



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

20 January 2022

COUNCIL MORATORIUM LIFTED TO FACILITATE HIGH-RISE DEVELOPMENTS ON COUNCIL SITES

The Council's moratorium preventing high-rise developments on sites in Staines where the Council is the developer has been lifted and developments on the Thameside House and Oast House sites will now be progressed with urgency. This was decided by nine votes to three at the Council's Corporate Policy and Resources Committee meeting yesterday evening at the end of a long and spirited debate.

The Council Officers had presented a paper declaring that all three conditions for lifting the moratorium had been met and focused on the financial consequences of further delays in proceeding with the Thameside House and Oast House projects. One of the conditions of the moratorium had been that there should be a public consultation on the future development of Staines; but the decision to lift the moratorium was not accompanied by any requirement for the findings of last summer's consultation, dominated by opposition to high-rise, to be taken into account in the Council's future plans.

Decisions on proposals for Thameside House and the Oast House sites will now be in the hands of the Council's Development Sub-Committee. It has already proposed blocks of flats on the Oast House site of eight and 14 storeys, and blocks of various heights up to 11 or 14 storeys on the Thameside House site. But the Sub-Committee has been asked to review these proposals.

"Whether these schemes are modified with lower building heights will depend a great deal on whether the Development Sub-Committee wants them to generate a profit or is happy for them to be financially neutral; but the calculations on this will also depend on accounting treatments and costs that can be loaded into the calculations. A number of Councillors expressed the hope that the currently envisaged heights could be reduced. We will watch this closely. Much will also depend on decisions by the Council's Planning Committee of elected Councillors because the Council cannot appeal against decisions by this Committee," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "There was a good deal of discussion about the need to listen to residents; but the implied decision to take no account of the consultation findings made much of that sound rather hollow. Time will tell. That said there was a good constructive debate on issues relating to the need for affordable and social housing, and for there to be greater focus on the design of new developments. A design sub group will be created to feed independent advice to the Development Sub-Committee.

"But more than anything Staines residents are surely entitled now to some long overdue honest straight talking from the Council about their vision for the future appearance and amenity of the town. We need to see some tangible evidence of the Council meeting its constitutional requirement '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'. We haven't seen much of that yet."

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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