
RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

21 June 2026

WILL CONSULTATION STOP COUNCIL MUGGING MEMORIAL GARDENS? ... 'MUGA' proposal fails key criteria ...

SPELTHORNE COUNCIL'S PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL to install a fenced-in 'Multi-Use Games Area' (which it calls 'MUGA') in the middle of Staines' riverside Memorial Gardens ended today. Informal feedback indicates there is a good deal of opposition to it. The £500,000 budget has already been set aside, should the project be approved. The decision on whether to proceed will be taken by the Council's Environment and Sustainability Committee at its next meeting on 10 September.

The fact that the project is even being considered has proved to be highly controversial. The decision to put it to public consultation was taken while plans were moving ahead to consider options to develop Memorial Gardens as one of four key sites in the Staines Masterplan. As part of this process, Council officers and design consultants collaborated with residents in a working group in April this year to produce a scheme yet to be put to the Council or its Masterplan Board. In addition to accepting the Environment Agency's determination that the site is "suitable for water-compatible development only", the working group was guided by the need for any development at Memorial Gardens a) to contribute to and benefit from its riverside location, and b) to respect the long-standing purpose of the Memorial Gardens as Staines' only open green space for quiet reflection. The proposed MUGA clearly meets neither of these defining criteria.

"Of course, sporting activity makes a valuable contribution to the development and wellbeing of young people. However, if there is a need for more sporting facilities in the town in the form of a MUGA, it must be supported by reliable evidence given its £500,000 price tag, and it must surely be located in a more appropriate site elsewhere. The proposal fails to meet the very desirable criteria defined for any development of Memorial Gardens in the emerging Staines Masterplan," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "We understand account will be taken of social media comment on the proposed MUGA when a decision is being considered. But the results of the on-line public consultation will be a key factor in any decision, so we have submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Council to let us see the full detail of the completed survey responses."

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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