



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

10 December 2021

TWO IMPORTANT 'WE NEED TO THINK AGAIN' DECISIONS BY SPELTHORNE COUNCIL

No screeching u-turns, but two important 'we need to think again' decisions on high-rise issues in Staines resulted from a lively debate at yesterday evening's marathon meeting of Spelthorne Borough Council. Both decisions were largely the result of hard work in the chamber and pre-meeting lobbying by Staines ward Councillors. Both are critical to a final outcome of whether Staines will be transformed into a dormitory town peppered with tower blocks of tiny flats. But neither do more than postpone a final decision until the new year.

The Council was told last night that the moratorium on high-rise developments on sites where the Council is the developer no longer exists because controversial conditions attached to it had been met. This was followed by an announcement that Council Leader Cllr Lawrence Nichols had decided the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee should consider re-imposing it when it meets next month. As a result of a 'call in' motion from Staines Councillors Sinead Mooney, Chris Bateson and Malcolm Beecher, a decision by the Development Sub-Committee to build blocks of flats up to 11 storeys high on the Thameside House site was sent back to the Committee for reconsideration.

"Lifting the moratorium is a scandal. One of the conditions for lifting it was that the Council should undertake a borough-wide consultation on the future development of Staines; but with no commitment that it would take any notice of its findings," says the spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "It also became clear that the proposal to build high blocks of flats on the Thameside House site was more about maximising profit than considering the appearance and amenity of the area for residents."

During the debate, Cllr Mooney talked about the 'chasm' of mistrust that had built up between the community and the Council largely because of heavily conflicting messages from officers and councillors on the high-rise issue. Cllr Bateson urged the Council to be more determined and positive in its efforts to reduce the government's housing target driving the claimed need to burden Staines with high-rise. Cllr Beecher argued for a smaller development on the Thameside House site that paid the mortgage but was not profit driven to respect the view of residents.

A confusing and confused debate on a proposal to consider a new 'vision' for the borough that would prevent the overdevelopment of Staines but rely on a lower housing target was voted down. But pressure will now build from the community and Staines Councillors to ensure key elements of the vision are included in the emerging Staines Development Framework.

Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition – a working group of seven 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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