

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

2014 SPRING NEWSLETTER



www.losra.org

LOSRA incurs the wrath of Spelthorne with article on Kempton Park development

The front page story about the possibility of a major housing development at Kempton Park in the last LOSRA newsletter in the autumn caused a major furore at Knowle Green, as Spelthorne officers and councillors took us to task for what they regarded as an inaccurate and misleading article.

LOSRA officers received e-mails and phone calls, and were summoned to a meeting, at which the content of the article was vigorously challenged, with the Leader of the Council even threatening legal action. Unsurprisingly, the meeting, at which LOSRA defended the article with equal vigour, ended inconclusively.

However, at no stage did representatives of LOSRA step back from the position we adopted in the article or in any way apologise for what was written, believing it to be fully justified by the circumstances and by information which was in our possession and which we had been told, including statements by individuals who were at the meeting.

The upshot was that LOSRA invited Spelthorne to publish on the LOSRA web site a message from Spelthorne's Chief Executive saying whatever the Council wanted to say in response to our article. We are happy to repeat that message here, so that all Lower Sunbury residents have a chance to read it.

"We welcome this opportunity to make our position on Kempton Park completely clear. As you would expect the Council has regular discussions about future business plans with all the major operations within the borough, including Kempton, but it has not seen or discussed building plans for any development on this site. Should plans be submitted at some future date there

would be a statutory requirement for the developer to undertake full and detailed pre-application discussions with the local community. We would expect this to be done at a very early formative stage. The subsequent application would be publicised giving the community a further opportunity to comment. Officers would consider the scheme in the light of all relevant policies, including Green Belt, and considered for a decision at a meeting of the Planning Committee.

We always encourage development on Brownfield sites but unfortunately cannot stop consideration of other options, including Green Belt. Were the Government to review Green Belt Policies, then we would consider how any changes applied to Spelthorne.

Spelthorne Council and LOSRA will not agree on everything – and perhaps that is as it should be – but we firmly believe that the closer relationship of recent years has brought real benefit to the local community and is founded on the acknowledgement that both parties play different roles (and will sometimes have different ideas) but both want the best for Lower Sunbury."

What Spelthorne objected to most strongly was the use of the word "Plan" in our headline "Spelthorne plans major housing development at Kempton Park". They felt that this implied that Spelthorne had submitted or were going to submit, a planning application for such a development. It did not, of course, do any such thing. You can have something in mind that you have discussed as part of a long-term strategy, and on that basis you would be

"planning" to do it, and that is precisely what we were stating.

There are a number of documents which are now in the public domain which make clear some aspects of the history of this issue. As long ago as 21st March 2012 an event took place called 'Spelthorne Cabinet and Planning Committee Kempton Park Tour', attended by Jockey Club representatives, for which the agenda included contributions by Spelthorne's Chief Executive and Chief Planning Officer. We know that a significant housing development was discussed at the meeting.

We know that Surrey County Council and Richmond Borough Council, in June and July last year, had meetings with The Jockey Club's transport consultants Mouchel at which a development of 1500-2000 dwellings was discussed. And Mouchel commented on Costco's planning application for a store on the A 316 close to Sunbury Cross to the effect that it did not take into account potential housing development at Kempton Park.

LOSRA representatives were specifically told at a meeting by a senior Spelthorne officer that such a housing development would be a solution to the Borough's affordable housing shortfall.

We think that amounts to a plan, and that's why we are sticking by what we said. There are many complex issues involved, and we will keep you informed as things develop, and we will keep up the pressure to ensure that Spelthorne's commitment to protecting the Green Belt as required by the Local Plan remains rock solid.

Surrey County Council approves amended application for EcoPark

On 17th March Surrey County Council Planning Committee approved the amended application for the controversial Eco Park at Charlton Lane. To avoid the project having to return to square one the amendments covered 43 changes and were described as minor, despite the fact that they include a completely different incineration technology, a necessity required to replace the now failed and discredited technology previously promoted by SCC and SITA as tried, tested and efficient.

The newly approved technology is experimental and will have a unique combination of systems, which authorities have described as presenting operating and control challenges, but as before SCC and SITA have every confidence that it will work! Currently the Environment Agency, the same authority that approved the previous application, are reviewing the amended application and their draft report on whether to grant an operating permit is awaited.

Meanwhile Ofgem's decision on whether the proposed new technology will be eligible for Renewable Obligation Certificate (ROC) is still outstanding. This is important to SITA as effectively it will enable them to sell their generated electricity to the Grid at three times the normal rate.

Private Eye magazine has published another article regarding what they call the "shenanigans" surrounding this affair, and is scathing in its analysis of the "chicanery" involved. They highlight the fact that the new proposed technology, which SITA insist in calling a gasifier, is no such thing, and does not conform with Ofgem's statutory definition of such equipment. It is simply

an incinerator, although at the Committee Surrey's Planning Officer, despite incontrovertible evidence from residents' representatives, doggedly advised the Committee that it was indeed a gasifier. The Private Eye article notes that Defra has held no less than 29 meetings with Surrey and SITA, "effectively coaching the Council on how to hang on to the money and give it to SITA".

On 19th March the Planning Inspectorate Inspector issued her decision that diversion of Footpath 70, which runs through the plot of the proposed Anaerobic Digester, is necessary to enable the development of the Eco Park to proceed, but added *that 'the extent to which any danger, in all its various forms, may or may not affect the public – including those using the Footpath 70 – is for other regulators, authorities and statutory bodies to consider when making decisions on whether to grant the approvals necessary before plant on the site can be commissioned. Indeed it is essential that they do so.'*

As yet SITA have not explained how they propose overcoming the 75% reduction in Charlton Lane green waste handling facilities, which will be necessary to allow space for construction of the incineration building.

Despite that fact that there were clear grounds for SCC's Planning Committee to refuse the latest application, it is no surprise that they approved it. Possibly Councillors knew there would have been huge political fallout if they refused it, and knowing there is a fair chance it won't go ahead simply because it does not meet Ofgem specifications, they felt able to approve it without being held responsible for the consequences.

As floods recede Lower Sunbury takes stock of the damage and lessons to be learnt

At last the river has dropped and the waters have receded from the riverside roads in Lower Sunbury which took the brunt of the inundation which was pretty much unprecedented, at least in recent decades.

We know from talking to residents that the process of clean-up and re-instatement of domestic infrastructure is only just beginning and is extremely daunting.

The good news is that residents and businesses have rallied round and that the magnificent level of donations to the local Flood Relief Fund are being channelled via CAB to residents who need help, and as noted elsewhere some councillors have deployed their neighbourhood funds to assist residents.

Residents also turned out at a public meeting at St. Mary's Parish Hall to support the initiative by local residents Kaye Lennoin and Alison Griffiths to set up a local Flood Volunteer Group. We were delighted to help by publicising and chairing the meeting, which

resulted in a number of people coming forward to help, co-ordinated via Stuart Mann at Spelthorne (s.mann@spelthorne.gov.uk). Quite apart from any help during the actual flooding, the Volunteers will come into their own assisting people who need help with the clean-up.

People are also asking what lessons can be learnt. There is no doubt that the severity of the floods took most people by surprise, and that as a result local authorities were not able to react immediately, but in general, while affected residents felt very much on their own, especially in the early stages, people seemed to be reasonably happy with the way that Spelthorne's officers and local councillors dealt with the problems and helped and communicated with residents.

Now we know that these floods on this scale can happen, and that there is very little prospect of stopping low-lying riverside areas flooding in the first place, everyone can prepare themselves better to cope with floods if they happen.

Housing plan for St. Pauls tennis courts site at The Ridings

A plan for 17 dwellings is soon to be submitted by Cala Homes for the area occupied by now-derelict tennis courts adjacent to St. Pauls School and The Ridings just off Green Street. This number started at 14, then went up to 29, and has now been reduced again after discussions with Cala.

The tennis courts were used by the school, but the Birmingham-based Sisters of The Charity of St. Paul have wanted to develop the land for some time, and the courts were decommissioned and left unused.

As with the London Irish, its designation as Protected Urban Open Space was lost when this government's National Planning Policy Framework did away with the Regional Assemblies under whose auspices the designation was established.

As a result, there seems little hope of resisting housing development here, although there are bound to be problems of access along the narrow cul-de-sac of The Ridings. Surrey County Council, as the highways authority, are notoriously unwilling to object to developments on highways issues.

Update on feasibility study for Thames cycle/footbridge proposal

At the time of going to press we still await the publication of the Surrey Cycling Strategy to which we submitted our suggestion for a cycle/footpath bridge connecting Lower Sunbury with the Thames Path at Walton. In our last newsletter it was reported that the feasibility study would cost in the region of £5,000-£10,000, but the quote, once the scope of the study had been fully understood, proved to be an underestimate and actually amounts to £18,500 +VAT. It was also hoped that part of the sum would be found from our local County Councillors' neighbourhood grants. Unfortunately, though quite properly, these funds were diverted at the last minute to flood relief. This unforeseen, though very understandable, hiccup has not detracted from the overall direction of the project. Cllr. Tim Evans has assured LOSRA of his support in the next financial year and will endeavour to get the bridge included in the local Transport Plan.

In addition to developments on this side of the river, it was of course vital to secure the support of Elmbridge Borough Council. This has been achieved by LOSRA address-

ing the Local Elmbridge Committee who were happy to support the initiative in principle, and subject to the findings of the feasibility study, the scope of which is described as follows:

Proposed scope of high level feasibility study

- Strategic overview:
 - How would such a bridge fit into the wider strategies for cycling, sustainable transport etc. both at a local and national level, e.g. Surrey County Council's developing Cycling Strategy?
 - Would such a bridge link into existing cycle and pedestrian routes, or would new connecting routes be needed?
 - What needs would such a bridge provide for in the context of local and national transport strategies?
- Identification of possible sites, with advantages and disadvantages, and indicative costs for each.
- Would the proposed new bridge (and associated connecting links) replace or complement any existing or proposed new infrastructure?

Surrey County Council vote through cuts in Spelthorne's Fire Service

Surrey County Council has voted through a plan to close the two fire stations at Staines and Sunbury which each had one fire appliance, and build a new fire station in Ashford with one appliance, backed up by a second appliance with an on-call crew nearby.

This has been done despite overwhelming evidence that response times at the extremities of the Borough will be doubled, and in the face of strong opposition from eleven residents' groups, senior fire officers and the Fire Brigades Union. It is claimed the revised structure will save £800,000 a year. Surrey's cabinet member for fire and police services said that the move was justified because the number of incidents the fire units are called out to has decreased dramatically.

What has incensed a number of people, including former Conservative councillors, who now comprise the Independent Party on Spelthorne Council, is the fact that three County Councillors from Spelthorne, two of whom are also Borough councillors, who had previously opposed the cuts, voted in favour of the measure. They include Halliford and Sunbury West councillor Tim Evans. They apparently voted for the proposal, called "Option Five", as it was one of the five possible approaches on the table, because they believed it to be the least worst of the options. Whatever the case, public services, and this case possibly public safety, have gone the way of desperate cost-cutting by a County Council which is in some disarray.

Sunbury Health Centre update

In the last newsletter we discussed the situation at Sunbury Health Centre, and invited comments on the article. In response to that, we have had a statement from Dr. Dave Gill on behalf of the Practice, and we are happy to publish it in full for the benefit of residents:

"Sunbury Health Centre has undergone significant changes in the last 9 months. In April 2013 the Primary Care Trust who owned our building changed hands to the North West Surrey Clinical Commissioning Group. This transfer of responsibilities led to inevitable delays regarding local funding and accountability. Our internal IT system had to be changed as a result of the changes. With the retirement of our senior Partner and the suspension of another full time partner pending GMC investigations within the same time period the Practice found themselves in a very unique and unforeseeable situation. One of our Partners also had to take some extended sick leave around this time but we are delighted to say has now returned. The destabilisation of our previously very stable and hardy workforce meant we were unable to consistently provide the quality service we strive to provide.

I would like to reassure our patient population that contrary to the LOSRA autumn letter there is no siege mentality at the practice and we have simply been an organisation who has suffered considerable adverse events. Patients are more than welcome to join our active Practice Participation Group (PPG) which meets with the

- Assessment of impacts on navigation, water life environment and consequent limitations on pier location and span.
- Assessment of any constraints on visual appearance—would there be a need for Design Council consultation?
- Statutory Road Map—what statutory and consultative steps would be needed to gain the necessary approvals—e.g. Compulsory Purchase, Planning Permissions etc..
- Identification of further studies and assessments that would be needed to develop the suggestion—e.g. and Environmental Impact Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment etc..
- Appraisal of funding opportunities in the current and foreseeable climate.
- Appraisal of who would own and maintain a new structure and connecting links.
- Consultation with the relevant statutory bodies: Surrey County Council, Spelthorne and Elmbridge Borough Councils, and the Environment Agency.
- Consultation with other relevant bodies, for example Sustrans
- In the event that funding is not forthcoming in the foreseeable future, what could be done to safeguard the suggested scheme in the local planning policy frameworks of Elmbridge and Spelthorne Councils?

surgery every month to discuss issues and together we have been working on projects to improve our services (please contact our reception for further details).

We feel very strongly that our appointment system is not impersonal and uncaring. We endeavour to serve our patient population of 18,700 patients and provide them with the very best personal care from our team. The premises we work from which are not owned or managed by the Doctors but by NHS England were built for approximately 10 thousand patients. We currently serve a Patient Population of 18,700. Contrary to popular belief we have kept our lists "open" because there are no suitable alternatives to patients moving into this area and we all strongly believe that everyone deserves to be registered with a local GP just like they should be able to gain a school place for their child in a local school. With your support we are trying our very best to try and secure better premises for everyone.

We have recently employed several new clinical and non-clinical members of staff to try our hardest to accommodate the rapidly expanding population we serve but we simply are bursting at the seams. We call upon local planning teams to consider the impact of the ever expanding residential building that is occurring in Sunbury on the already bursting local support services and welcome the help of LOSRA and its members in presuring those people who can help us all secure a brighter and better future for all the residents of Sunbury."

Update on cattle grazing in Sunbury Park

The issue of cattle grazing in Sunbury Park was discussed at the meeting of Friends of Sunbury Park, which was attended by a representative of SPAG, the pressure group formed by a number of Park users and dog walkers to oppose the scheme.

The group has raised a petition which has been presented to Spelthorne Council, and we understand it is to be discussed at the Cabinet meeting in April. Until this has happened, we will obviously not know if the scheme will go ahead or not, although it is still very much a committed element of the Council's management strategy for the Park.

We understand from an e-mail received as we go to press that David Hicks, Spelthorne's Wildlife Officer, who has been in charge of progressing the project, is leaving his post in early April, so it is not clear who will be handling it, and we could not get further information before we finalised the newsletter.

We have already published on our web site the answers to some Frequently Asked Questions provided by Spelthorne, but unfortunately this does not go into any detail on timescales, revised dates for implementation etc..

We know that grazing is intended to take place during the summer months, and it is clear that the installation of the necessary infrastructure in terms of extra fencing, kissing gates, water trough etc., is likely to be quite a job, so one has to ask whether it would be possible for the work to be done in time for this year.

If we get further information we will publish it on the web site and in the e-bulletin.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

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Sign up for LOSRA's e-bulletins with new easy one-stop system

When it comes to communications, It's never easy to reach all residents all of the time. Currently, we attempt to do this via our web site, periodic newsletters, the pages of Sunbury Matters and by our e-bulletins. The e-bulletin service has been frequently publicised in the past but we are not convinced that everyone is aware of it or, if they are, how to go about receiving it and be kept up to date on all that is going on in the Lower Sunbury area.

Well, from now on it has been made incredibly easy. All that is required is for you to insert your e-mail address under 'Join our mailing list' in the top left hand corner of the Home Page of our web site at www.losra.org and press 'Subscribe'

If you are already subscribed but have not received an e-bulletin recently, it may be that your contact details got lost when the new system was installed. To be sure, please enter your email address once more.

Volunteers needed for Sunbury Neighbours

Drivers and Duty Officers (people who answer the phone) are always in demand to help run this long established Volunteer Help Scheme which organises car journeys for those unable to access their own or public transport for visits to local doctors, hospitals, shopping needs, day centres, hairdresser, and various other local trips as required. Journeys are from the Client's home and return.

Drivers are needed on weekdays only to strengthen our existing team, and Duty Officers from 9.30am to 11.30am Monday to Friday. Any job by Drivers or Duty Officers take place only when convenient to them. Contributions for expenses for car costs and telephone calls are made periodically.

For further details on how the scheme works please phone John ([01932 784432](tel:01932784432)), David ([01932 787290](tel:01932787290)) or Nigel (01932 787343)

Please pay your 2014 LOSRA subscription

Our membership renewals for 2014 have been disappointingly low and we would also expect to have attracted more new members by now. Understandably, the foul winter weather may have made renewal a lesser priority but, just to remind you, subscriptions for 2014 became due in January.

The £5 membership which has not changed for eight years may be paid by the secure Paypal facility on the Home page of the Website. Alternatively, an envelope enclosing the tear-off slip below, together with your remittance, may be deposited with Skinners Post Office in The Avenue or Twirltours Travel Agents in Green Street; or with our Secretary, Colleen Cuthbert at 8 Maryland Way.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not paid your subscription for this year, could you please help us by paying your subscription either by using the secure PayPal facility on our web site at www.losra.org or dropping your subscription in to one of our two collection points using the tear-off slip below. You can deliver it to any of the following: Skinners Newsagents/Post Office in Avenue Parade; Twirltour Travel in Green Street. Our thanks to these businesses for their help in providing this service. You can also deliver it to Colleen Cuthbert (LOSRA Secretary) 8 Maryland Way. You can become Life Member at a cost of £100.

Please find enclosed my annual subscription of £5.00 for family membership of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association for the calendar year 2014. In addition, I would like to make a donation of £..... (SPR14

Name:..... Address :

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