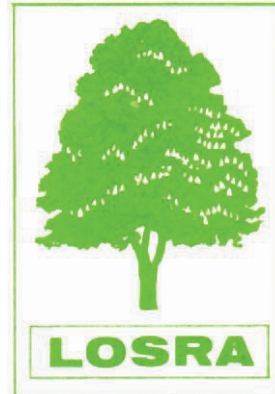


# LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



## SPRING 2012 NEWSLETTER

### Is it just us or does it feel like Lower Sunbury is drowning in a tide of over-development?

Follow the latest  
news on the LOSRA  
website at

[www.losra.org](http://www.losra.org)

It's remarkable that, having just enjoyed a year or so during which three development proposals have been rejected after planning appeals and public inquiries – those involving London Irish RFC/Hazelwood, the Environment Agency Site and 72 The Avenue – we should now find ourselves faced with an extraordinary flood of potential developments which cumulatively are likely to have a serious long-term impact on Lower Sunbury.

At least one of those victories – London Irish and Hazelwood – looks like being a pretty hollow one, courtesy of the small print in the Secretary of State's ruling, and the same Secretary of State's abolition of the Regional Assemblies, and with them the influence they had on planning decisions. The details are in the full story overleaf, but suffice to say it looks like being very difficult to resist another application for housing on the London Irish site in The Avenue – whether it impacts Hazelwood as well remains to be seen.

It is also almost certain that there will be another application for housing development on the Environment Agency site. Linden Homes, the developer, is bending over backwards to ensure there won't be a need for another appeal and inquiry, and has consulted with residents on choice of architect/designer. The likely outcome is a proposal which will not have the same damaging impact on neighbouring residents as the previous one. It would be hard to resist development, since this is a brownfield site, but whatever happens it will be another significant number of new homes in the local area.

The Police College is a similar story – it's a brownfield site, so building on it is inevitable, and once again it's Linden Homes who have acquired it for development. Local reaction to the plans when they were exhibited was mixed – some people thought it reasonably OK, although it is architecturally incredibly mundane and unimpressive for such an important corner site on the entry/exit to and from the Conservation Area. However, a number of local residents believe that the proposal provides for too high a density of housing, and have approached the same specialist planning QC who fought the residents' case at the EA appeal in order to ensure it is effectively opposed. Nevertheless, a development involving another significant number of new houses is inevitable.

The cumulative impact of these developments in terms of traffic and pressure on the local infrastructure will be huge. In truth, these developments are not sustainable – the Health Centre and local schools will find it difficult to absorb the numbers involved. However, our useless planning laws mean that if developers can demonstrate that some kind of public transport exists reasonably close by, and that other elements of the infrastructure exist, whether or not they can cope, then cumulative impact goes by the board.

And, of course, it's not just housing development. Disgracefully, the EcoPark proposal for the site of the Charlton Lane Waste Transfer Station was approved in March by Surrey County Council, despite the Advertising Standards Authority having ruled unequivocally that the consultation was based on insufficient and inadequate information, and despite cogent scientific evidence that the technology involved is unproven. As ever, Surrey is happy to use Spelthorne as its dumping ground for everything that the county's wealthy residents of the stockbroker belt don't want.

On top of that, it has become clear that, having for the last 30 years or so successfully kept Watersplash Farm, in Fordbridge Road, off the list of sites to be worked for gravel, we have finally lost the battle, and it now seems certain that work will start there in a couple of years time. It could be worse, in that Cemex are not going to have an aggregates recycling plant there as well, but clearly, with a projected 125 lorry movements a day on the A244, traffic will undoubtedly be affected.

It does seem ridiculous that it is impossible to oppose any of these developments on the basis that their cumulative impact is genuinely unsustainable, and that when our Chairman asked a question on this matter of the Local Area Committee, he was batted off with a bland and anodyne response which wilfully made no attempt to address the issue raised.

No matter how effective or well-organised a community like ours is, it seems increasingly the case that the planning system dice are loaded in favour of developers and vested interests, with an assumption in favour of development, and people like us branded by a Government minister as "nihilistically selfish", unlike the corporate heavyweights who lobbied so hard for these changes, of course. With the new planning document in place, it seems likely that it can only get worse.

# London Irish submit new planning applications for The Avenue and Hazelwood Golf Course

Many thanks to over one hundred of our members who turned up for the public meeting on 23rd February at St. Mary's Church Hall. The meeting, arranged by LOSRA, was intended to give London Irish and the design planner the opportunity to present their development proposals following the dismissal of their earlier appeals by the Secretary of State in October last year.

As expected, it was an occasion of much lively debate as it served to highlight that planning appeal decisions can sometimes prove to be double-edged swords. On careful reading it was almost inevitable that, after satisfying the reservations expressed in the decision notice, London Irish would come back to the table with revised applications. If you are not familiar with the grounds for the original decisions these may be viewed on the Council Website.

At the meeting, London Irish made it plain that they intended to make two separate applications in respect of their Avenue site and a separate application for the Hazelwood Golf Course. This they have now done and all three are featured on the 'Hot Topics' News section of Spelthorne Borough Council's Website. All those who have made previous representations should by now have received a letter from the LPA advising of the new reference numbers.

The two applications for the Avenue Site are:  
**12/00368/OUT:** This outline application is for 194 residential units, a 60 bed care home, a site for a future health centre and the provision of new open space including a new neighbourhood park. This is the same as the appeal scheme, with the exception that 35% affordable housing is now provided on site. The residential units are a mix of 39 one bed and 51 two bed flats, along with 66 two bed cottages, 16 semi-detached three and four bed houses and 22 detached four and five bedroom houses.

**12/00369/OUT:** This alternative application is for a wholly residential scheme of 146 houses (106 market housing and 40 affordable) and a sheltered housing complex for the elderly (50 - 60 units) with the provision of significant areas of new open space. The residential units are a mix of 12 two bed houses, 68 three bed houses, 40 four bed houses and 26 five bed houses.

Again, this scheme is an outline application. The scheme has been drawn up in discussion with the Council and LOSRA, and provides more family sized medium and large

houses, 20% affordable housing on site and a financial contribution for the remaining 15% off site, and centrally located open space. London Irish has also indicated in its Planning Statement for The Avenue site that the original application and appeal scheme (ie 12/00368/OUT) will be withdrawn if this alternative scheme is granted planning permission.

Despite our preferences (LOSRA has a history of opposing development on this protected area of urban open space) we are where we are. The Secretary of State has, with certain caveats, signalled his approval for the Site to be developed. There is little point now in repeating the arguments which didn't carry sufficient weight at appeal, e.g. traffic, infrastructure, amenity and sustainability.

All however is not lost. Many of the concerns raised by residents in the past, e.g. lack of family housing and too many flats (there are 90 in the original plan) have been addressed; there are many more of the former and, apart from the sheltered housing, none of the latter. Paradoxically, the alternative much denser plan (12/00368/OUT) would be more likely to succeed on appeal. For this reason, whilst indicating its opposition to both plans, LOSRA will signify its preference for the second plan if we must accept one or the other.

The application for Hazelwood Golf Course:

**12/00367/OUT** The new application for the Rugby Centre of Excellence at Hazelwood is the same as the scheme which was dismissed on appeal, except that a legal agreement will be required to ensure that community benefits are delivered regardless of whether or not The Avenue development goes ahead. LOSRA will be seeking to attach the same very restrictive conditions as were agreed at the appeal hearing.

All these plans will be heard by the Planning Committee on Thursday 21st June. Due to the Easter holidays public consultation on all three applications has been extended to six weeks as opposed to the standard three week period. If you wish to comment on any of the applications you may do so by email via 'Planning Applications Online' or by sending a letter to: Planning Dept, Spelthorne Borough Council, Knowle Green, Staines TW18 1XB by 11 May 2012 using the reference numbers above.

## LOSRA opposes phone mast proposal for Green Street/ Croysdale Avenue. Residents urged to object

LOSRA has received of a number of emails regarding an application to install a 12.5 metre phone mast and junction box on the grassed area of Green Street at the junction with Croysdale Avenue. After looking at the plans, it is evident that the application has the potential to ruin the views and pleasure of the Linear Hawke Park for the much wider community.

For this reason we have submitted a detailed and closely argued representation which may be viewed via the link on our website. We have managed to get previous similar applications rejected on the basis that it is inappropriate in this position, but as always the vested interests keep coming

back to try again, and this application makes a number of what we regard as quite unsubstantiated claims, which deserve to be roundly rebutted.

We urge residents to look at our submission and then make their own individual objections which can be completed on line or by email to:

[planning.development.control@spelthorne.gov.uk](mailto:planning.development.control@spelthorne.gov.uk) quoting reference number 12/00326/T56. The deadline for submissions is 19th April.

## Date of Annual General Meeting

A number of people have asked when this year's LOSRA AGM is taking place. It is on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> June, as usual at the Riverside Arts Centre at 8pm. There will be a fuller notice of the meeting in due course.

# Surrey County Council approves EcoPark application – but the saga may not be over

With perhaps depressing predictability, the Surrey County Council Planning and Regulatory Committee unfortunately decided to approve the Eco Park application on Friday 9th March.

Not content with passing this unproven (and therefore experimental) technology, they even refused requests to prevent access to the gasification plant by HGVs on Saturdays and Sundays; to prevent access to the anaerobic digester on Saturdays; and to restrict the operation of the gasifier at weekends. They also chose to ignore the fact that the Advertising Standards Authority had ruled that the consultation had been based on inaccurate and inadequate information, which clearly called into question the validity of the consultation process.

The arguments put forward by the speakers on your behalf were delivered with conviction and should have persuaded the Committee of the concerns the residents have about the proposal. Our local County Councillors also put forward cogent and well reasoned points, and all were supported by a packed public gallery, but the Committee did not vote as we would have hoped.

This has been a long three years of campaigning, and the hugely disappointing outcome has served to illustrate how economic considerations seem destined to trump all the environmental deficits which will inevitably result from this project.

However, this may not be the end of the story. Following the Planning Committee decision, we had a lengthy meeting with the Head of Corporate Governance, the Head of Planning Policy and the Cabinet member responsible for Environmental Services. It was a useful meeting and sufficient time was allowed for all our concerns to be aired. It now remains to be seen whether counsel for SBC advises that there is a case for applying to the High Court for Judicial Review.

It is worth reminding readers that, whatever the decision, no evidence has yet been provided which rebuts the following propositions:

- According to the EC Guidelines for safer Biomass gasification, such plants can never be safe; they are always

managed risks requiring best practice to mitigate them. Assurances of absolute safety are simply untrue.

- Batch gasifiers (e.g. the EcoPark) burning unknown waste are a lot riskier than continuous Biomass fed gasifiers because they are harder to control and experience continuous process perturbations as feed chambers are switched. Most 'big bangs' occur at start up and shut down, as any process engineer can tell you.

- During operation of a biomass gasification plant there is an increased hazard potential due to the fact that a potentially explosive, toxic and combustible gas mixture is produced and consumed. The producer gas and residues (ash, liquids, exhaust gases) may cause the following major hazards/risks:

- an explosion and/or fire;

- health damage to humans (poisoning, danger of suffocation, noise, hot surfaces, fire and explosion);

- pollution of the environment and plant vicinity.

- To counteract these adverse effects, appropriate measures must be taken to meet the requirements for successful market introduction of a safe and eco-friendly biomass gasification technology.

- The developers had neither recognised these risks in their design nor advised the Health and Safety Executive of what they were about. We did that when they would not. They have still not created a viable design; and what they propose is often the opposite to what is recommended in the Guidelines i.e. UNSAFE

Hence our concern with placing a badly designed experimental explosive chemical process plant, handling toxic substances, in a public facility near dense habitation. This is not a practice that a responsible commercial plant operator would follow, or be allowed to follow by competent authorities or their lawyers, because it's simply placing people at avoidable risk. That is not a planning criterion says the Surrey CC planning officer; and it's not your problem he assured councillors.

## LOSRA question to Local Area Committee gets poor response from Surrey County Council

The highly restrictive process by which a resident may ask a question of our local County Councillors has once again proved to be more important than a satisfactory outcome. Once a question has been asked, with one supplementary allowed, no further debate is permissible - no matter how important the issue. Not for the first time the Chairman of LOSRA left the Local Area Committee wondering how his time might more profitably have been spent.

The question was one which is of interest to all our members as it concerns the cumulative effects of the various prospective developments in the Lower Sunbury area. The answer to the first question which queried what arrangements were in place to deal with the potential problem was blandly answered with information that is already freely available on the SCC Website. Critically, the answer did not address the

"how" which was the whole point of the question. The answer to the supplementary question, designed to elicit one named individual to whom ultimate accountability should be attached, was similarly opaque. Please look at this story on the LOSRA web site where links to the questions and answers are posted – they are extremely illuminating.

In short, the Chairman was none the wiser when he left the Council chamber, having learnt nothing new or which he could not have discovered by searching the internet from the comfort of his office. He was also left wondering whether our elected representatives actually see the answers prepared by officers who seem so adept at scripting obfuscation and patronising platitudes on behalf of their political masters. It's almost as though the public are merely "them", the polloi, the dumb, slow moaning livestock of politics. This may sound harsh but this is the impression which most of those attending to ask questions took away with them.

## Local residents oppose developments plans for Police College site

The planning application to build houses and apartments on the site of the Police College at the junction of Thames Street and Green Street has attracted considerable opposition from residents in the immediate area. When they were exhibited at the Riverside Arts Centre, reactions to the plans were generally not especially negative, although there were concerns about the traffic exit on to the narrow one-way section of Green Street. It was made clear at the time that the proximity to the junction made it impossible for there to be an exit on to Thames Street.

Since the formal plan was submitted, however, a significant body of local opinion has built up, most especially concerning the density of the number of dwellings proposed for the site and the impact on residents behind the site in Stile Path.

So forthright is this opposition that a group of residents in the immediate area have approached Robert McCracken, the specialist planning QC who successfully fought the residents' case at the public inquiry into the initial plan for the Environment Agency site, with a view to his providing advice and assistance.

Clearly, by the very nature of the site, it is inevitable that there will be some kind of development on it, but it may be that the highly committed action of residents can succeed in having the plans scaled down to reduce not only the impact of the development on the immediate area, but the cumulative effect of traffic and other pressure on the local infrastructure.

### THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

|  |                               |        |
|--|-------------------------------|--------|
| David Banks                                    | 38 Kenton Avenue              | 789652 |
| Pamela Cabannes-Barrall                        | 4 Forge Mews                  | 761131 |
| Elleke Carling                                 | 3 Croysdale Avenue            | 882726 |
| Ziz Coltart (Treasurer & Membership Secretary) | 161 The Avenue                | 782277 |
| Tessa Cook                                     | 125 The Avenue                | 700264 |
| Don Cunningham                                 | 2 Parkwood Grove              | 889033 |
| Colleen Cuthbert (Secretary)                   | 8 Maryland Way                | 783606 |
| Peter Francis                                  | Linden Lodge, Woodlands Drive | 770661 |
| Jenny Grant                                    | Riverbank, The Creek          | 780682 |
| John Hirsh (Chairman)                          | 21 School Walk                | 781363 |
| George Rushbrook                               | 8 Meadows End                 | 788471 |
| Matt Thomas                                    | 7 Nursery Road                |        |
| Paul Watts (President)                         | 87 The Avenue                 | 788449 |
| Chris Wills                                    |                               |        |
| David Woods                                    | 47 Sunna Gardens              | 786806 |

## Come and join us at the LOSRA Summer Garden Party Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June at The Old Vicarage, 1 Church Street

LOSRA is holding a special event this summer, which is the result of a very kind invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Heslop, who live in the Old Vicarage in Church Street, making their delightful garden available to us for an occasion such as this.

The event is a Summer Garden Party, which will take place on Fathers' Day, Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June, between 12 noon and 5 p.m.. As those of you who visited the Old Vicarage garden when it featured in the Open Gardens Day a couple of years ago, it is a truly beautiful place.

As well as viewing this fabulous garden, the LOSRA Old Vicarage Summer Garden Party will feature the opportunity to enjoy food and refreshments throughout the afternoon, including afternoon teas and coffee, bucks fizz and wine bar, a summer BBQ and food from "The Indian Zest."

There will be entertainment during the afternoon provided by a variety of local musicians and fun things for the kids. Local products will also be available for purchase from a variety of small stands. There will also be boat rides to see the village from the river ( tickets available on the day). Tickets for the event will cost £5.00 and will be available from Skinners Newsagents, at [www.losra.org](http://www.losra.org), Philip Hodges and Twirltour Travel. or contact 01932 782277. Youngsters under 13 will be admitted free on the gate.

As you know, we are incurring some significant costs in fighting the various campaigns which are still continuing, so the funds we raise from the Garden Party will be very useful, and it provides us with the opportunity to add another enjoyable occasion to the village calendar. We are very grateful to Mr. & Mrs Heslop for making their lovely garden available and also to the sponsors of the event, Philip Hodges and Waterside estate agents. We hope to see you there.

### Congratulations to Raj Homecare on the Rotary Award for services to the community

We are sure everyone in Sunbury will join us in congratulating Raj of Homecare DIY in Avenue Parade, who has received the 2011 Shield for Business Award from Sunbury & Shepperton Rotary Club for services to the community. Raj and his marvellous shop – it's remarkable what he has in stock – has been a valued part of Sunbury life for as long as most of us can remember, and he is a bottomless source of knowledge, advice and help for ordinary mortals doing unfamiliar jobs around the house.

Raj epitomises everything that's best about a neighbourhood retail business, and this recognition is richly deserved.

### MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not paid your subscription for this year, could you please help us by paying your subscription either by credit card using the secure PayPal facility on our website at [www.losra.org](http://www.losra.org) or by dropping your subscription in to one of our two collection points using the tear-off slip below. You can deliver it to either of the following shops : Skinners Newsagents/Post office in Avenue Parade and Twirltour Travel in Green Street. Our thanks to these businesses for their help in providing this service. As advised in our previous newsletters, the subscription increased to £5.00 from the beginning of January 2008. Via the web site you can now, as an alternative, become a Life Member for £100.

Please find enclosed my annual subscription of £5.00 for family membership of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association for the calendar year 2012. In addition, I would like to make a donation of £..... (SPR12)

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