

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION 2008 AGM NEWSLETTER



www.losra.org

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association will take at The Riverside Arts Centre, Thames Street, Sunbury, on Wednesday 9th July at 8 p.m.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Minutes of the 2007 Annual General Meeting**
3. **Chairman's Report**
4. **Treasurer's Report**
5. **Election of Officers and Committee**
6. **Talk by Jill Stephens, Chairman of Spelthorne Civic Pride Volunteers**
7. **Update by Robert Shaw, Chairman of Sunbury Millennium Embroidery**
8. **Open Forum**
9. **Any other business**

Please note that we do not circulate the Minutes of last year's AGM or the Associations audited accounts with this notice, because to do so would generate disproportionate printing costs. Copies will be available at the AGM, and will also be posted on our web site. If you are unable to visit the web site but would like to see the documents in advance of the meeting, please contact John Hirsh, LOSRA Chairman, whose details are on the back of the newsletter.

Focus on Civic Pride at this year's AGM

We are delighted to welcome Jill Stephens, Chairman of Spelthorne Civic Pride Volunteers, to this year's AGM as our guest speaker.

Civic Pride is a tremendously valuable organisation of conservation volunteers, which is committed to enhancing the borough's environment. It undertakes a wide variety of environmental improvement and maintenance projects throughout the borough. Like many voluntary organisations, it also often does not get the recognition it deserves.

Jill will be telling us about the background to Civic Pride, the projects that it undertakes, and how people can get involved. We know how busy Jill is, so we are grateful to Jill for giving up her time to come and speak at our AGM.

If you are unable to make it to the AGM, but are interested in finding out more about Civic Pride and perhaps becoming a volunteer, you can get further information and contact details on the Spelthorne web site at http://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/env_civic_pride.htm.

LOSRA web site traffic grows - please help by joining our e-mail list

Traffic on LOSRA's web site last month grew to 33,000 hits, and we are seeing a startling progression in traffic growth month on month.

A significant factor in this is the growth in our e-mail list of members. We now have 235 members on the list, who receive regular e-mail bulletins when news items are added to the site. These headline bulletins have links to the site where visitors can see the full story.

This is especially valuable when issues arise such as planning applications, where we need letters of

objection submitted by a deadline date. It has helped greatly in a couple of recent cases - the Nursery Road development and the Croysdale phone mast - where substantial numbers of letters were generated.

This more dynamic and frequent communication with members makes us a more effective organisation, and helps in setting the media agenda - we know the local papers regularly look at our site to identify key news stories.

Please help continue this process by joining our mailing list on the site at <http://www.losra.org/contact.htm>.

Spelthorne officers snub local residents' groups over meeting about Benwell Centre plan

The thorny subject of the closure of the Benwell Day Centre and the development of the site took a further unwelcome turn recently.

As you may know, a planning application has been submitted by Notting Hill Housing Trust for the demolition of the existing building, and the erection of a building incorporating thirty-nine extra care sheltered flats and day centre facilities.

The proposal has attracted huge opposition, partly because of the residual bitterness caused by what many regard as the Council's appalling behaviour over the original decision to close the Centre, and subsequent referral to the Local Government Ombudsman, but mainly because of the inappropriateness of the proposed structure.

The proposed building is in places 5 storeys high - scarcely the ideal environment for care homes where elderly people with mobility difficulties would live. This large structure is being crowded on to the site, with extremely limited space being allowed for gardens and parking. It has variously been described by local people as "Colditz" or a "ghetto".

Because of the importance of this issue, LOSRA, along with Green Street Action Group and Sunbury Common Residents' Association, wrote to Nigel Lynn, Spelthorne's Deputy Chief Executive, listing 22 points which we wished to discuss with the planning officers about the application, and requesting a meeting with Spelthorne Borough Council's Planning Officers.

He wrote back declining to see the residents' representatives. John Hirsh, LOSRA Chairman, has written further to Mr. Lynn protesting at this discourtesy, pointing out that developers have unfettered access to planning officers, and on especially important matters such as this, residents' groups should be able to discuss the key issues with officers.

Mr. Lynn's letter and LOSRA's response are both available for you to read on the LOSRA web site. The episode is another example of how the odds are stacked in favour of developers and the consultation process on planning applications is anything but a level playing field.

The whole Benwell Centre saga will come back to haunt Spelthorne Borough Council for years to come as a classic case of how not to handle an issue of this kind. They hired consultants to advise them on Day Centres; ignored their conclusions when they didn't come up with the required answer; decided to close the Centre and flog it off for development; tried to tell people that this represented an improvement in services; carried out a consultation process that most saw as a charade; forced the decision through Council; smeared the residents' groups in a letter to the Ombudsman and dragged our MP into preventing our meeting the Ombudsman on spurious grounds; and now they refuse to talk to us about what is clearly a wholly inappropriate development on the site.

The consultation period on this application has now closed and it remains to be seen how the Planning Committee will view it. It's easy to feel a sense of futility and ineptitude when it proves impossible to alter the course of events on matters like this, but be sure that there are people at Knowle Green who know they are under scrutiny and under pressure over this, and every letter you write and complaint you make has an effect. They may have successfully circled their wagons on this issue but never let them think they have got away with it.

Application for phone mast at Croysdale Avenue refused

In April, we reported on the web site that a planning application had been submitted by a telecoms utility for a radio based station at the junction of Green Street and Croysdale Avenue. It proposed a 12.5 metre high replica telegraph pole with 3 antennae, an equipment cabinet and ancillary items.

LOSRA opposed the application on the grounds of the negative visual impact on the Linear Park open space, and the siting of the mast on a narrow pavement which is already congested with various items of street furniture.

LOSRA Committee members in the area co-ordinating a cam-

paign to generate letters of objection, and e-mail bulletins to our mailing list also created a significant response.

As a result, a significant number of objections was received by Spelthorne. We are pleased to report that the application has been refused by Spelthorne Borough, which is a very welcome outcome. Many thanks to all those who took the time to register their objections.

As noted in the report on the front page, it highlights the value of instant communications provided by our e-mail newsletters on issues like this where quick response is needed.

Nursery Road development plans refused

As reported on the web site, for the second time, planning applications for completely inappropriate development at No. 5 Nursery Road have been rejected by Spelthorne's Planning Committee.

The first applications were rejected on appeal, so it remains to be seen whether the developer takes it to appeal this time as well.

Many thanks to all those who wrote letters of objection. Once again, the cycle of applications, consultation and decision happened between newsletters, so the web site and e-mail newsletters enabled us to deal with this effectively.

Local Development Framework

Your objections to release of Green Belt Land for development needed by 27th June

The complex and tortuous process of the consultation on the new Local Development Framework, which is the new format of strategic development plan for the borough, has reached a crucial phase, and your letters are needed to object to the potential allocation of key Green Belt land for development.

What happened was that developers objected to the way Spelthorne had handled the original consultation, and the Inspector ruled against Spelthorne, which left the way open for developers to make new submissions on the allocation of sites for potential housing development.

Sites where owners submitted new proposals are :

- Vicarage Farm (owned by Cemex)
- Kempton Park Car Park area
- Land off Croysdale between Hazelwood Golf Course and Lyndhurst Ave. (owned by Network Rail)
- Land at Stratton Road (owned by Persimmon Homes)

There are others outside our immediate area, but which are equally alarming. What the developers in each case are saying is that, despite the fact that Spelthorne is eight years ahead of its housing target, the Borough will not be able to meet its long term targets without the release of these Green Belt sites.

The fact is that the needs will be met by windfall sites that are not allocated in the Plan, and everybody knows it, but the corporations that own these sites are using the procedural niceties and semantics of the Plan's terms of reference to turn things in

their favour. These companies, of course, have huge resources to devote to such matters, and the processes of consultation and objection are complex, but it is vital that we get as many objections lodged as possible.

The closing date for submissions is 27th June so please act immediately.

The only real way to get the necessary information is from the Spelthorne web site at www.spelthorne.gov.uk. Follow the link on the home page under 'Hot Topics' to the 'Spelthorne Development Plan'. Then, under latest, click 'Current Consultation on Alternative Site Allocations 6 May-27 June, and all the sites are listed with links to the plans for each site.

You will need to register objections to each site individually. At the bottom of the page listing the sites are links to a Representation Form, which you can print as a .pdf to use , and to Online Form, where you can input your comments direct.

The primary argument in each case is that Green Belt in this area fulfils a classic function of separating Lower Sunbury from surrounding built-up areas, such as Halliford, Shepperton, Hanworth and Hampton. Any development will compromise this and allow suburban sprawl to develop. In addition, the reality that Spelthorne does not actually need this land to meet its housing targets should be recognised.

This is a complex process wrapped up in jargon and technicalities, but these are vital issues and we must do everything possible to resist the developers in trying to use it to their advantage.

Mixed outcome on plans for car park charging

In our last newsletter, we set out Spelthorne's plans for imposing charges for parking in three car parks in Lower Sunbury - The Avenue, Thames Street (Blue Dragon) and Old Bathing Pool (Fordbridge Rd.).

Our campaign was unsuccessful in completely preventing the imposition of charges. However, a significant victory was the exemption of The Avenue car park, which reflected submissions by the Sunbury Embroidery Gallery and the Lower Sunbury Business Community. The Embroidery Trustees pointed out that the car park was used by their volunteers who need to park for several hours, and charges would genuinely threaten the viability of the Gallery and Café.

Another minor success was that parking for the first hour in the other car parks would be free. However, the charges, especially in the Blue Dragon car park, which is used heavily by residents, will cause unnecessary cost and inconvenience, and create more on-street parking in surrounding roads.

It is also another step in the trend towards local government, directed by central government, losing sight of what creates social cohesion in communities, and becoming obsessed simply with counting beans and ticking boxes.

Help us by working on the LOSRA Committee

If you think that LOSRA performs a valuable service in our community and would like to help, why not think about joining the Committee. We elect the Committee at the AGM, and we have spaces for members that we can co-opt even if we have sufficient nominations for the number specified in the constitution. It's important we have new people coming into the Association to ensure we have continuity over the years. If you are interested please contact the Chairman John Hirsh in advance of the AGM.

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).



There is no newsletter from The Sunbury Embroidery Gallery with this LOSRA newsletter, as this is a hugely busy time of year for the project, so we are including this brief update.

As announced in the last newsletter, the main Embroidery panels have been re-framed and re-hung. They are now suspended in clear Perspex boxes on concealed support brackets, and the visual impact is stunning, with the panels apparently suspended in space, and the lighting creating some fascinating effects. The logo panels are now being worked on prior to re-hanging along with the tactile display.

As we go to press, the Gallery has just co-operated with the Riverside Arts Centre and other venues in the Sunbury Art Trail weekend, and the Open Studio Exhibition is under way. Once again it demonstrates what a marvellous setting the Gallery and Café provides for the display of artwork of all kinds. This year the combination of Ann Swan's botanical and plant portraits in the café, David Newman's sculpture both in the gallery and on the patio, and Susan McArthur's textile art in the Gallery was an ideal blend.

We are delighted to announce that Barbara Robertson is joining us as Gallery Administrator. She brings to the project a wealth of experience, most recently at the Landmark in Teddington, and as we celebrate our second year since we opened, we are sure this development will ease the load on our volunteers and help us make the most of the potential the Gallery provides.

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

FRIENDS OF SUNBURY PARK

Many thanks to all those who joined the litter pick in Sunbury Park in April, announced in the last newsletter. There was a good turnout, and 37 sacks of litter of all kinds was collected.

Most, as one would expect, consisted of cans, bottles, crisp packets, paper, and the like. However, there were many bizarre finds in the undergrowth and woodland. There was a television under the trees in the wooded area, a motor-cycle, a vacuum cleaner, a complete car exhaust system, a rechargeable garden lamp, a wrought iron gate, and a set of academic text books.

It's odd that people are prepared to cart stuff sometimes quite a long distance from a car park to dump stuff in the Park, when they could drive five minutes to the Charlton Road tip.

However, it was a worthwhile exercise which will be repeated on a regular basis.

Newsletter distributors needed

There are a number of roads where we do not currently have a regular distributor for our newsletters, which means our resources get stretched. This is an easy way that you can help the Association's work just by spending an hour or so delivering newsletters three times a year. If you would like to help, please contact Cathie French, our Treasurer (contact details opposite). Many thanks to our current distributors for the valuable help they give us.

Bill Fraser - an appreciation

We are sad to report the death of Bill Fraser, who was a doughty supporter on residents' issues and until his passing was the residents' representative of the southern part of Spelthorne on the "Spelthorne Together" body, which oversees community issues in the Borough. He was an active participant in the Green Street Action Group/LOSRA campaign against Green Street development plans.

It has been confirmed that Don Cunningham, former LOSRA Chairman and current Committee member will take over from Bill as our Spelthorne Together representative.

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 facility on our web site or 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 2008. (AGM08)

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