



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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COUNCILLORS BACK BOTH HORSES IN TWO-HORSE RACE

A compromise that could change everything ... or nothing much. After three hours yesterday evening discussing the flaws and merits of two very different approaches to the development of Staines and Spelthorne, members of the new Environment and Sustainability Committee decided to pursue both. Common to both, but with different degrees of emphasis, will be an attempt to reduce the borough's housing target and spread its burden more evenly across the borough, and consideration of the recent public consultation findings when these are published. But from this base each approach moves in opposite directions:

- Proposal/decision A is to move ahead expeditiously with refining the current draft Development Plan, assume for now that the housing target cannot be reduced and agree that building on some greenbelt land may be needed to reduce some high-rise developments in Staines.
- Proposal/decision B is to reflect the widespread concern among residents and some Councillors about the draft Development Plan and its impact on Staines. An independent expert will be brought in to advise on developing a new vision for the borough that will produce a legacy Councillors can be proud of and maintain residents' quality of life. This approach does not accept at this point that the housing target cannot be reduced or that any consideration need be given now either to building on greenbelt or high-rise developments in Staines.

While both these approaches will be pursued in parallel, several key aspects were unclear last night on which we hope to be able to report soon:

- What is the strategy to seek a reduction in the housing target?
- Will analysis of the recent public consultation be undertaken independently or by those who have had a hand in designing the draft Development Plan ... and will the findings of the survey be made public?
- Will the facilitator for Plan B be the same person as the consultant being brought in to help Councillors review the draft Development Plan (as agreed at the Committee's meeting last week) ... and, critically, who will select the candidate(s) for these tasks and what will be their terms of reference?

"Last night's discussion was somewhat confusing, reflecting different understandings of government policy and what is practical in terms of deviating from the draft Development Plan," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "That aside, much depends on who will drive each of the two approaches and take key decisions, with Councillors showing increasing determination that it will be them."

Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition – a working group of six residents' organisations representing several hundred residents. Supported by other residents' organisations across Staines and the Staines Town Society.

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