

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION 2007 AUTUMN NEWSLETTER



www.losra.org

New LOSRA web site now in place and regularly updated

As many of you have already discovered, the new LOSRA web site is now full operational and proving extremely useful in providing up-to-date news on local issues.

We apologise for the typographical error when we announced the web site address in the last newsletter. As you can see from the revised address underneath the logo above, the correct address is www.losra.org.

We are very grateful to local resident and new LOSRA Committee member Matt Thomas for his work in redesigning and building the site, which presents the image and work of the Association in a thoroughly professional way.

It is intended that the site should

become as fully interactive as possible, allowing LOSRA to communicate instantly with its members on a whole range of issues, many of which are time sensitive. The web-site will be the vehicle for conveying news items, alerts, appeals and the communication of any other matters which members wish to broadcast.

Join the mailing list

In order for this to succeed, it is essential that members who have the facility should visit the site and provide e-mail and postal addresses by completing the form on the '**Contact LOSRA**' menu. Any data provided will of course be protected by the Data Protection Act and will be used for no other purposes. If you

have already provided this information, it may have got lost at the time we changed to the new website. Apologies for the inconvenience but we would ask you to do it again to be on the safe side.

Our e-mailing list will enable us to alert residents when we need letters of objection written on planning applications within tight time deadlines, or when there are important public meetings taking place.

We hope residents find the site a useful resource, and that it will help give us an even more dynamic relationship with our members.

Thanks to our sponsors

This item would not be complete without conveying our gratitude to those who have been kind enough to sponsor the site (see sponsors' page). If you would like to add your company or business to the list of sponsors, please let us know.

Come to the Area Forum on Tuesday 30th October

The next Area Forum takes place on Tuesday 30th October at 7.00 pm at St. Paul's School, The Ridings (off Green St.). The last Area Forum took place on the 27th February, over 8 months ago. We have yet to persuade the Council that, if the Forum is not to be perceived as just another 'tick box' exercise, it should be held quarterly and made more accountable.

LOSRA has repeatedly urged the Council to make the Forum more meaningful, as it is the only platform on which purely local issues may be expressed by local residents.

We are encouraged that the Council has, for the first time, seen fit to allow residents to have an input in setting the Agenda. We have repeatedly asked for this facility which has

now finally been granted. On this occasion the Benwell Community Centre and the extra care housing project will, at our request, be one of the topics for presentation and debate. The Agenda is :

7pm Public Question time : Representatives of Spelthorne, Surrey, Surrey Police and Ashford/St. Peters NHS Trust.

8-8.30pm Consultation on Crime and Disorder Priorities for 2008 : (Tim Kita & Melvin Hartley of Spelthorne Borough Council).

8.30-9pm Benwell Community Centre and extra care housing project (Liz Borthwick, Spelthorne's Head of Community Services) (see item on page 2).

The Attendances at the Sun-

bury Forums over the last couple of years have increased significantly and, if we are to be taken seriously, we should do all we can to maintain these high turnouts

Lime Crescent Plan rejected

Residents of Lime Crescent have won their battle to prevent the demolition of two houses and their replacement with a block of eight flats. The Planning Committee, having heard the objections, including a representation from local councillor Caroline Nichols, overturned the recommendations of the planning officer and refused the application. The Committee concluded: "that the development would have had a poor relationship with neighbouring properties and was too dense".

Public consultation with Housing Trust on plans for Benwell Centre site set for Tues. 13th Nov.

As you may know, Spelthorne's intention is that the site of the Benwell Day Centre will be subject to a development of extra care homes for the elderly, incorporating a scaled-down Day Centre. Proposals for the development have been prepared by the Notting Hill Housing Trust.

We have seen an artist's impression of the proposed development, and it is somewhat alarming, to say the least. It appears to envisage a four-storey block which fills almost the complete footprint of the site, compared to the current single-storey building occupying about half the site.

LOSRA wrote to a senior representative of Trust asking that the public be fully consulted on their plans for the future development of the Benwell site and crucially, before formal plans are submitted to the Local Planning Authority. She replied saying that she was keen to seek feedback from LOSRA and is anxious to ensure that the consultation methods meet the needs both of local residents and users of the Day Centre. NHHT are at the early stages of liaison with the planners. The full text of the letter and the representative's reply can be seen on the LOSRA website.

It has now been confirmed that the consultation will take the form of an exhibition and open day at St. Paul's School on Tuesday November 13th from 3pm to 8pm. Please make sure you come if you are concerned about this issue and want to talk with NHHT about their plans.

As noted in the article on the Area Forum, the SBC perspective will be discussed at the Area Forum on 30th October.

Church Villas development gets planning permission

Planning permission for the proposed development on the site of the former sheltered homes at Church Villas near the bottom end of Green Street has been granted by Spelthorne's Planning Committee.

As this is a brownfield site, it was obvious that there would be some kind of development there, but we objected strongly to the density of dwellings on the site.

The plan crams one 6-bedroom, two 4-bedroom and ten 2-bedroom houses onto the site. Not only is this extraordinarily dense, especially for a site in the Conservation Area, but it provides inadequate parking provision, in an area where there is huge pressure on on-street parking.

It is also an extremely dangerous spot for cars to emerge on to Green Street, at a point where visibility is particularly poor at the apex of the Green Street/Church Street one-way system.

However, such arguments seem of little interest to our planning officers, determined to shoehorn houses into ever more crammed sites, regardless of traffic and parking issues. The Planning Committee, who are generally supportive of residents on these issues, rather surprisingly accepted the plan as it stood. It was passed by a majority decision. Cllr. Lawrence Nichols, councillor for Halliford & Sunbury West, was the only councillor to vote against the proposal. Many thanks to those residents who wrote to object to the scheme.

Harfield Road housing plan refused, but new plan submitted

The planning application for a development of houses on the gardens of existing houses in Harfield Road, backing on to Sunbury Cricket Club, was refused by the Planning Committee in August.

Spelthorne's officers had recommended refusal on various grounds, including the development being out of character with the area. In addition, Cllr. Lawrence Nichols proposed the following additional reason for refusal, which was agreed by the Committee.

"The proposed development by virtue of its siting, massing and lack of landscaping would detract from the visual amenities of the adjoining Green Belt land to the rear of the site contrary to the guidance in Paragraph 3.15 of PPG 2 (Green Belt)".

The importance of this is that any modified application received for this site would be likely to fall foul of this reason for refusal. And, true to form with such situations, the developer had not even waited for the Committee decision before submitting another plan. A new plan was submitted on 27th July, more than two weeks before the Planning Committee meeting.

As a result, a new round of objection letters had to be written. We assume the developer was hoping to confuse the issue and take advantage of "objection fatigue". The new proposal has not come up at Committee yet, but we hope that officers and

LOSRA Committee members support "garden-grabbing" protest outside Parliament

LOSRA Committee members joined members of other environmental and amenity groups in a demonstration at Westminster on 16th October in support of the Private Members' Bill which aims to stop a particular interpretation of planning guidance being used by developers to build houses on domestic gardens.

The Protection of Private Gardens (Housing Development) Bill, sponsored and introduced by Conservative MPs Caroline Spelman and Greg Clark, seeks to close the loophole whereby the gardens of houses are deemed to be "brownfield" sites. This device has been widely employed by developers in Sunbury, most notably in the developments at the top of Green Street and in Oakington Drive.

If such a Bill passed, it would make our job fighting planning applications very much easier, so this is a situation where we should be joining forces with similar amenity groups on a national level to persuade our legislators that this is a cause they should support. We are pleased to note that Spelthorne's MP, David Wilshire, has declared his support for the Bill.

Housing development on Environment Agency site : Public Meeting on Nov. 10th

The EA have awarded the preferred bidders, Linden Homes, the contract for the development of their site at Fordbridge Road. A series of pre-application consultation meetings with residents in The Creek, Willow Way, Wheatley's Eyot, Fordbridge Road, Loudwater Road and Loudwater Close took place during the month of October. A further public meeting to which all residents are invited will take place on Saturday, 10th November at the Arts Centre, Thames Street. (check our website for the exact time).

A broad outline of intent was presented at a preliminary meeting with local councillors on 1st October. At that meeting it became clear that approximately 94 homes are envisaged for the site with a mix of 70

houses and 24 flats; representing a density of about 50 dwellings per hectare.

Within this mix, the developers will be required to meet their obligation to provide a specified number of affordable houses. It is their intention that the affordable element will be fully integrated within the plan so as not to create separate distinctions of 'us' and 'them'. To find out more, make sure you put the 10th November meeting in your diary. The planning application will not have been submitted by then and the developers have promised to listen to all residents before making a formal submission to the Local Planning Authority.

Public examination of Local Development Framework delayed until February 2008

The Examination in Public of the Local Development Framework (LDF) has been delayed from December until February. The LDF is the new form of strategic plan for the Borough, which will put in place the policies which will provide the context for development in Spelthorne.

Keith Johnson of the Green Street Action Group has done a phenomenal amount of work preparing comments and amendments to the draft LDF, with which LOSRA has been happy to enjoin, and his work has ensured that on most key issues, LOSRA and GSAG will be able to make representations at the EIP.

This will take a less adversarial form than previous public inquiries into Local Plans, but it is clear that there are a number of developers targeting the status of Green Belt land in Spelthorne, so our representations will be vital. We will post details of the revised dates of the hearings on the web site as soon as we know them.

New Neighbourhood Specialist Officer appointed in Sunbury

Lower Sunbury has a new dedicated local police officer - Neighbourhood Specialist Officer (NSO) PC Caroline Barnes. PC Barnes is part of the Lower Sunbury Safer Neighbourhood Team and works with Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Gerry Beadle.

As well as holding regular neighbourhood panels, the Safer Neighbourhood Team also has a web page where you can find news and updates, contact information for their local team and dates for future meetings. Visit www.surrey.police.uk/spelthorne for more information.

Contact details for our local officers are :

PC Caroline Barnes Tel: 07967 986411 Email:

barnes3885@surrey.pnn.police.uk

PCSO Gerry Beadle Tel: 07967 986542 Email: beadle11705@surrey.pnn.police.uk

Developers target St. Paul's School Tennis Courts Site

A request has been submitted to remove the classification of "Urban Open Space" from the site known as the 'The Former Tennis Courts and St. Paul's Building Complex'. The two hectare site is located in The Ridings behind the Loyola Centre in Green Street.

The request has been made by Bigwoods, who are agents for the owners of the land, a Birmingham-based group of nuns known as The Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St Paul the Apostle. Their application is in response to Spelthorne's emerging Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will steer the type and density of housing, commercial and other development in the Borough for the next 20 years and part of its role is to allocate specific sites to different uses.

An Urban Open Space designation affords protection against development and this site has enjoyed such protection for a number of years. Lifting the designation will make some or all of the site vulnerable to re-development. This site is a valuable asset as a recreational/sports facility.

There is also considerable local concern about the way that the tennis court site has been removed from recreational use and its surface damaged by the burning of material from clearance of adjacent wooded areas on it.

LOSRA has written to the Senior Planning Officer to express its strong opposition to a change in classification; and proposing a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to benefit the community. Full text of the letter may be seen on the LOSRA website.

One reason this is of concern is that the open land to the north of London Irish RFC is, we understand, in the same ownership as the Tennis Courts site, and is similarly designated as Urban Open Space. At previous Local Plan inquiries, similar attempts have been made to downgrade the status of this area of land. We will, as always, seek to protect our area from speculative attempts people from outside the community with no interest in its well-being, who want to make money by building on valuable open land.

FRIENDS OF SUNBURY PARK

Carols in the Meadow Wednesday 12th December

Once again, the Friends of Sunbury Park have organised the annual gathering in Orchard Meadow for community carol singing around the Christmas tree, led by the Salvation Army band. The event takes place this year on Wednesday 12th December at 6pm. Mulled wine will be served, and Father Christmas will be on hand to greet the youngsters. This has become a popular and enjoyable event that helps to kick off the festive season in the village, and we look forward to seeing you there.

Wildflower planting in Orchard Meadow

The Friends of Sunbury Park, working closely with Spelthorne's Biodiversity Officer Cynthia Bendickson, have undertaken a programme of planting 1200 wild flower plugs in Orchard Meadow, along with selective sowing of new seed. Combined with a planned regime of mowing and grassland management, it is hoped that over the next couple of years, this will help the wild flowers to establish themselves and create a striking spectacle on our village green.

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

LOSRA AGM votes for annual subscriptions to be increased to £5.00

The AGM on 27th June was very well attended, with over 100 members in a packed auditorium at the Arts Centre. In addition to the usual business, the Chairman put forward a case for an increase in the annual subscription from £2 to £5 per household. He argued that the current subscription, while sufficient to meet running costs e.g. newsletter printing, room hire etc., did not enable the Association to purchase expertise such as independent surveys, legal opinions and consultancy services. In recent times the Association has found itself hitting the buffers on a number of issues due to lack of such resources. To remedy this, the Chairman proposed the establishment of a 'fighting fund' which would allow the Association to challenge dubious or questionable decisions which might affect our members, and in so doing, would also ratchet up the profile of LOSRA as a serious player. The increase in subscription was supported by all those who spoke and was passed with a unanimous show of hands.

AGM discusses waste disposal and recycling

At our AGM, we welcomed Dr Sandy Muirhead, Spelthorne's Head of Environmental Services, who gave a presentation on the Borough's new waste disposal and recycling strategies, and fielded questions from the audience. There was a lively discussion about the fact that our new wheelie bins contain a microchip which will facilitate the weighing of contents of bins when appropriate equipment is installed on the collection vehicles. There was disquiet among the audience that this 'big brother' technology could be used as a taxation or charging method, although Dr. Muirhead said that Spelthorne had no plans to use the chips for this purpose. This has opened up a correspondence with Spelthorne about the legal implications of removing the chips, which we are advised could be construed as criminal damage. It is an interesting area of discussion, which we are sure will surface again, especially if Spelthorne at some stage go back on the assurances given at the AGM.

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 noted above, the subscription remains at £2.00 until the end of this year. When subs become due at the beginning of January, they will increase to £5.00.

Please find enclosed my annual subscription of £2.00 for family membership of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association for the calendar year 2007. (AUT07)

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