



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

28 JULY 2021

STAINES 'GHETTO' REJECTED BY COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Planning applications for two major developments, which would together have added more than 1,000 residents to an already over-crowded part of Staines, were both rejected yesterday evening by Spelthorne Borough Council's Planning Committee.

The bigger of the two schemes would have added 397 tiny flats (for rent only) in blocks near the Iron Bridge, wedged between the railway line and the Moormede estate. The development would have been serviced by a single narrow road. The second development would have added 64 flats and no additional parking spaces in three blocks up to nine storeys high next to the existing London Square development. Locally Listed buildings currently on the site would need to be demolished.

The schemes were recommended for approval by the council's planning officers. The surprise of the evening was that both schemes were also supported by the Committee's chair, Cllr Tom Lagden (Staines ward, but not a resident of the borough) who had spoken out *against* new high-rise developments in Staines during the recent by-election campaign!

Vigorous opposition to both proposed developments from Committee members was led by Cllr Michele Gibson (Riverside & Laleham) and Cllr Chris Bateson (Staines South). Planning policy objections related mainly to the developments' scale, height, mass, design, adverse impact on neighbouring properties, disability access, lack of on-site amenities for residents, inadequate parking provision and road access. One Councillor said the developments would turn the area into a ghetto. The only member of the public permitted to speak was Anne Damerell, Secretary of the Staines Town Society. She spoke on behalf of the Society and the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition and also cited a range of planning policies that would be contravened by the developments.

"The borough clearly needs more homes, particularly family homes; but peppering the town with tower-blocks of tiny flats isn't the answer ... and Staines shouldn't bear almost half the borough's housing target. Residents are really scared that these kinds of developments would destroy the character and amenity of the town and turn it into a mini-Woking or mini-Croydon. There's also the question of whether the town's infrastructure could be improved to support anything close to this level of over-development" says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "Several other tower blocks are in the pipeline for the town centre, overlooking the river and in the Conservation Area – all, it would appear, endorsed by the Council's planning officers but not many elected Councillors. It makes a bit of a mockery of the Council's recent public consultation asking residents whether they think the height of new developments in Staines should be limited!"

Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition – a Working Group of six residents' organisations serving the interests of residents on both sides of the river. Supported by other residents' organisations across Staines and the Staines Town Society.

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