
RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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TIME COUNCIL DECLARED HOW IT WILL DEAL WITH INCREASED FLOOD RISK IN STAINES

EVERYONE WHO LIVES IN STAINES should view the recording of a meeting to brief Spelthorne Borough Councillors on the extent of potentially significant increases in flood-risk from new developments ([click here](#)). The meeting was held at the beginning of last month. The recording was released by the Council just yesterday afternoon, after overcoming internal opposition to it being made available to the public. Although the meeting was four weeks ago, the Council has yet to declare how it wants to deal with the consequences of what Councillors were told. A presentation on the findings of the research by Royal Holloway, University of London, last year into groundwater flooding in the town by the scientist who led it was followed by a spirited question-and-answer session highlighting the scale and seriousness of the problem.

Staines suffers flood risk from the river, surface water run-off, and the massive volumes of water (known as groundwater) flowing through the thin gravel substrate on which the town is built. Little was known about groundwater flood risk until the Royal Holloway research. The threat of flooding from this source is at least as big as from the other two sources. The research shows that the volume of water flowing through the gravel under Staines is a staggering several million times greater than the volume flowing down the Thames under Staines bridge! Also, because of variations in the depth of the gravel and speed of flow, there are flood risk 'hot spots' across town. Barriers in the gravel, for example the foundations (however shallow or deep) of large buildings, can increase flood risk in the area around new developments. It is also becoming clear that underground design and engineering 'solutions' to reduce the size and impact of these barriers won't work everywhere.

Spelthorne Council administration has yet to respond to requests for a clear statement that it accepts the findings of the research and recognises the need for robust and enforceable policy directives to ensure new developments do not increase flood risk for others. The Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition has proposed that these policy directives must require developers to undertake two commitments: 1) provide an independent hydrological study with every planning application to identify site-specific risks and potential solutions, and 2) acceptance of a legal responsibility if their development increases flooding in the area.

"Other boroughs, including three in London, have confronted this problem in their Local Plans and, for example, require hydrological studies as part of planning applications. Spelthorne's Local Plan, currently under final review by the Planning inspector, does not deal with this issue at all," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition, "The briefing for Councillors was a month ago, so it's high time the Council says whether it accepts the research findings and how it wants to deal with their consequences for residents – especially with sites it is selling to developers where the Council can insist on prerequisites in any contract."

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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