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## RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

24 JUNE 2021

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### **COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE REJECTS TOWER-BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OVERLOOKING RIVER**

Spelthorne Borough Council Planning Committee last night voted unanimously to reject a planning application for twin-towers (13 and 15 storeys) of 206 tiny flats on the Old Telephone Exchange and Masonic Hall site overlooking the river. The application from Inland Homes had been recommended for approval by the Council's officers. The decision to reject the application followed more than three hours of statements, presentations and debate.

The Planning Officer's presentation outlining the proposed development (described by one committee member as "a sales pitch" for the developer) was preceded by short statements both against and for the scheme – one against the scheme by Peter Bower "on behalf of the several hundred residents represented by the Riverside Residents Coalition and the three thousand people who have already signed the petition calling for no high-rise developments in the Staines riverfront area" ([click here](#) for full text).

A statement supporting the scheme was read by Stephen Wicks, Chief Executive of Inland Homes, who said this would normally be done by one of his staff. Inland Homes had threatened legal action against the Council earlier in the year if any attempt was made to include their scheme in a temporary moratorium on high-rise. At least two members of the committee were told less than an hour before the hearing that Inland Homes wanted them barred from participating because of comments they were alleged to have made in the past.

Most members of the committee spoke to challenge the development. The debate was opened by a stinging 12-minute tour de force by Cllr Michele Gibson. She welcomed some aspects of the scheme but detailed several planning policies she believed it contravened, from those relating to their height and detrimental impact on the area to inadequate parking provision. Other Councillors who spoke about the scheme on similar grounds were Chris Bateson, Amar Brar, John Doran, Nick Gething, Sinead Mooney, Bob Noble, and Robin Sider. Cllr Veena Siva, although not on the committee, attended the hearing to speak against the development.

"The Planning Committee hearing was a significant demonstration of Councillor power defending the interests of residents against the combined forces of an aggressive developer supported by Council officers," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "It was an important event supporting our campaign against the high-rise hell in the draft development plan for Staines currently under review by a Councillor-led Task Group. But several more tower-block developments are in the pipeline so there's a long way to go. Residents and Councillors 'one', Developers and Council officers 'nil' ... but we're barely 15 minutes into the game!"

**Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition** – a working group of six residents' organisations representing several hundred residents. Supported by other residents' organisations across Staines and the Staines Town Society.

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