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# RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

16 April 2025

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## **COUNCIL MUST NOW ACCEPT FLOOD RISK RESEARCH CHALLENGE TO STAINES' DEVELOPMENT PLANS ... and why residents should participate in the public consultation ...**

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE MORE THAN 100 CHANGES Spelthorne Council wants to make to its plans to deliver some 10,000 new homes in the borough in the next 15 years, more than half of them in Staines, ends in mid-May. Submissions to the consultation will feed into the government Planning Inspector's determination on whether the borough's Local Plan is 'sound'. For Staines, these considerations will focus mainly on two questions: Can more than 5,000 new homes (mostly in tower blocks of flats across town to accommodate a near 50 per cent population increase) be built on the sites allocated for them? Is there a credible plan to ensure delivery of the key infrastructure and services needed to support such massive development?

A major challenge to the Council's plans for Staines, something the authority must now take more seriously, is unquestionably flood-risk. This is graphically highlighted in research by Royal Holloway, University of London, now validated and endorsed by international experts and just published in the *Journal of Flood Risk Management* ([click here](#)). It shows how powerful, wildly variable and critically important groundwater flows are through the thin gravel substrate on which Staines is built; how they act independently of, but add materially to, flood-risk from the river and surface water run-off; how and where they produce flood-risk 'hot spots'. Barriers in the gravel substrate from the foundations and basements of existing buildings have undeniably altered and added to flood-risks in Staines. New barriers, however shallow or deep, from new developments will add to the problem ... and the problem will be further exacerbated the more there are of these new barriers both individually and as disturbed water-flows from them interact with each other.

The research calls for flood-risk maps for Staines to be redrawn. It also highlights two other fundamental issues that should trouble Council planners and the government's Planning Inspector. First, prior to this research, extremely little was known about flood-risk from groundwater in Staines. Second, whereas the Environment Agency is the statutory consultee for flood-risk from rivers, and Surrey County Council for surface water run-off, there is no authority with the statutory obligation to advise on flood-risk from groundwater.

"The current public consultation follows the Inspector's examination of the Council's Local Plan and proposed changes to it that concluded in February. Representatives of our Coalition participated in every day of the examination, the only residents' organisation to do so," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "The lack of a credible infrastructure plan, and protection of the Conservation Area and riverfront, will feature in our submission to the consultation. But its main focus will be the consequences for Staines of Royal Holloway's research. We will share our submission with *News/letter* readers in the next couple of weeks, well before the end of the consultation period. Even if residents wish to take a different view, or want to challenge other aspects of the Council's plans, we urge everyone to participate in the consultation. This can be done through the Council's website questionnaire or email."

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