



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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STAINES HIGH-RISE HELL IS A COMMUNITY CANCER

Plans by Spelthorne Borough Council to pepper Staines with more than a dozen tower-blocks of mostly tiny flats across the town centre overlooking the riverfront and in the Conservation Area are moving ahead. Sites were identified and published a long time ago for the draft Staines Development Plan. Developers, fearful the Plan may be amended to limit the height of new developments, are circling like vultures now, licking their lips at the opportunity to pounce for early easy profits. Planning applications are being lodged and more are being prepared. The cost of the whole scheme for Staines and its residents if nothing changes: a population increase of 50 percent, the probable loss of five car parks, at best a strangled infrastructure and high-rise hell for those who live, work and visit the town. Just ask the residents of Woking and Croydon what it will be like. For Staines it is now a race against stacked odds and time!

Tower-block cancer will kill Staines

The draft Staines Development Plan is not a plan to 'develop' Staines any more than the government's current 'housing target' for the borough defines the actual local 'housing need' in terms of either numbers or type of accommodation. Tower blocks of tiny flats will be transient dormitories not family homes for a settled community. The developments in the pipeline are a community cancer ... and cancer kills. A cluster of these developments is already growing, although currently confined to a small area between the Iron Bridge and the Crooked Billet roundabout. But the Council officers are in effect telling the community '*Staines has these developments now, they're going to spread throughout the town, so you're going to have to learn to live with them*'. The problem is that *living with them* is not an option. They will kill Staines as it is today.

While Council officers seem to be comfortable with the draft Plan as it is, Staines ward Councillors are fighting to prevent the spread of these developments, particularly in sensitive areas of the town. It was the No 1 issue for all four candidates in the recent Staines Ward by-election. The Council's new leadership, with cross-party support, is bringing in an independent consultant to make sure every possible avenue is explored.

In the meantime ...

The big risk now is that until the new Staines Development Plan is in place, hopefully to limit the height of buildings in the town, developers are trying to exploit the existing Local Plan to secure permission to build tower-blocks up to 15 storeys high (the limit imposed by the town's proximity to Heathrow).

Reasons enough can surely be found to reject planning applications for these cancerous blights between now and finalising the new Plan. The Council is meant to answer Freedom of Information requests within four weeks. Twice that time has now elapsed with no answer to our simple FoI question: *What planning policies or other legal devices could be employed to limit the height of buildings in Staines below that imposed by proximity to Heathrow?*

Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition – a Working Group of six residents' organisations. Supported by other residents' organisations across Staines and the Staines Town Society. www.riversideresidentsstaines.org.uk

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