

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.