

RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

1 January 2025

2026 MAY SETTLE STAINES FUTURE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

a New Year wish-list to help make this work for the community

A NEW 'STAINES MASTERPLAN', approval and adoption of a Spelthorne Local Plan and a Design Code to support it, and development of a Supplementary Planning Document on flood risk. All are expected to emerge in the coming months, long before the end of 2026. All of these initiatives will change Staines as a place to live, work and visit for generations to come. So, what they will deliver for the community matters a great deal. They will be a parting gift from Spelthorne Borough Council as local government reorganisation forces it and five other councils to disappear into the newly created West Surrey unitary authority.

Staines needs more homes. The town centre and riverfront are ripe for a revitalising up-grade. Residents will embrace change and growth if it is sensitive to improving the town's character, amenities and community wellbeing. This means protection from the 'just build' philosophy of thoughtless high-rise overdevelopment driven by cost and profit regardless of adverse local impact. It means not building tower-blocks right next to already established low-rise residential areas. It means creative and imaginative design of new developments. It means the provision of adequate infrastructure. It also means protection for existing properties and public spaces from increased flood risk that can be created by new developments - a serious potential problem across Staines, highlighted by ground-breaking independent research in 2024 by Royal Holloway, University of London.

A New Year 'wish list' we ask Spelthorne Council to consider

* **Effective community consultation on the new Staines Masterplan.** Consult early enough with residents for their views to have real influence. Make sure the proposed Community Panel meets early on and is properly representative, with no conflicts of interest, and includes representation from all residents' associations. Make sure the wider consultation with residents on the draft Masterplan happens early enough to matter and is not just a 'tick box' exercise (as has sometimes seemed in the past).

* **A robust and enforceable policy directive on flood risk.** Staines is vulnerable to flood risk from all three sources (the river, surface water run-off, and the vast quantities of water that flow through the thin layer of gravel on which the town is built) not least because they feed off each other. New rules must get as close as possible to a guarantee that no new development can increase flood risk for other properties and public spaces in the area around them. Councillors and Officers charged with developing the new rules must seek advice from truly independent external experts, not just from consultants who advise developers on opportunities and loopholes.

* **Value the riverfront, the town's most distinguishing asset.** Recognition of flood risk has protected the riverfront from the Council's originally planned high-rise overdevelopment at the Bridge Street car park, Memorial Gardens car park, and Thameside House. The Council agrees that the Bridge Street car park site should now be used for community recreational and social purposes. Very welcome news, but the Council should take the opportunity to consult now with residents to generate ideas, not just produce a plan and then ask them what they think.