



## RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

20 OCTOBER 2021

### TOO LATE TO STOP 'HIGH-RISE HELL' IN STAINES? ... IT ISN'T 'GAME-OVER' QUITE YET ...

Battle lines have been drawn for a final show-down on whether the amenity and appearance of Staines will be wrecked by tower-blocks of tiny flats. This became very clear at last week's meeting of Spelthorne Borough Council when our petition, calling on the Council to prevent high-rise developments close to the river and in the Conservation Area and to spread Spelthorne's housing target more equitably across the borough, was endorsed by Councillors. Council lawyers insist it can't be implemented.

Today's crisis originated in the Spring of 2020. First, the realisation that the Council's draft 'Staines Masterplan' called for the town to be peppered with tower blocks of tiny flats to accommodate a massive increase in population to meet the borough's housing target. Second, the Council's extraordinary delay in addressing this high-rise hell by either developing a new Local Plan that would include restrictions on the height of new buildings, or seeking a simple amendment to the existing plan to limit building heights.

The focus of the crisis now is the proposal by Inland Homes for 13/15 storey twin-towers on a site next to Debenhams. Planning officers, who recommended the scheme for approval (at the same time as asking residents in a survey whether they want high-rise!) make much of the fact that the existing Local Plan does not restrict the height of buildings. But the Council's Planning Committee rejected the scheme unanimously by citing other planning policies, including one that requires new developments to "*respect and make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area in which they are situated, paying due regard to the scale, height, proportions, building lines, layout, materials and other characteristics of adjoining buildings and land*". Inland Homes has appealed the decision so the issue will be resolved in the coming months by the government Planning Inspectorate.

The Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition has submitted a lengthy document to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration at the appeal/inquiry. It challenges many of the assumptions in the Inland Homes case and the degree of common ground it claims to have with Spelthorne planning officers. Our document also urges the Inspector to take the view that the residents of Staines "*should not be penalised and have the appearance, amenity and character of their town wrecked by the imposition of tower-blocks of tiny flats because of the delays created by the administrative complexities in the Council and the failure to seek an amendment to the extant Local Plan*".

Many questions arise about how all of this has been handled. One is why the Council's role as planning authority, which should be *entirely* separate from its other functions, reports to the same officer responsible for the Council's property interests.

**[CLICK HERE FOR THE FULL STORY](#)**

**Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition** – a Working Group of six residents' organisations serving the interests of residents on both sides of the river. Supported by other residents' organisations across Staines and the Staines Town Society.

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