



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

7 December 2022

OPEN DOOR FOR SPELTHORNE COUNCIL TO AMEND PLAN THAT WOULD "RUIN THE CHARACTER" OF THE BOROUGH ... AND WORK NEEDS TO START NOW

MANDATORY HOUSING TARGETS WILL GO under a new government policy announced this week allowing all Councils to abandon plans that would "*significantly change the character of an area*". Spelthorne Council had declared that its Local Plan to meet the borough's housing target (recently submitted for government approval) "*pleases no-one, will damage our environment and ruin the character of our small and highly constrained borough*". The new government policy opens the door for Spelthorne to deliver a revised Plan that does not do this. The policy also strengthens the government commitment "*to build the right homes in the right places and put local people at the heart of decision-making*", which certainly brings into question Spelthorne's current plan to build several thousand tiny flats in tower blocks across Staines.

Spelthorne Council had rushed through internal approvals to submit its Local Plan for formal government approval little more than a week before Monday's government announcement. More than 20 other local authorities, including neighbouring Runnymede, had suspended development of their Plans in anticipation of a change in government policy. Some, including neighbouring Elmbridge, had already developed and submitted a Plan for a lower housing target.

"Spelthorne's urgency to seek government approval for its Local Plan was because it had allowed its current Plan to become out of date and ineffective. Presumably that's why it didn't challenge its housing target", says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "When the new government policy becomes a formal regulation, Spelthorne will have all the room it needs to modify its Plan to achieve at least two things: a significant reduction in the number of new homes currently envisaged for Staines to accommodate a wrecking 50 percent increase in the town's population, and also provide serious and robust protection for sensitive areas such as the town's riverfront and Conservation Areas.

"Given the urgency for an approved Local Plan, Spelthorne Council must surely begin work now on revisions to its Plan with a lower housing aspiration for re-submission as soon as the new government policy becomes a binding regulation. It should also declare now that this is its intention."

Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition – a working group of six residents' organisations serving the interests of residents on both sides of the river. Supported by other residents' organisations across Staines.

www.riversideresidentsstaines.org.uk

e mail riverside.residents.staines@gmail.com

FB Riverside Residents Staines