
RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

18 March 2026

LOCAL PLAN AND DESIGN CODE APPROVED

... with some key decisions for Staines still to be taken ...

NOT YET JOURNEY'S END, BUT CLOSE! Spelthorne Borough Council approved and adopted two critical documents yesterday evening: the Borough's Local Plan (to meet a demanding housing target set by the government), and a supporting Design Code. The Council's near decade-long journey to yesterday evening's decisions has been tortuous and frustrating for everyone: the Council's Officers and elected body, and residents. But it's the end of the beginning, not journey's end, especially for Staines. The Local Plan is now subject to an "immediate review" demanded by the Planning Inspector. Work has also already begun on a Staines Masterplan that will augment and refine the Design Code's determinations for the town. Updating aspects of the Local Plan and what the Design Code currently intends for Staines is potentially good news for the town's residents. Key among those items at issue are the robustness of protection against flood risk and the development of riverfront sites:

* The Local Plan includes a radically revised and welcome new flood risk directive insisting that new developments must not increase flood risk for other properties or public spaces in the area. Missing from this is what will be required of developers in the planning approval process to demonstrate how this will be ensured. The Council has hired consultants AECOM to advise on a supplementary flood risk policy, working with Dr Jonathan Paul of Royal Holloway, University of London, who led the groundwater flood risk research in Staines.

* Negotiations with the Environment Agency on flood risk began almost eight years ago and resulted in the Council being forced to remove five sites it had earmarked for housing development. Three are at Staines' riverfront: Bridge Street car park, Memorial Gardens car park, and Thames Lodge hotel. Despite this, the Design Code has identified Bridge Street car park for what it calls a "Marker Building" with the site being one "where additional building height may be accepted". Memorial Gardens is identified for a "Landmark Building". It is not yet clear how this fits with the Council's pledge, enthusiastically welcomed by residents, to respect flood risk concerns and develop riverfront sites mainly for community and recreational use.

"These are more than just loose ends to be tidied up. How they are dealt with will have potentially generational consequences. Many of the opportunities to enhance the appearance and amenities of Staines have already been identified, but some important decisions have yet to be taken" says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "Consulting with Staines residents on both sides of the river in the run up to everyone being part of West Surrey Unitary Authority, to draw on their experience and aspirations for the town, will be key to finding a good solution".

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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