



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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'HIGH-RISE HELL' IN STAINES ONE STEP CLOSER ... Council's catastrophic failures largely to blame ...

DEVELOPERS INLAND HOMES have won their appeal against Spelthorne Borough Council Planning Committee's unanimous rejection of their application to build twin towers (14 and 16 storeys) of tiny flats on the old Masonic Hall site next to Debenhams overlooking the river.

In his 20-page Decision Notice published today granting the appeal, the government Planning Inspector references the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition and says he "placed weight upon" the post-card petition from residents opposing the scheme, adding "There is clearly a very strong concern from the local community about the impact of the proposed development on the townscape of Staines". However, he had concluded from the evidence submitted by Inland Homes and the Council that "the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area overall" and saw "the benefit of providing homes in an area of under-delivery of housing".

An obvious set-back for the campaign against 'high-rise hell' in Staines, the decision to allow the appeal will encourage other developers to bring forward similar schemes for other sites in the town. An application to demolish the iconic Debenhams building and replace it with twin 14-storey towers of flats has already been submitted. This has attracted record numbers of objections from residents and opposition from several heritage bodies. The decision to allow the Inland Homes appeal against the unanimous rejection of the scheme by Spelthorne Council's Planning Committee of elected Councillors shines a light on catastrophic failures by the Council. The most important of these have been 1) its endless and unconscionable delays in producing a development plan for the borough and the town that would limit the heights of new buildings, and 2) its significant historical failure to meet the borough's housing supply needs. A new development plan for public consultation is still several months away and now needs to be a top priority for the Council. Other significant failures include an apparent lack of commitment and urgency in seeking a lower government housing target for the borough that currently drives the Council's apparent determination to see high-rise on every available site in the town to meet it. Most of the earmarked sites are close to or overlooking the riverfront.

"Staines now risks being the only small/mid-size town on the non-tidal Thames whose appearance and amenity could be wrecked by the overbearing dominance of tower-blocks of mostly commuter flats. What a legacy to bestow on the town!" says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "We also have a particular concern about the role of Council Officers in the process that led to the Inland Homes Appeal. Two weeks ago we submitted to the Council Leader five solid reasons justifying our call for an independent investigation."

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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