sites re-considered in this consultation to potentially transfer them from that pot to this. The fact it is recommended not to transfer them to this 'pot' simply means they will stay in the other 'pot'. Either way they are all under consideration.

I cannot answer any of the petitions specifically because the work to analyse them has hardly started and they are likely to contain new information that has to be looked at carefully. I will though, make some general observations.

Health provision: We are in discussions with the local health providers and the results of this, along with infrastructure and other issues will all be incorporated into an infrastructure assessment.

Flooding: We will have to look at photographic evidence that has been produced, and incorporate that with the EA flood data updates that are 9 months late. Developers will argue that these can be overcome with a Sustainable Urban Drainage scheme. That may be possible but only up to a point, which will be analysed in detail for each site with EA input.

Biodiversity related issues: I do not believe any of the sites have been identified as specifically a BOA (Biodiversity Opportunity Area), but whether or not some are close enough to a recognised BOA to have potential impacts on it will have to be looked at again for each site.

Schools: When we last checked two days ago, Surrey were still confident they could meet the extra demand for school places in Spelthorne if the proposed new building was to go ahead as laid out.

Traffic: Surrey's formal response to the consultation is also quite clear about roads. If the proposals were to go ahead broadly as laid out, collectively they would not have a severe impact on the road network, and therefore could not be opposed on those grounds. YES, I find this hard to swallow but legally Surrey are the competent authority on this and we have to listen to what they say, however hard we find it to believe them. Further mitigation will be needed to accommodate the traffic generated by specific sites but this will be delivered if they go ahead."

Cabinet agreed to note the petitions and ask the Local Plan Working Party to review the matters they have raised.

This does not require too much comment from us. It's very helpful to have such frank statements from Council Cabinet, so that we can appreciate their views and the problems they have to deal with.

It's no consolation that they are as unhappy about the situation as us, but at least we can understand their predicament. Not many of us would want their job.

EcoPark article: Suez and SCC request right of reply

You may remember the article we published in the Autumn newsletter regarding ongoing issues surrounding the “EcoPark” in Charlton Lane. The article was reprinted in Sunbury Matters, and the editor received an email from the PR manager at Suez saying that it contained inaccuracies and was not written by anyone involved in the community liaison group. The letter also said there was a lot of “rumour and misinformation” about the EcoPark.

The correspondence was passed to us, and a further e-mail detailing their concerns has been received. They have requested that their letter is published to redress the balance.

We would stress that LOSRA’s articles on this subject over the years have always used technical information from highly qualified chemical and mechanical engineers. Our late Committee member, Peter Francis, fulfilled this role until he sadly passed away last year, since when we have consulted another well-qualified resident, an active member of the Community Liaison Group over the years. It does LOSRA a gross disservice to imply that our reporting is anything other than fully fact-checked.

Given the way that both organisations have consistently ignored and sought to belittle residents over the years over this project, we do not feel in any way obliged to give them space, but we’re not here to stifle debate, so we are prepared, on this one occasion, to accede to their request. Here’s what they wrote:

“We were concerned to read the article titled “Is the Eco Park a White Elephant” in the January 2020 edition of Shepperton Matters and Sunbury Matters, as the article included several pieces of information which were outdated or incorrect.

We are pleased to confirm that the Eco Park has in fact generated electricity and as of January 2020 had produced over 2.5GWh, which is enough to power 700 homes for an entire year. The anaerobic digestion facility had also processed over 11,000 tonnes of food waste – well over the 4,000 tonnes reported in the article. In fact, the facility processed all of Surrey’s food waste over Christmas and into the New Year, coping well with the 150% increase in volume associated with the holiday season.

The article goes on to claim that the Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) processed at the Eco Park has low energy content which will not be enough to sustain the gasifier and generate electricity. However, the waste processed at the Eco Park has a higher calorific value than what the pre-treatment process was modelled on, resulting in RDF that is well within the energy content range that the Eco Park’s gasification process was designed to operate with.

Because the RDF is high quality, gasoil is only necessary upon start up/shut down, as waste cannot be introduced into the process until the top of the chamber reaches 850 deg. The nature of commissioning requires the plant to start up and shut down more frequently than during normal operations, but it is not used ‘like paraffin on a bonfire, except continuously’ as the article asserts.

Regarding the article’s comments on financial matters, we would like to remind readers that Surrey County Council’s Cabinet agreed to proceed with the construction of the Eco Park following a comprehensive value for money assessment. The value for money case remains unchanged despite the delays to the construction and Defra continues to support the project with the Waste Infrastructure Grant.

SUEZ and Surrey County Council are working in partnership to deliver an integrated waste management system which increases recycling across the county, encourages reuse through the five Revive shops, and moves non-recyclable waste away from landfill. We look forward to reusing and recycling even more and making the most of Surrey’s household waste in 2020.

Sincerely, Tim Evans (Surrey County Councillor for Lower Sunbury and Halliford), Richard Walsh, (Surrey County Councillor for Laleham and Shepperton), Justin Hampton, (Eco Park Plant Manager, SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK)”

We are grateful to SUEZ and SCC for clarifying certain issues, but we would venture to suggest that it does not represent a resounding debunking of our position. Our article, for example,

did not mention the Anaerobic Digester.

While explaining certain processes, it does not challenge the point we have consistently banded on about, which is that the technology and processes being used at the plant are not what they are purported to be. Our view, which has always been consistently articulated using as much scientific explanation as space allows, is that it is not gasification, which was the planning basis for allowing this development. It has one combustion chamber, and no syngas output. We assume this has not been challenged because there are no valid technical grounds to support such a challenge.

We are surprised that they make so much of the value for money assessment done by Deloitte and SCC’s Finance Director. The Cabinet Member responsible, when reporting on the balance between going ahead with the project or not, said that there was “*no material difference between the options*”, i.e. there was no really positive quantitative business case for the project. So the Finance Director recommended proceeding on her qualitative, i.e. personal, opinion. The £200m PFI money available via the Waste Infrastructure Grant, which was not part of the VFM assessment, was no doubt a consideration.

The fact remains that this development is the wrong thing in the wrong place doing the wrong thing. There were other, better, cheaper, less risky options available with much less impact in terms of the environment and residents’ interests.

SUEZ and SCC are absolutely right on one admission in their first letter, namely that the project “*is not a popular development within the local community and likely never will be*”. They went ahead with project, wilfully ignoring cogent evidence against it, for reasons that suited their interests, and not those of taxpayers.

On that basis, no-one involved in the project in either organisation can expect any sympathy, or any kind of apology for statements we make, or the harshness of their tone, when we believe they are justified, and we have sound technical, scientific and moral grounds for making them.

If they find the criticism they continue to get about the project hard to take, they should have thought about that when they had the chance. As the saying goes “If you can’t stand the heat etc.....”. An incinerator is no place for snowflakes.

Important developments in Sunbury Health Centre appointments system

As regular users will know, just over four years ago, Sunbury Health Centre made a massive leap forward in eliminating the early morning queue for appointments by introducing an on-line booking system. The queue disappeared overnight and for the next few years, patients have benefited from the new system.

However, time moves on and so does the health centre. In line with national trends, gone are the days when you could only see a doctor or a nurse, as a whole new raft of clinical practitioners becomes available to primary care. With Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Paramedics and a Clinical Pharmacist now based at the health centre, and appointments available evenings and weekends through ten Improved Access Clinics, the current on-line booking system is just not capable of getting the patient to the right clinician in a timely manner.

Patients using the current system will be well aware of how the timescales for advance booking of appointments have stretched over the past year or so. Fortunately, some properly joined-up thinking has resulted in a new health care system being rolled out across the whole of Surrey, with Sunbury Health Centre being designated an early adopter of the new system.

The new on-line process will triage, i.e. assess and direct, patients to the correct clinical practitioner and it is hoped that waiting times for a non-urgent appointment will be cut to days instead of weeks. Those patients without access to a computer or smart phone are not forgotten and appointments can be made over the phone, as the practice now has 12 phone lines and a modern call monitoring system.

The new system should be up and running in the next few weeks. What hasn’t changed is that the one thing you won’t have to do to get an appointment is queue up!

Sunbury Cricket Club stage a Special Charity Music Night on Friday 13th March to support The Mayor Of Spelthorne's Charities

The Music Club at Sunbury Cricket Club now has an annual tradition that it devotes one of their Music Nights to a special event to support the Mayor of Spelthorne's charities, and they have proved extremely successful evenings, they are repeating the exercise this year.

This year's Mayor is Cllr. Mary Madams, a Laleham & Shepperton Green councillor. The club has assembled the usual suspects from the local music fraternity in a dozen-strong band to play under the name of THE CHAIN GANG in honour of the Mayor's chain of office.

The Mayor's charities are - Midas Plus, a local registered charity based in Staines-upon-Thames, run to help local people in need, raising and distributing funds for community groups and individuals (mainly in Spelthorne) who have nowhere else to turn; and - Eikon: an award-winning charity which provides long-term support to some of the county's most vulnerable young people, with a vision is to develop happy, thriving and resilient young adults who make a positive contribution to society.

The musicians will be giving their services free, so all the door money will go to the charities. It will be a great night of top class rock 'n' roll, blues, '60s R&B, rock and country. It's all for a great cause and will be a fun community night, so please come along and support it.

Sunbury Cricket Club, Lower Hampton Rd., TW16 5PS Friday 13th March 8.30pm £10.00 on the door.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

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Nigel Spooner	36 Kingsmead Avenue	07887 898874
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Sunbury on Flood Alerts but still people are out on the river

With Sunbury currently on its third Flood Alert of the winter and the river 'Red-boarded' most of the time, it's amazing that some people still think it's a good idea to go out on the river.

A member of the LoSRA Committee who lives close to Sunbury Weir has had to call out the emergency services three times recently to rescue people in boats unable to cope with the fast flow who have become trapped on Sunbury Weir, in genuinely life-threatening situations.

Bizarrely, one group who were left hanging on to the weir posts only feet from disaster thought it appropriate to take selfies! Their foolishness risked the lives of the search and rescue crews called out to save them. The rescues have been complex and costly but thankfully no lives were lost.

Significant progress being made with the Sunbury Ferry Project

On a somewhat lighter note regarding the river, we mentioned some time ago that the idea of a ferry across the River Thames at Lower Sunbury was being explored by Spelthorne Council River Task Group, of which LoSRA is a member.

The project has begun to make good progress and the feasibility studies have indicated that it should be possible to achieve, and has got as far as identifying workable sites for a ferry to operate from.

The ferry would be suitable for pedestrians and cycles, but it would obviously be desirable to make it suitable for wheelchair users

The research indicates that an element of initial fund-raising would be needed, not only the boat itself, but also necessary works to make the landing points safe and practical, but there are several similar ferries operating around the country whose experience can be drawn on. It would also need volunteers to run it, but it's unlikely that that would be a problem.

One of the councillors on the Group is determined to get it up and running during this summer, which is probably a tall order but it is a positive objective to have.

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