
RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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WHY IS FLOOD RISK IN STAINES NOT A COUNCIL PRIORITY?

THE RISK OF FLOODING from new high-rise developments in Staines for existing properties and public spaces in the town is significant, unequivocal and remains unchallenged. Research by Royal Holloway, University of London, proving the sheer scale and scope of the risk was released in May 2024. It acquired independent 'peer review' validation (its findings unchanged) nine months ago and was discussed by the full Spelthorne Council more than six months ago. Finally, yesterday, the Council announced it will begin preparing a Supplementary Planning Document on flood risk next year. The announcement gave no indication of when a draft document might be ready for consultation let alone adoption and enforcement.

The apparent lack of priority or importance the Council attaches to this issue has troubled residents for some time. Two new reasons in particular have recently added to the concern. First, the urgency with which the Council is now obliged to pursue the sale of its commercial property assets including development sites. Second, the timelines and deadlines relating to Spelthorne Borough Council disappearing into the new West Surrey unitary authority, a process that begins in just a few months.

"The Council has said it recognises that flooding is a 'key concern' of residents, but endlessly kicking this can down the road perhaps until it becomes the new authority's problem is very unsettling," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "The Council owns several sites across Staines that are earmarked for residential tower-block development. We have written to the Council today to find out when it expects to have a robust flood risk planning directive in place to protect existing properties and public spaces, and what position it takes on flood risk in dealing with planning applications in the meantime."

Technical background: *Staines sits on a thin layer of gravel through which vast quantities of water flow. Barriers in the gravel particularly from the foundations and basements of high-rise buildings force these water flows upwards, creating a significant risk of flooding in the area around them. Only strict enforcement of a clear, unambiguous and robust planning directive governing the below-ground structures of new developments can ensure they don't create flood risk for others.*

Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition – a working group of six residents' associations serving the interests of residents on both sides of the river.
Supported by other residents' organisations across Staines.
Nominated contact: Nigel Rowe (anrowe1@aol.com ... 07785 776696)