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## RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

19 January 2022

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### **COUNCIL OFFICERS IN SECRET NEGOTIATIONS ON FUTURE OF STAINES**

#### **Councillors and community kept in the dark**

SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL's Chief Executive and two other senior officers have been in secret negotiations with Surrey County Council for several years on the development of Staines as part of a masterplan for the county that also involves a number of towns in other boroughs. The detail is set out in a 71-page document '*Surrey's 2050 Place Ambition – a strategic vision for place leadership, infrastructure & good growth*' which Councillors described last night as a "shock". They were unaware of its existence until being given papers for yesterday evening's meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

Many Councillors and our Coalition see this as yet further evidence of an endemic dysfunction in how the Council operates and its continuing failure to abide by its constitutional pledge "to work in partnership with residents to make Spelthorne a place where people are fully engaged, and to encourage the active involvement of the community in the decisions that affect them".

The scale of this new scandal dominated the agenda of the Council's Environment and Sustainability Committee meeting, with a lengthy presentation by a Surrey County Council Officer followed by a discussion that was less about its content than the covert nature of its provenance. The masterplan document will be published soon for Councillors and residents to comment on. But it is the product of several years' work involving boroughs throughout the county and is therefore a jigsaw that relies on the interconnection of each borough's role in the masterplan.

"There must be a serious doubt as to whether any 'consultation' on the County Council's masterplan and Staines' role in it will have any material influence at this late stage in the process on its content or implementation," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "This certainly helps to explain why many in Spelthorne Council have been so fixated on delivering the 'high-rise hell' overdevelopment of the town ... and why we have yet to see any evidence of a serious attempt to secure a lower housing target for the borough. It also begs the question of when the Council will begin to function in a way that a public authority should, with its elected Councillors more in the driving seat on policy and priorities."

"We urge the Council to provide a properly co-ordinated response to the document from Councillors, not allow Officers to mark their own homework, ensure particularly that whatever the response is has the full support of Staines ward Councillors, and to meet the demands of the Council's constitution by involving residents in some way in determining their response."

**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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