

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



2007 SPRING NEWSLETTER

ANGER AT SPELTHORNE PLAN FOR SUNBURY CAR PARK CHARGES

Send your letter of objection by 8th March

Spelthorne Borough Council's plan for introducing charges for users of the car park in Green Street adjacent to Sunbury Park has been greeted with unanimous condemnation by local residents.

The plan, proposed to come into force in April, involves a charge of £0.20p for the first hour or £1.00 for a whole day.

The Council's rationale is that the car park is used for long term parking by employees of Page Engineering and attendees at the Police College, and that these users should contribute to the upkeep of the car park. They also suggest that long-term users restrict the availability of space for residents.

Spelthorne's argument ignores the reality that the long-term users would simply no longer use the car park and will park on the surrounding streets, causing congestion, access difficulty and inconvenience for residents. Police College users would also probably use the Old Bathing Pool car park in Fordbridge Road.

The financial implications of the proposal are also pretty bizarre. The cost of preparing the car park for charging - marking spaces, installing machines etc. - would be

about £12,000. Spelthorne's estimate of annual income is £4,000. Even at this level, no benefit or contribution to Park upkeep would accrue for over 3 years, and in any event most of Spelthorne's previous estimates of income from car park charges in the Borough have proved to be wildly overstated.

Local shopkeepers are horrified at the proposal - they know that long-term users would take up on-street spaces used by their customers, and people would be reluctant to pay in order to visit their shops.

Residents and local businesses already pay for these car parks through their business rates and Council Tax. This is just a gratuitous extra charge on a service and facility which is essential for the social cohesion and organisation of a local suburban community.

It is also an odd thing to do at a time when everyone is trying to encourage people to take exercise and use our open spaces, and when the activities of the Friends of Sunbury Park and the Sunbury Embroidery Gallery are attracting people to visit the area.

Significantly, the Friends of Sunbury Park group has not been consulted on the issue. Public notice of the proposal was restricted to a single advertisement in the Surrey Herald.

There is widespread concern that this is the thin end of the wedge and that, if this goes through, charges will be introduced in The Avenue and Magpie car parks next year. A Spelthorne officer specifically told a LOSRA representative that this was the case.

Our view is that the proposal is entirely inappropriate for our area, that the car parks are an important part of the local infrastructure for which we already pay the cost, and that the economics of the scheme are laughable.

If you want to register your objection, letters need to be received by 10th March. Write to: The Head of Corporate Governance, Spelthorne Borough Council, Knowle Green, Staines TW18 1XB.

Please also copy your letter to, or e-mail, all the Sunbury East and Halliford & Sunbury West councillors (links are on www.spelthorne.gov.uk). Once again, we need to show Spelthorne the strength of local democracy in action.

Green Street Public Inquiry starts on March 27th - please support

The Public Inquiry into the appeal by Cliveden Properties against the decision by Spelthorne's Planning Committee to reject their application for a development in Green Street has been scheduled for Tuesday 27th March at 10am at the Council offices at Knowle Green.

The proposed development comprises 4 houses and a block of 10 flats on the site of two houses at the top end of Green Street, which is part of the site for which a previous application was defeated at an Inquiry in 2004.

One reason the applicant has appealed in this case is that Spelthorne's planning officer recommended approval of the plan. Although the Planning Committee quite rightly maintained consistency and used the principles cited by the Inspector in the previous case in rejecting the application, the Officer's stance gave the applicants a chink of light to lodge an appeal. It is vital that we keep pressure on the Council to take a more robust line in such cases.

We have worked closely with the Green Street Action Group in encouraging residents to write letters of objection - many thanks to the hundreds of you who have supported the cause. Keith Johnson of GSAG has worked tirelessly to prepare the case for the Inquiry, and LOSRA Chairman John Hirsh will be presenting the residents' case.

If you can spare the time, please go along and watch the proceedings - it always impresses the Inspector if there is a good turnout of local people, and it can unnerve the applicant's witnesses, especially when they are being cross-examined on issues where they are short on local knowledge. Let's wish our team luck in getting this scheme thrown out.

More applications for demolitions and dense developments - objections needed

There have been two more planning applications already this year to demolish existing houses, and build dense developments on the plots, using green space currently occupied by the gardens.

One is at 17-19 Lime Crescent, off French Street, where the plan is for a block of 9 flats with a new access road on the site of 2 semi-detached houses (Application Ref. 06/01209/FUL). The closing date for objections was 22nd Feb., but if you want to object, the letter will probably be accepted.

The other is at 5 Nursery Road, where there are two separate applications for different parts of the same plot, involving a 3-bedroom house and a bungalow, with new access, on a site currently occupied by a bungalow and its garden. (Application Nos. 07/00079/FUL & 07/00097/FUL - objections deadline is 8th March). What is worse, this area has already been infilled and over-developed by conversions done back in the 50s.

As you know, LOSRA's strategy is to oppose all development involving the loss of houses and gardens, as it destroys vital green space, creates housing density out of character with the area, and threatens social cohesion. If you agree with us and the immediate neighbours who are concerned on either of these applications, please write or e-mail to register your objection.

Area Forums - is this real local democracy?

As we go to press, we are preparing for the next Area Forum at St Paul's School on Tuesday 27th February. Unfortunately, our newsletter schedule did not make it possible to give you a reminder of this, but we know that a lot of local people are intending to be there.

Spelthorne Council profess to see Area Forums as an important way of communicating with residents, giving opportunities for dialogue with local people. However, we are concerned that the reality might not live up to the PR. LOSRA has campaigned unsuccessfully to make the Area Forum more dynamic and relevant to the needs of the community; in other words, to make it more than just another talking shop.

We have tried, without success, to increase the frequency from the token two, to a more meaningful four per annum; and to have an input into the shaping of the Agenda to make it more responsive to local Sunbury issues. We were however successful in exacting one small concession, enabling residents to submit questions in advance of the Forum in order to get an authoritative response on the night. The questions and answers would be delivered in public for the benefit of all and for the enhancement of the public accountability of our elected representatives.

It now seems that, without further reference to residents, such questions and answers will be conducted by way of a paper exchange and will not be aired publicly save at the discretion of the Chairman (a local councillor). The Council cites pressures of time as the reason. This cannot be valid however as the Council has declined to increase the number of Forums, for which we have repeatedly asked, and which would have alleviated this problem.

Whatever the intention, it is difficult to view this other than a crude attempt at gagging the difficult or inconvenient question. There is an overwhelming impression that Spelthorne is keen to pay lip service to the ideas of consultation and democracy, but that it is really just a box-ticking exercise. The minute that anything is suggested that might involve open discussion of issues, the stage managers take over and debate and dissent is stifled. Call us a bunch of old cynics if you like, but given how the date of the last Forum fits within the electoral calendar, should it come as any surprise!

A report on the latest Forum, with our comments, will be posted on our website www.losra.org.uk - please look out for it.

Residents take up the cudgels over BP pumping station on Elmbridge riverbank

Lower Sunbury residents who live near the banks of the Thames were alarmed by a proposal by BP to build a new pumping station near Sunbury Weir as part of their fuel storage facility.

We have always had a problem with the way that Elmbridge Council has allowed the utilities to develop the southern bank of the Thames opposite Sunbury without much apparent concern for its neighbours or the environment. We appreciate that major vested interests have corporate power, but in our view there has been inadequate attention paid to the impact of their activities.

This plan involved a pumping station, with noise protection

measures provided on the 3 sides facing Elmbridge, but no visual or noise screening facing the Sunbury bank. Sunbury residents were concerned that, with the amplification of noise across water, plus new building, there would be a considerable impact on the environment.

Sunbury residents should have been advised of this plan, but we understand that there was a breakdown of communication between Elmbridge and Spelthorne and it didn't happen. However, once residents got wind of the proposal, strong action was taken.

A consortium of Thames Street residents co-ordinated objection

letters, got Cllr. Gerry Ceaser involved, and spoke at Spelthorne's Planning Committee, persuading them to change their stance and object to the proposal.

Further pressure resulted in a meeting involving Elmbridge Council, BP and objectors, including Sunbury residents, and LOSRA spoke to the engineer who designed the project. As a result, residents' fears have been allayed and they are satisfied that the extra measures subsequently put in place to control noise and light nuisance and to screen the works will be sufficient.

This is an issue where LOSRA officers were able to lend their support, write the necessary letters and keep a watching brief while the residents immediately concerned took the initiative in pursuing the objections. Many thanks to them for their action, and for keeping us in the loop.

Residents' groups campaign to change Spelthorne housing strategy

The Green Street Action Group has launched a campaign to persuade Spelthorne to change its housing strategy, and LOSRA, along with other residents' groups in Spelthorne have endorsed the initiative with a joint approach to Heather Morgan, Spelthorne's Head of Planning.

Keith Johnson, Chairman of GSAG, has produced a superbly researched document, which shows that Spelthorne is six years ahead of its housing target. Of the 2580 dwellings Spelthorne is committed to build by 2016, no less than 2046 have already been built or permissions granted.

It also argues that the infrastructure in the Borough is unable to cope with the rate of housing growth, and that issues of air pollution, proximity of housing to the polluting effect of the many motorways in the Borough, and the impact of the loss of trees and green space, are making the situation critical. It argues cogently for a moratorium on new building while discussions are held.

The GSAG report is available on LOSRA's website, www.losra.org.uk. The document echoes many of the arguments in LOSRA's "A Vision for Lower Sunbury" presentation, also on the website.

This is a timely, necessary and crucial initiative - if you support the stance it adopts, please e-mail to let us know, so we can demonstrate to Spelthorne the level of support it enjoys.

Fly-tipping on Linear Park : please be vigilant

There was another instance of fly-tipping towards the end of January on TP26, the Linear Park between French Street and The Avenue. Unfortunately, it took about 12 days to get the large pile of rubbish shifted because of the fact that the land is still owned by Surrey County Council.

As a result, Spelthorne passed the complaint to Surrey, who took a long while to act. Local residents, along with Cllr. Ceaser, plus LOSRA, and, according to their newsletter, the local Lib Dems, were on the case, but the response was lacklustre to say the least.

It would be really good news if the cowboys who dump this stuff could be caught in the act, so they could be prosecuted. Please keep your eyes and ears open and if you spot anything, note the vehicle registration number, and report it to the Police and LOSRA.

To make sure any flytipped rubbish is cleared as quickly as possible to avoid encouragement to others tempted to add their waste to the pile, call Spelthorne's Direct Services Department on 01784 446411.

2007 LOSRA Membership subscriptions are due

Each year we ask you to support us by paying a small subscription of £2.00 for family membership. We are delighted that some of you do so every year and last year this gave us about £860.

What do we do with the money?

We produce 3 regular newsletters a year at a cost of approximately £1000 and in emergencies have to produce special newsletters to alert residents to urgent issues. We hold our committee meetings and AGM at the Riverside Arts Centre at a cost of approximately £200 for the year.

So £1200 regular expenses against £860 collected in subscriptions - how do we manage? The balance has to be found by the fundraising efforts of our committee and donations from our more generous residents in Sunbury.

Newsletters are delivered to some 3,400 homes in Sunbury by a loyal band of dedicated residents to whom we are indebted - every home gets one regardless of whether they pay subs because we want to encourage wider involvement. £2.00 is a lot to ask for the efforts of your LOSRA Committee all year, and we hope you feel you get good value!

You can pay your subscriptions using the form below, or drop it through any committee members' door. We look forward to welcoming you as a member.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

Pamela Cabannes	4 Forge Mews	761131
Tony Cannings	90 Manor Lane	789750
Elleke Carling	3 Croysdale Avenue	882 726
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	
Pat Stone	Adelphi, Parke Road	
Paul Watts (President)	87 The Avenue TW16 5HZ	788449
Chris Wills	Mon Abri, Wheatleys Ait	780574
David Woods	47 Sunna Gardens	786806

Albert Skinner

Sunbury mourns the passing of a pillar of the community

Hundreds of Sunbury residents turned out for the funeral of Albert Skinner, of Skinners' Newsagents in Avenue Parade, who died on Boxing Day after a long illness.

Albert was a remarkable character who epitomised all the best qualities of a genuine pillar of the community. He was always prepared to help any individual or local organisation, and the number of people who wanted to both mourn his passing and celebrate his life is a testament to the huge contribution he made to the life of Lower Sunbury over several decades. He will be long remembered

Have a tree planted!

For only £30, local tree warden volunteers are able to supply trees, and will deliver and plant them for you. They can plant in gardens, and with authorization from Surrey CC Highways Dept. are also able to plant on roadsides and other open spaces. They provide a stake, a tie, and a strimmer guard for each of the trees, most of which are bought from growers in Surrey or Hampshire.

Applications for roadside trees need to be vetted. It is important therefore to contact them in good time for the autumn. If you would like a tree or trees just contact one of our members: Dave Woods 01932 786806; Dave Huxford 0794 1093186; Sally Fletcher 01932 227679 or 07778 370571 The Surrey Tree Warden Network is a registered charity.

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 2007.

Name : Address :
E-mail address Tel. no. : (SPR07)