

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

2008 SPRING NEWSLETTER

HOUSING PLANS FOR LONDON IRISH SITE

An alarming new plan has come to light via the London Irish RFC message board, confirmed in an official press release in the News section of their web site.

This states that a plan is to be submitted for housing on their site in The Avenue, and if they are successful in securing permission, this site will be sold. The Club is already raising funds through corporate means for the purchase of an alternative site in Sunbury to house their Club, 1st team and Academy activities.

The press release reads :

"London Irish plans to develop a major new rugby and sports facility in West London to accommodate the entire London Irish 'Rugby Family' which includes the Amateur Club, the Professional Squad, the Academy and the community sports programme.

London Irish has outgrown the current facility at Sunbury where the lack of sufficient modern playing, training and off pitch facilities is now impacting significantly on the club's ability to cater for the growing needs of all sections of the club. Following relocation to the new facility London Irish plans to develop the existing Sunbury site for alternative use."

The messageboard entry adds ; *"We have identified a number of sites in the Sunbury area which are large enough to accommodate a new sports 'centre of excellence' which we intend will satisfy the long term needs of our amateur club, community sports programme, academy and professional training base. Negotiations are underway to secure one of these sites.*

A project team is significantly

advanced with the preparatory work to submit a planning application for a mixed housing development on all of the Sunbury Site and a further parcel of adjacent land on which we have an exclusive development partnership agreement. Our intention is to sell the freehold of the Sunbury Site with the benefit of planning consent (assuming that it can be obtained). The Directors anticipate that a provisional planning application will be submitted in the first half of 2008.

The planning advisors and consultants have advised the Board that there is a "reasonable chance" of this development project achieving planning consent. Following the disposal of the Sunbury Site, the Company intends to make a distribution to the then holders of Ordinary Shares of an amount equal to the after tax net proceeds of the sale."

What they are proposing is pretty horrific. London Irish is a very large site designated as Urban Open Space. We have always supported the Club's sporting activities, but will strongly oppose this plan.

It is clearly stated that the proceeds of this development will be distributed to shareholders, and not ploughed into community sports facilities, so they are no different from any other developer.

Please keep an eye on our website for further updates. We hope we can rely on residents to support us in opposing development on this land, which would result in a huge reduction in green space in our residential area. It remains to be seen where there are proposing to build their new facilities - this could be yet another battle. It's rather a sad turn of events, bearing in mind London Irish's long history as part of the community.

More information can be found at the following web references :
http://www.london-irish.com/News/London_Irish_Announces_Ambitious_Plans.html



www.losra.org

Important victory as Inspector turns down appeal over Harfield Road plan

The Planning Inspector has turned down appeals by Silver Homes against the decision to refuse permission for housing development on gardens of houses in Harfield Road. This is very welcome news.

The Inspector cited the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, and on the living conditions of people living nearby, and the inadequacy of parking provision.

The Inspector said the development would be "wholly at odds with the character and appearance of Harfield Road, especially because of the small gardens and predominance of hard surfacing." In addition, he decided that the development would harm the visual amenity of the adjacent Green Belt site of Sunbury Sports Association.

The full text of the decision can be found on the LOSRA web-site at www.losra.org.

Thanks and congratulations are due to Harfield Road resident Alan Weston, who co-ordinated the opposition campaign, which was naturally fully supported by LOSRA. In addition, mention must be made of Cllr. Lawrence Nicholls, who introduced the issue of the impact on Green Belt at the Planning Committee.

This will not deter other predatory developers from targeting other sites in Lower Sunbury with such plans, but it does provide us with proven grounds on which to oppose such plans.

Outcry over proposals for car park charging

By the time you receive this newsletter, Spelthorne's Executive will have made a decision on the proposal to introduce charges in three car parks in Lower Sunbury—The Avenue (Orchard Meadow), Thames Street (Blue Dragon) and Fordbridge Road (The Old Bathing Pool). The scheme would be extended to the Walled Garden and Green Street car parks at a later date.

LOSRA distributed a special newsletter to a large number of houses to generate opposition, as well as making submissions to Spelthorne officers. Local shops also raised petitions. The proposal would be disastrous for local shops, as well as making life expensive and difficult for local residents. It would also affect usage of Sunbury Park and would seriously threaten the viability of the Embroidery Gallery, whose volunteer staff regularly use The Avenue car park.

There is no worthwhile argu-

ment in favour of the scheme. The amount of money it would raise is paltry in terms of Borough finances, when set against the serious effect it will have on the cohesion and sustainability of our community, especially when local shops are already under huge pressure.

Spelthorne simply appears to be applying the same criteria to Lower Sunbury as to much larger genuine town centres such as Staines, as well as being seen to be maximising the income from their resources, and so ticking the appropriate boxes for the Audit Commission, regardless of the consequences.

Many hundreds of people have opposed the scheme by writing letters and signing petitions. If the proposal is approved in the face of such opposition, it will be a poor day for local democracy, and will say a lot about current trends in local politics and governance. Please check our web site at www.losra.org to find out the outcome.

Phoenix reopens and submits new licensing application

After a much-needed refurbishment which took over two months, The Phoenix pub in Thames Street reopened just before Easter. The new leaseholders have made a significant investment in bringing this important site in the Conservation Area back up to standard, and we wish them well in making a success of the business.

At the same time, they have submitted a licensing application providing for a 'live' music licence for 12 days a year, background recorded music in the garden up to 9pm, and late opening hours (11.30pm Mon. Tues. Thurs, 00.30 Wed. Fri. Sat.).

Residents in the immediate vicinity have expressed great concern about the implications of this, especially the possibility of music being played in the garden and the potential noise and disturbance caused in this area, where residences are so close to the pub, by customers entering and leaving the premises at late hours if opening times are extended.

There is an argument that, as the pub has traditionally had occasional 'live' music (notably on Christmas Day), a licence for indoor music is not unreasonable.

However, this needs to be balanced against the interests of residents immediately affected. LOSRA will be passing on residents' concerns to the licensing authority. If you have a view either way, you may wish to make it known to the authority as well.

The application number is 08/00118/LAPRE—full details are in the Licensing section of Spelthorne's web site. The closing date for consultation is 2nd April.

LOSRA web site adds new dynamics to our activities

Our new web site has already begun to have a significant effect on our ability to communicate up-to-date news to local residents and to generate quick response to appeals for action on campaigns.

The number of visits to the site has increased exponentially in the last three months, and we now have an e-mailing list of over 150.

Join the mailing list

Please help to make us even more effective by registering your e-mail address on the site (click the 'Contact LOSRA' button), so that you can be added to the list. Those on the mailing list now get regular bulletins with updates. This has helped in getting letters of objection written on important issues which arise between the publications dates of our printed newsletters.

Pay subscriptions on-line

The new system for paying LOSRA subscriptions via the web-site is working well, and a number of people have already taken advantage of the facility. This uses the secure PayPal system, and is very straightforward to use.

Thames Corner site redevelopment starts

Work has started on the redevelopment of the Thames Corner site on the corner of Thames Street and French Street, which has been empty and a rather sorry sight for some time. The outstanding planning permission would have run out in April, so presumably the developers were obliged to get it under way or seek a new permission. Demolition has been completed and the footings are being worked on.

Unfortunately, the design of the building which is going up is not an inspiring one. Spelthorne's planners missed an opportunity to insist on a high quality design for this key Conservation Area site opposite listed buildings, and have allowed a bog standard pastiche of the kind that has gone up along Staines Road West and Windmill Road.

Their excuse was that they had already given permission for a conversion which would have been much less desirable, so they were not in a strong position to put pressure on to achieve something better—a pretty limp approach. However, it will hopefully be an improvement on what has been there for the last few years.

Spelthorne throws in its lot with Heathrow expansion

Spelthorne Council has done a highly significant strategic about-turn, and has given its support to the Government recommendation for a third runway at Heathrow.

Up until now, Spelthorne has been part of the consortium of boroughs surrounding Heathrow which has opposed further expansion on environmental and infrastructural grounds.

We are aware that Heathrow is somewhat of an emotive issue in Spelthorne, since many residents earn their living there. However, LOSRA has consistently opposed expansion on environmental grounds, and we know that not everyone who works at Heathrow blindly supports its inexorable growth. Opinion at a local public meeting was solidly against the runway, and we are alarmed and disappointed by the shift in Spelthorne's stance, not least by the way it has been achieved.

They have taken the same approach as our MP David Wilshire, quoting support from 52% of residents based on the highly loaded question *"Do you support a new runway—if the environmental issues can be overcome?"*

"Indian Zest" restaurant

The alarm bells started to ring fairly briskly when the new "Indian Zest" restaurant took over the historic listed building previously occupied by the Blue Dragon, and introduced startling exterior décor.

LOSRA, and we understand, Spelthorne Council, made contact with the owners, and they were happy to co-operate in removing the more obviously inappropriate features.

The new owners have been very active in making contact with people and groups within the community, and have made it clear they will consult about any future exterior decoration plans.

No-one in authority ever asked the alternative question *"Do you support a new runway if environmental issues cannot be overcome?"*, or even the simple question *"Do you support a new runway at Heathrow?"*

Recent press coverage after the end of the consultation indicates that BAA and the Government colluded to suppress vital Environment Agency evidence that the effect of expansion on air quality "will result in increased morbidity and mortality impacts", i.e. people dying earlier.

At the Spelthorne Council meeting on 21st February, there was very unseemly behaviour by some councillors who insulted councillors who opposed airport expansion, and the supposed lack of environmental impact was consistently quoted in pressing the case for Spelthorne's U-turn.

In the grand scheme of things, we suspect that neither Spelthorne nor LOSRA will be able to influence the argument greatly, but it is very bad news that this issue has become a political football in our locality, and that people in authority have not approached the consultation with genuine even-handedness.

A reminder from our Tree Wardens : Trees available for planting

The Surrey Tree Warden Network (which is a registered charity) is able to supply and plant trees for roadside sites or other open spaces, and also for private gardens, at a charge of £30 per tree, including delivery, watering hose, strimmer guard and staking. No charge is made for planting as the Tree wardens are volunteers.

Applications need to be processed and approved by Surrey CC. If you would like to apply for trees to be planted, please contact one of the Tree Wardens : Dave Woods (01932 786806), Dave Huxford (07941 093186), Sally Fletcher (01932 227679).

Yet another Area Forum which fails to inspire

The Area Forum is touted by Spelthorne as providing residents with a regular opportunity for direct dialogue with the local authority and a way to influence the process of local government.

In reality, these events have proved to be nothing of the sort. We have constantly tried to find ways to make them more effective and dynamic, so that they happen more often and that questions from residents get immediate answers from officers or councillors who can provide authoritative answers.

However, the way they are run is so lack-lustre and anodyne that they are completely ineffective, and the recent Forum on 11th March was pretty typical.

As a result fewer people bother to attend and the local authority is put under less pressure, which of course suits them fine. They can tick the appropriate box that says they are consulting local residents, while deflecting difficult or embarrassing questioning.

We need to find a way to make this process more effective and one which encourages more people to get involved.

Residents join up to Speedwatch

LOSRA has recently assisted with the Surrey Road Standards initiative by local police to get residents involved with the Community Speedwatch scheme, designed to reduce the incidence of speeding on local roads.

As a result a number of residents have undergone training in operating speed monitoring equipment, and teams have been deployed around the area on roads where there is known problem with speeding.

The teams obviously have no statutory powers, but the registration numbers of offending vehicles are recorded and persistent offenders are likely to receive a communication from Surrey Police.

Many thanks to those residents who have given up their time to organise and undertake this activity.

Negative response from Spelthorne on pathway surface at Kings Lawn

Much as we were pleased that Spelthorne had at long last got round to dealing with the broken fencing, dangerous banks and other problems at Kings Lawn that made part of the path impassable, we were less than impressed with the quality of some of the work. (Kings Lawn is the area of riverbank in Thames Street opposite Sunbury Park).

In particular, we thought that the way that the path had been relaid with a basic and rather ugly concrete surface was not really in keeping with the area, and certainly not as good as the crazy paving that it replaced.

Their response was that crazy paving can be uneven and dangerous, and that in any case budgetary restraints only allowed for the standard of work which they had carried out. Our view is that the crazy paving had lasted for as long as we could remember and that we weren't aware of any accidents caused by it, but in the end, they can always fall back on the money argument.

FRIENDS OF SUNBURY PARK

Please help with litter pick in Sunbury Park
Saturday 12th April at 10 a.m.

The Friends of Sunbury Park, with the help of Civic Pride, are organising a litter pick in Sunbury Park on Saturday 12th April, and would appreciate as many volunteers to assist as possible.

Please meet at 10 a.m. in the Green Street car park. Gloves, sacks and picking tools will be provided. Apart from helping to keep the Park looking good, this will also help raise funds, as £2.00 will be earned for every sack of litter collected.

LOSRA Committee members recently undertook a litter pick along School Walk, and we will be turning out again for this project—please help if you can.

Sunbury Park management issues

The Friends of Sunbury park have been badgering Spelthorne to get a proper management plan in place, having contributed a significant amount of preparatory work. Spelthorne have now decided that they do not have sufficient internal resources to handle this task, and have asked Surrey Wildlife Trust to take it over. The Friends group will work closely with SWT on the project, and a draft plan is expected during the summer after they have done some surveys.

Meanwhile, Park users may wonder why the brick pillar at the end of the ha-ha near the Walled Garden is lying on the ground. It was accidentally knocked over by Spelthorne's tree contractors, and will be rebuilt (at the contractor's expense) when the specialist bricklayer starts work again on the ha-ha wall. The fallen pillar should have been removed to the gardeners' yard, but this has not yet been done.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

Pamela Cabannes	4 Forge Mews	761131
Elleker Carling	3 Croysdale Avenue	882726
Pat Carrick-Allan	Adelphi, Parke Road	
Don Cunningham	2 Parkwood Grove	889033
Colleen Cuthbert	8 Maryland Way	783606
Peter Francis	Linden Lodge, Woodlands Drive	770661
Cathie French (Treasurer)	173 French Street	789157
Roger Harding	Sunmead Cottage, Green Street	782744
John Hirsh (Chairman)	21 School Walk	781363
George Rushbrook		788471
Patrick Smith	6 Maryland Way	783683
Matt Thomas	7 Nursery Road	787709
Paul Watts (President)	87 The Avenue	788449
Chris Wills		
David Woods	47 Sunna Gardens	786806

Big turnout for Carols in the Meadow despite cold weather

Once again, the people of Lower Sunbury ignored the bitterly cold weather on 12th December and turned out in large numbers (counts put numbers at over 400) to support the Carols in the Meadow event in Orchard Meadow, with Spelthorne's Mayor, Cllr. Andrew Hirst, in attendance. With the big attendance, the collection more than covered the cost of putting on the event, and this occasion is now firmly established in the local seasonal calendar. Thanks are due to the Salvation Army band for providing the music, Riverside Youth Theatre for the lighting and Gerry Ceaser for organising the event.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not paid your subscription for this year, could you please help us 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 in Avenue Parade; Twirltour Travel in Green Street. Our thanks to these businesses for their help in providing this service. **As advised in our previous newsletter, the subscription has increased to £5.00 from the beginning of January 2008.**

Please find enclosed my annual subscription of £5.00 for family membership of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association for the calendar year 2007. (SPR08)

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