

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



2006 AGM NEWSLETTER

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association will take place at The Riverside Arts Centre, Thames Street, Sunbury, on Wednesday 28th June at 8pm.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 29th June 2005
3. Chairman's Annual Report
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Election of Officers and Committee
6. Sunbury Millennium Embroidery : Progress Report by David Brown, Chairman of Sunbury Millennium Embroidery Group
7. Presentation by Paul Watts, President of LOSRA, of "A Vision for Lower Sunbury"
8. Open Forum
9. Any other business

"A Vision for Lower Sunbury" theme for this year's AGM

The thrust of this year's Annual General Meeting reflects the Association's continuing frustration with the way that local government is becoming less democratic, more inward-looking and less responsive to local needs and opinion.

Despite all the outward appearance of endless rounds of "consultation", local government seems more and more disconnected from its roots in the community, with the demands of central government paramount, and a culture of "box-ticking" pervading the communication process, rather than a real intention to listen to local views on strategic matters. There are plenty of recent examples, not least the Benwell Centre issue.

Our view is that as long as those in power, at whatever level, are able to set the agenda, all we can ever do is respond, so that our activities are a never-ending round of protests and campaigns.

At the AGM, we are presenting a draft document called "A Vision for Lower Sunbury". It is a first step in setting our own agenda in terms of a strategic view of how things should be in our area and the policies that should deliver those aspirations.

The document will be available for you to read in advance of the AGM, from 15th June, on the new LOSRA website at www.losra.org. We will also put a copy in Sunbury Library from that date.

Your views and comments on the document will be welcome, both in the discussion at the AGM or as written submissions, so that we can be sure that the final document truly represents the local consensus.

Please come and join the debate, so that we can demonstrate to our Councillors that this initiative enjoys the support of the community.

SSAGE

www.ssage.org.uk

Sunbury and Shepperton Against Gravel Extraction

Watersplash Farm still under threat : respond on latest consultation by June 9

The latest consultation phase on Surrey County Council's Preferred Options for gravel working is coming to a close. Many of you attended the exhibition of the proposals which took place at the Riverside Arts Centre in early May. Surrey officers said it was the busiest exhibition they had had.

Everyone who has previously written to Surrey on this subject has received a form to respond to the plans. If you have got one of these, please make sure you fill it in and send it back. If not, the documents are available online at www.surreycc.gov.uk/mineralsplan.

You will no doubt have your own thoughts on the subject, but SSAGE has also drafted some suggested responses to the questions on the form, which are as follows (and on the website) :

Do you agree with the five objectives which describe the overall approach of the draft minerals plan?

In principle, yes. There can be little argument about the theoretical validity of the objectives. However, how robust would the plan be? What assurances can SCC provide that it has the resources, systems and procedures to meet these objectives?

Do you have any comments about the preferred areas?

Area L - Watersplash Farm : In the absence of any form of credible impact assessment of this site, its inclusion is inappropriate and negligent. Within the principles of your guiding objectives, Watersplash should be excluded at this stage on the following grounds:

Hydrology and environment - Irreversible ecological damage and the loss of important biodiversity are likely to result from the compromise of the integrity of the River Ash and the major aquifer below the site. We need assurances that gravel extraction will not increase the risks of flooding or groundwater contamination.

Traffic - Transportation and access via the over-congested A244 which cannot support increased HGV usage will have severe adverse safety implications safety and further impact on the very poor air quality around the site. SCC traffic survey data used to assess these impacts is outdated and therefore invalid.

Strategic impact - The inclusion of this option as representing the lowest overall impact on Surrey is misleading. There is disproportionate focus on Spelthorne within Surrey to provide minerals. The role of open landscape and preservation of local heritage to provide relief in an

area of such high density urban development is extremely important.

Do you have any comment about the restoration proposals?

Area L - Watersplash Farm : It would be important for residents to be fully involved in the development of a restoration programme, so that it would provide maximum benefit to the community, and the working/restoration programme should operate on a phased basis so that worked areas can be restored progressively.

Please get your responses in as soon as possible. We will keep you posted on developments - updated information is always available on www.ssage.org.uk

Why not have a tree planted?

Local Tree Wardens will have trees available in the autumn. With authorisation from Surrey County Council they are able to supply and plant trees on roadside sites or other open spaces. They can also supply and plant trees in private gardens.

Most of the trees are purchased from growers in Surrey and Hampshire. A charge needs to be made for each tree, normally £30.00. This includes the cost of delivery, a watering hose, a strimmer guard and a tree stake and tie. No charge is made for planting the trees because Tree Wardens are all volunteers.

Applications need to be processed, and, for street trees, vetted by Surrey CC. It is important therefore to apply well in advance of the autumn. If you would like a tree (or trees) planted near your home or in your garden, simply contact one of the Tree Wardens : Dave Woods (01932 786806), Dave Huxford (07941 093186), Sally Fletcher (01932 227679 or 07778 370571). The Surrey Tree Warden Network is a registered charity.

Croysdale planning application rejected

The planning application for a stable block on the land off Croysdale Avenue used for boot fairs has been rejected. The plan involved the retention of the tarmac road which was laid without permission, and for which the Inspector supported the Council's enforcement notice for removal. It also proposed some inappropriate steel fencing.

Although we have no problem with the

principle of a stable block on Green Belt land, LOSRA strongly opposed any approach which allowed anything to be done on the land before the enforcement notice for the removal of the road is complied with.

Reading between the lines, we suspect that this is the view which planning officers took as well. We await the next moves.

Benwell Centre : a victory of sorts, but the anger remains

The anger at Spelthorne Council's plan to close the Benwell Day Centre, and the strength of opposition from all quarters of the community, forced a hurriedly put together change of plan at the Council meeting on April 27th.

The recommendation from the Executive, which was agreed by the Council was : *"Build extra care housing on the Benwell site in partnership with a specialist housing developer and Surrey County Council. This to include a community day centre with activity space, hairdressing, chiropody and hobby rooms. This area to be staffed and developed by the Council and to be linked with the Greeno Centre.*

In the interim whilst this facility is being built, agree to retain Churchill Village Hall for the older residents of Sunbury as a place to meet and participate in activities."

We asked to see the "feasibility study" on which this decision was based. This turned out to be an artist's impression - no financial analysis, no technical data. Our view was that a decision this crucial should be made on the basis of a proper study, not the equivalent of one done on the back of a cigarette packet. We were very unimpressed to see this debate turn into a political issue as councillors dutifully followed the party line.

Our concern, of course, is that by the time a genuine feasibility study is done, they will have knocked the Centre down, and if the numbers don't work, it will suddenly be a case of "Revert to Plan A". Needless to say, we would do everything possible to ensure that no action is taken in terms of closing Benwell without cast-iron assurances.

In addition, we get the impression

that local councillors are only too aware from the mood of the community that, regardless of any party allegiances, the continuation of their careers as councillors after next May's local elections probably depends on delivering an acceptable outcome.

Once again, it has been proved that the weight of local opinion, properly argued and organised, can force the Council to do the right thing, albeit grudgingly and with a fudged solution.

However, it should not have to be like this. The Council should not be trying to pull the wool over residents' eyes by presenting cuts in services as "improvements" as part of carefully-slanted consultation exercises. We know they have a problem balancing the books, but they should be working openly with residents to find ways to deliver the services that are needed.

And just once in a while, while there are some occasional honourable exceptions, we would like our elected representatives to remember just whose interests they are supposed to be representing.

Spelthorne Strategic Plan : June 15 deadline for responses

There have been some notices in the local press advising of the publication of Spelthorne's new "Strategic Development Plan - Preferred Options", the new version of the Borough Plan. You may remember that there was a questionnaire in the Spelthorne Bulletin last year, which was the Council's way of gathering opinions prior to the drafting of the Plan.

There is now a six-week consultation period on the SDP, which ends on June 15th, during which residents can make further comments and suggestions. In our view, this is much too short a timescale, as it is a very big set of documents, and we have asked for this period to be extended.

We cannot give you any kind of summary, as we are still ploughing through it ourselves. However, it is worth pointing out some of the site-specific elements on the Plan.

Among the major sites identified for significant housing development is the Environment Agency site in Fordbrisse

Road. However, there are several sites in Lower Sunbury where landowners have obviously lobbied for the status of the land to be changed to accommodate housing development, and where Spelthorne have rejected the proposals. These include : The Jarvis land, off Croysdale Avenue, between Hazelwood Golf Course and Lyndhurst Avenue (Green Belt); the tennis courts in St Paul's School off The Ridings (Protected Urban Open Space); Land at London Irish RFC (Protected Urban Open Space).

Although landowners can still put in planning applications, it is a good sign that the Council's strategic view is that the integrity of the protected status of these sites should be retained. You may wish to register your approval of this to the Council.

We will obviously be submitting our comments on the Strategies and Policies, and specific Proposals. We won't just be commenting on what's there. It's also important to look for

what's not there - the things on which we think there should be strong policies and commitments, but which maybe have not been addressed.

You can read the document, and submit your comments, on-line from the Spelthorne website. There is a link on the www.spelthorne.gov.uk home page. If you don't have access to the internet, there is a copy of the Plan in Sunbury Library, with details of how you can make written submissions in the normal way.

If you have time, this is a very important document, and every public submission carries weight.

Green Street plan submitted again

The application to knock down two houses at the top of Green St. and build flats and houses, already rejected by Spelthorne, has for some reason been re-submitted by the developers in apparently identical form.

This means that everyone has had to object again in order to ensure the same result. We suspect that even if it is rejected again, they will be back with yet another plan.

Spelthorne consults residents' associations via "Your Shout" initiative

Spelthorne Council invited representatives of all the residents' associations in Spelthorne to a meeting in May as part of an initiative called "Your Shout", through which they aim to be more responsive to local issues, and communicate better with the Borough's residents.

It was a worthy enough effort, although the Council representatives were careful not to allow an open forum debate, instead breaking everyone into small groups with council officers reporting back to the main meeting.

The most productive outcome is that there are likely to be improvements to the format of the Area Forums to make them more frequent, more useful and allow residents to set at least part of the agenda. There was also discussion about amounts of money being made available to residents wanting to do small-scale local enhancement work.

This kind of approach seems fine for addressing very local issues, but this seems to be the level at which Spelthorne wants to keep it. It remains to be seen whether it will be effective in addressing the difficult strategic stuff involving issues like housing development, traffic, air quality etc.. However, we will try to ensure that it is.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

Pamela Cabannes	4 Forge Mews	761131
Tony Cannings	90 Manor Lane	789750
Elleke Carling	3 Croysdale Avenue	882726
Pat Carrick-Allan	Adelphi, Parke Road	
Don Cunningham	2 Parkwood Grove	889033
Peter Francis	Linden Lodge, Woodlands Drive	770661
Cathie French	173 French Street	789157
Roger Harding	Sunmead Cottage, Green St.	782744
John Hirsh (Chairman)	21 School Walk	781363
Anne Nowicka	9 The Pines	885545
Mike Rigby (Treasurer)	26 Queensway TW16 6HB	789013
Patrick Smith	6 Maryland Way	
Paul Watts (President)	87 The Avenue TW16 5HZ	788449
David Woods	47 Sunna Gardens	786806

TP26 Cycle path plan published

Surrey County Council have published the plan for a shared Cycle/Pedestrian Route along TP26, the Linear Park between French Street and Green Street. They are proposing to put this in place before the land is formally passed to Spelthorne Council ownership.

Our opinion is that, in parts, the plan seems fine; in others less so, particularly the stretch between The Avenue and French Street. We had asked for a high profile public exhibition and consultation; SCC has responded with a leaflet drop to residents living next to TP26 inviting views and comments. This seems to us to be yet another well-meaning but inadequate effort at proper public consultation.

We have repeatedly pressed for the path to form part of an integrate landscaping and enhancement plan involving Surrey and Spelthorne, but this degree of 'joined up government' seems very difficult to achieve.

LOSRA will raise this matter again at the next Surrey County Council Local Area Committee on 19th June. The Linear Park is a valuable asset for the whole of Sunbury and should be given the weight of recognition commensurate with that status, so that the wider community can contribute to the decision-making process.

"Friends of Sunbury Park" Come to the AGM on Friday June 16th

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Sunbury Park takes place on Friday 16th June at 7.30pm in the Craft Centre of the Riverside Arts Centre in Thames Street.

The meeting is open to all, so if you are interested in how the Park, Walled Garden and Orchard Meadow are managed, and how you can be involved, please come along.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not already paid your subscription for this year, could you please help us by dropping your subscription in to one of our three collection points using the tear-off slip below. You can deliver it to any of the following local shops: Skinners in Avenue Parade; Londis in French Street, Twirltour Travel in Green Street. Our thanks to these businesses for their help in providing this service.

Please find enclosed my annual subscription of £2.00 for family membership of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association for the calendar year 2006.

Name : Address :
..... Tel. no. : (AGM06)