



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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HOW SERIOUS IS THE COUNCIL ABOUT SECURING A LOWER HOUSING TARGET TO SAVE STAINES FROM HIGH-RISE HELL?

The government-imposed housing target for Spelthorne borough is driving the Council's current plans to pepper Staines with tower blocks of mostly tiny flats. Last summer, Spelthorne's MP Kwasi Kwarteng publicly offered to help the Council secure a lower housing target; but there isn't much public evidence yet of the Council pushing at this open door.

Kwasi Kwarteng's offer to help followed a meeting he had with a representative of the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition and a Staines ward Councillor. To meet this pledge he asked the Council to provide him with the evidence to justify a lower number. That didn't happen until late November, and the content of what was sent to him is still shrouded in secrecy. In the meantime proposals for high-rise developments in Staines even on sites where the Council is the developer are being progressed, and the Council Task Group charged with developing the new 'Local Plan' for the borough refuses to spend any time examining the impact of a lower housing target.

"It's high time we had some straight talking from the Council on this issue, not the dissembling, mixed and confused messaging we have had over the past several months. We'll know how serious the Council is when we see the case they have put forward. The community is surely entitled to see this under the terms of the Council's constitution and it would be good also to see some real commitment, determination and urgency applied to the task," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "We have solid support from ward Councillors in Staines, and Spelthorne does have a strong case. The borough has limited brownfield sites for development, two thirds of the borough is greenbelt and a third of that is water, and a lot of land near Spelthorne's rivers is subject to flooding. The Council's own projection for natural population growth in the borough is for less than 2,000 over the next 30 years, and no other small/mid-size town on the non-tidal Thames has had its appearance and amenity wrecked with high-rise tower-blocks.

"If the Council is really serious about making a convincing case for a lower housing target it should also be able to do two things: First, demonstrate with numbers, facts and illustrations how Staines would be wrecked by the imposition of the current target. Second, demonstrate with numbers, facts and illustrations how the character and appearance of the town would be saved from 'high-rise hell' by whatever lower target the Council defines as appropriate and achievable. Frankly, this work should have been done months ago."

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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