

LOWER SUNBURY

RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

2018 NEW YEAR NEWSLETTER

Local Plan battle lines drawn as revised housing targets and Green Belt Review help focus minds and shape tactics



www.losra.org

The process of constructing a new Local Plan for Spelthorne, which involves a daunting array of reviews, reports, assessments and consultations, all with massive documents that need to be studied and analysed, has moved inexorably on, and is reaching a stage where we can start to see the issues on which we are going to have to focus our efforts in order to ensure that the most predatory of developers' ambitions can be reined in.

The main things that have happened since our last newsletter are:

- the setting of revised housing "targets" under what is now called the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which central government requires every local authority to undertake
- the "Call For Sites" under which Spelthorne is required to ask landowners what land they can make available for housing
- The delivery of the Green Belt Review for Spelthorne by consultants Arup, which analyses the extent to which Green Belt sites fulfil their role, and which sites might be considered for release for housing

In addition, we understand that the Strategic Land Availability Assessment, in which Spelthorne Council are identifying sites which they believe are available and suitable for housing, will be delivered by the end of January.

Considered together, these reports will begin to shape a detailed picture of how Spelthorne Borough might achieve its housing targets within the Local Plan, and what impact this might make on the local environment. This, in turn, will guide us in where we need to focus our efforts in making submissions within the relatively limited consultation and enquiry processes available to us.

Spelthorne's SHMA

Under the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, Spelthorne

and Runnymede Councils have been working with consultants GL Hearn to determine the number and type of homes needed to meet housing demand in the combined area over the period 2013 to 2033 based on population and economic projections. In arriving at these numbers, the SHMA does not take into account factors like Green Belt, flood risk or infrastructure capacity which may limit the ability of the councils to meet the overall level of demand.

The SHMA assessed the per annum housing need as between 552 and 790, compared to the annual target of 166 under the current Local Plan. However, the government has published proposals for a standardised method for assessing housing need which resulted in the annual need figure of 590 for Spelthorne. This methodology has been issued for consultation but is likely to be adopted. It seems a daunting and alarming number, but Spelthorne will have arguments that the amount of existing built-up area, open water and motorway infrastructure, combined with a deficiency of public open space could mitigate that number.

The Call For Sites

No surprises here, with owners of Green Belt sites like The Jockey Club, who own Kempton Park, and Persimmon Homes, who own a tract of land between Stratton Road and Bishop Wand School putting their sites in the frame for consideration.

Green Belt Assessment

Along with the SHMA, this was the other potentially controversial report. There is nothing hugely surprising in the report, but it does highlight sites where we will need to be vigilant in the longer term. It grades sites as "Strong", "Moderate" or "Weak", based on the extent to which they fulfil classic Green Belt functions. In our area, Kempton Park is "Strong", Sunbury Park is "Moderate" and Sunbury Cricket Club is "Weak", and in truth it's hard to argue with these assessments.

It is not, of course, a measure of the likelihood of the sites being built on - of these, Kempton Park, which is classic Green Belt, providing a green buffer between large built-up areas, is maybe the most vulnerable to development. One thing that Arup have done is identify areas of Green Belt, which, while performing a proper Green Belt function, may be susceptible to partition, so that certain areas within them might be built on. The Persimmon Homes land between Sunbury and Halliford is one of these.

SLAA

When Spelthorne publish their Strategic Land Availability Assessment, we can then all start to see if there is enough land to meet the SHMA within the period of the Plan or whether there is a shortfall, which could put the Green Belt under threat. That will be a crucial aspect of the framing of the Plan over the next few months, and we will be trying to stay on top of the process.

Next steps

Working with our associates in Keep Kempton Green, we have already invested some funds in getting preliminary advice on what the key statutory considerations are and how we can influence the arguments - such is the complexity of some of these issues that we may need to get further advice, so we are not outflanked by the cash-rich housebuilders (Persimmon's CEO recently got a £129m bonus).

At this stage, there is nothing that residents can do to influence things, but we will keep you up to date as things move forward. Meanwhile, we are happy to be able to report that Spelthorne's councillors and officers have been as open and helpful as they can in keeping us abreast of recent developments, and they seem determined to defend the Green Belt as robustly as possible.

Sunbury Health Centre delivers positive update to start New Year

Sunbury Health Centre has recently completed improvements to the reception and waiting room after what has seemed to be a very long process (for the practice team and also for patients). The practice leases 45% of the practice premises from NHS Property Services with the other 55% rented to the Community Services provider, CSH. Making changes in a leased building where the practice has been the minority tenant has thrown up a number of challenges not least in securing funding (NHS funding is capped at 66% of improvement costs leaving the rest to be found from other sources – even when improving a landlord's building).

The practice was very grateful for the opportunity to outline the challenges in relation to the premises and its future plans to the LOSRA Annual General Meeting in the summer of 2016. From this presentation, local and county councillors contacted the practice and after a series of discussions secured substantial funding that together with a considerable practice contribution enabled the purchase of a container to locate patient notes as the initial step in the improvements to be made to our landlords Building. Subsequently, the old shutters and

glass partitions that the reception team used to sit behind have been opened up into a new and more welcoming reception area and the dingy waiting room has been newly painted and brightened up with art work from local artists organised by the Patient Participation Group (PPG).

We know that the practice is hugely appreciative of the support from LOSRA, the PPG, local and county councillors and to the planning department to make positive changes for our patients. Work will continue to develop the premises and there is positive movement for the practice to lease more space and bring on-stream more consulting rooms for its expanding team although it continues to challenge the hurdle of a 500% increase in its service charges.

The practice was very pleased to become a training practice earlier this year, and have a number of GPs in training and are looking to expand this as part of the development of a multidisciplinary team. The practice is currently recruiting a clinical pharmacist and an additional GP and were delighted to appoint two Nurse Practitioners and two Health Care Assistants to their growing clinical team. They have also recruited a number of new receptionists in the last year and are developing a

team to manage clinical correspondence, releasing time for GPs to focus on patient care and not burdensome administration.

The practice is continuing to push for an improvement in cleaning standards. The responsibility for the cleaning contract rests with the community provider CSH and the practice is pressing for improvements to be made, especially to the floors, which are detracting from the other improvements made recently.

The minor surgery clinics continue to be popular as do the Hearology ear microsuction and Quit 51 smoking clinics, and a community ultrasound clinic will be introduced from mid-January.

One plea from the practice as it looks forward to 2018 is that the car park is used by patients and not as a drop off zone for local schools – patients often find it difficult to park at school drop-off and pick up times when the practice is at its busiest.

Although challenges remain and the NHS remains on the front pages due to winter pressures, the practice is positive about the further developments that are planned to develop and improve patients' experience.

Spelthorne's Planning Officers continue to be let down by County Highways Authority input on planning applications

Spelthorne's Planning Officers have been left hamstrung as to their decisions on planning applications by the fact that the Surrey County Council Highways Authority fail to acknowledge the primacy of the parking standards legally enshrined in Spelthorne's Local Plan.

A plan for the conversion of Inglewood Hall, a house in one of the busiest parts of Green Street close to the junction with Nursery Road, into six flats, with a total of 13 bedrooms, was approved despite the fact that the plan provides for just four on-site parking spaces. This is a long way short of the standards specified in planning law.

The County Highways Authority's comments on the application include a tacit acceptance that the application will result in parking on the pavement, commenting "Even if vehicles did park partly on the footway, there would still be at least 2m of footway width left to allow pedestrians and wheelchair users to pass safely".

This seems to imply that the County

Highways Authority (CHA) is now admitting that 'parking partly' on the pavement is acceptable if this is the price to be paid for getting applications through to eventual approval by the Local Planning Authority.

What is especially insulting about the Highways Authority's approach is that they inspected the site at 11am on a weekday, when on-pavement parking would have been at its lowest, and traffic at its lightest, saying later that this was "when officers were available". Developers are no doubt delighted at such an off-hand approach.

Equally dismissive are their comments about the impact of local schools: "We recognise that there is a high demand for on-street parking in Green St. when schools are opening and closing; however, this is a temporary problem – it occurs at specific times of the day and only for short periods of time."

The CHA also failed to demand proper parking standards for an application to convert the bungalow at 126

Green Street, at the junction with Manor Lane, into seven flats, providing for only seven car parking spaces on-site. Fortunately, there were other strong grounds for this application to be refused by Planning Officers, and we wait to see if the developer comes back with yet another scaled-down plan.

However, the fact is that local Planning Officers might feel wary about refusing applications because of inadequate parking provisions, on the basis that the CHA has failed to demand provision in accordance with the law, and that plans would be allowed on appeal, with costs possibly awarded against the Council.

The simple fact is that hardly any planning applications in Spelthorne in recent years have been refused because of negative reports by the CHA. It seems like they have given up trying to pursue their statutory objectives "to ensure road safety and to enable the free flow of traffic." If that is the case, we have to ask the question, is the CHA fit for purpose and what is the point of it?

Residents up in arms over EcoPark plans to use bird-scaring cannon to keep birds off the site

As the so-called Eco-Park at what used to be the Charlton Lane Waste Transfer Station and Community Recycling Centre nears completion, its massive visual impact on our suburban green belt can hardly be missed and there is no way that it will be hidden behind the promised tree planting scheme. Wherever you view it from, either from Charlton Lane itself or from the M3, it is quite simply a very substantial industrial complex, which should never have been built in this location.

A comparison with the original artist's impressions of a few installations hidden underneath grassed humps demonstrates what an iniquitous exercise in misrepresentation and arrogant, bullying county and corporate governance this project has always been, falling regrettably short of acceptable standards of good practice.

The Anaerobic Digester construction is almost complete and cold commission has commenced. In the coming months waste food will be processed and loaded into the plant. Concurrently, the Municipal Waste Incinerator's principal components are in place and the final stages of construction are to follow. The anticipated completion of the project is now mid-2018, one year behind the original schedule.

Meanwhile, the site has not been without controversy, with new outdoor layout of the

waste collection/holding bays attracting vermin and especially seagulls. Several methods to control the situation have been employed including the use of magnificent hunting hawks; however this has had only limited success. The operators Suez now propose to use a bird scaring cannon, normally used by farmers in strictly rural areas.

Many local residents have objected to this proposal and have pointed out that the NFU's highly relevant code of practice states:

- *Never use noisy scarers near buildings where people sleep or where quiet is important.*

- *Think carefully about the use of propane gas guns. Inconsiderate use may lead to complaints and you may have to appear in court.*

- *Try to avoid positioning auditory scarers adjacent to Rights of Way.*

- *Remember that horses are easily frightened and can bolt or unseat their riders.*

- *Do not position scarers near roads or brideways usually used by riders.*

Needless to say, Suez will no doubt ignore any such fully justified objections, and equally predictably there will be neither the will nor the regulatory teeth within Surrey County Council or the Environment Agency to stop them. If you live in the area, and soon start hearing the cannons being fired on a regular basis, you know what the noise is - feel free to contact both Suez and Spelthorne's noise

control officer to complain.

Meanwhile, in October, Surrey County Council has published their Minerals and Waste Planning Policy (Waste Local Plan) for consultation, which closes on the 7th February 2018. The details can be accessed via <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/.../surrey-waste-plan>, or Email: wasteplan@surreycc.gov.uk

The draft SWLP includes a "Vision" that sets out a broad picture of how waste will be managed during and by the end of the plan period. It includes "Strategic Objectives" which outline how the Vision will be achieved. A draft "Spatial Strategy" is also included that seeks to direct the development of additional waste management capacity land that has been previously developed and to sites that are well connected to where waste is produced. This approach hopes to ensure the best use of land and the efficient transportation of waste.

Quite what this means in terms of how successful, useful or otherwise the "EcoPark" will be is hard to say. There are reasons to suspect that, given that its technology is unproven and because there may not be enough waste to supply the number of such facilities being developed in the UK, the plant may prove to be a huge, intrusive and massively expensive white elephant.

Spelthorne continues property investment programme to support Council income with purchase of Hammersmith office building

We reported in our autumn 2016 newsletter on the fact that Spelthorne Council had purchased the BP building in Sunbury as an investment to provide regular rental income to replace declining support from central government.

This was enabled by borrowing money at low fixed rates of interest from the Public Works Loans Board.

Since then, they have purchased two other properties, both in the Heathrow area, at the World Business Centre 4 and in Stockley Park, to broaden their income base further.

Just after the New Year, Spelthorne released news that they had made another purchase in a continuing expansion of this programme under the headline "Spelthorne announces purchase of new-build prime office investment in Hammersmith".

The site in question is a 170,000 sq.ft. office building in Hammersmith Grove close to the district's hub of Hammersmith Broadway, and the £170m purchase was funded by long-term low

fixed rate loans. Spelthorne state that "The building is fully let on long leases, and promises a highly secure income from a first class tenant line up of multi-sector global businesses.....The building and leasing terms have set a new benchmark for offices in Hammersmith bringing West End quality to this market."

There are many who question the appropriateness and propriety of this technique, especially those who don't think that local authorities should borrow to build local infrastructure like council housing or schools.

However, assuming that appropriate advice has been taken and due diligence been done to ensure risk is minimised, it seems like a sensible way to ensure the income to protect local services in the foreseeable future.

Maybe its opponents would like to come up with equally cogent arguments to support the dubious PFI strategy, pursued by governments of all colours, that sees us paying several times over for our hospitals and schools just to keep the costs off the balance sheet.

Special Music Night at Sunbury Cricket Club on Fri. 9th Feb. in aid of the Mayor of Spelthorne's charities

There is a special Music Night in aid of the Mayor Spelthorne's Charities at Sunbury Cricket Club on Friday 9th February at 8.30.

This year's Mayor of Spelthorne is Shepperton councillor, Cllr. Vivienne Leighton, and the Club is continuing its tradition of staging a special Music Night in aid of her charities. The cream of the local music fraternity, some from major bands, have been assembled once more to play under the name of THE CHAIN GANG in honour of the Mayor's chain of office. Her charities are Spelthorne Dementia Support (Purple Angels), Impossible Dream (providing river trips for wheelchair users), and the Swan Sanctuary. The musicians are giving their services free, so all the door money will go to the charities - entrance is £10.00 on the door (tickets are not being sold in advance).

It's all for a great cause and will be a fun community night. Full details of the event and the members of the band are on the Music Club page at www.sunburycricket.co.uk

Friends of Sunbury Park update Cattle-grazing begins to make impact on management of Sunbury Park

This is the first time we have had a chance to comment on the way that last summer's cattle grazing has had a much more visible effect on the grassland and other vegetation in Sunbury Park, and there's little doubt that their effect was much more apparent than in previous years.

The main reason for this is that the cows were available early enough to be introduced in April this year, in time to start grazing before grass could grow too high, and stayed through to October. As a result, grass was kept under control throughout the growing season. It also helped that the size of the herd was increased to twelve this year, although, as before, their habits were sufficiently unobtrusive for this to be barely noticeable.

In addition, because the cattle like to spend a fair amount of time skulking in the wooded areas, they also thinned out the undergrowth in those areas, opening them out and making it easier for other plant species to take hold.

Once again, it has to be acknowledged the lack of troublesome interaction between cattle and dogs reflects the self-fulfilling prophesy that people whose dogs would not react well to the cattle simply stop visiting the Park while they are there, which is unfortunate for them. However, the upsides of the use of grazing as a management technique to minimise costs and improve biodiversity are starting to become apparent, which we hope can be regarded positively by most people.

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LOSRA subscriptions now due for new calendar year

The fact that we are, unusually, doing a New Year newsletter because of the timing of news about the Local Plan means that we can make a timely call to action for residents to pay their annual LOSRA subscription to coincide with the start of the new calendar year, which is the period covered by subscriptions. 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.

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 £..... (NY18)

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Sunbury Embroidery Gallery announces exciting new ex- hibition programme for 2018

The Embroidery Gallery in the Walled Garden continued to establish itself as an important art gallery exhibition venue during 2017, with a programme of six eclectic and high-quality exhibitions across different cultural disciplines, and their new 2018 schedule, just announced, continues this development, with five exciting exhibitions in the first half of the year featuring both returning and first-time artists.

In February, the Gallery have been fortunate to secure a young Welsh artist, Thomas Perceval, whose tree drawings are laser etched and engraved into various wood veneers, a must for all tree lovers in Sunbury.

This is followed up by an exhibition of young, up-and-coming graduate textile designers whose work gives us a glimpse of living in the 21st century.

In May, the Gallery welcomes back Sunbury Working Artists with an exhibition of 12 individual artists all living and working in Sunbury entitled 'Diverse Palette'.

This is followed by another exciting project involving Manor Mead and Walton Leigh schools for children with special needs. This year, in association with Runnymede, the project is entitled 'Go with the Flow' – a community art project celebrating the glorious River Thames.

The programme bridges into the second half of the year with another exhibition, this time by The Hampton Court Florilegium Society.

In addition to the exhibitions, there is a comprehensive programme of 11 workshops under the direction of Sophie Long and Dave Nelson, and new for the Gallery, workshops on book folding by Sara Prebble and contemporary poetry writing led by Jan Noble.

You can find details of the exhibitions on the Gallery's web site at www.sunburygallery.org, or you can pop into the Gallery during their opening hours of 10am-4pm, and enjoy a coffee and home-made cakes in the Café.

The Gallery continues to need more volunteers in both the café and the Gallery sections, so if you have time to spare, it's a rewarding and welcoming environment to make a contribution.