



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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DECISION DAY IN JANUARY ON THREE KEY HIGH-RISE ISSUES

JANUARY 2022 could decide whether Staines is on its way to the 'high-rise hell' opposed by residents, with three key decisions expected before the end of the month.

A decision by the government's Planning Inspector on the appeal by Inland Homes against the Council Planning Committee's rejection of their application to build 14 and 16-storey twin-towers of flats on the Old Telephone Exchange site next to Debenhams is expected in the second half of the month. The development had been recommended for approval by Council officers, but this was rejected unanimously by the Committee of elected Councillors. The appeal inquiry was held over several days at the beginning of December last year. If the appeal succeeds it could have huge significance in setting a precedent for other developers to bring forward proposals for tower blocks of tiny flats on other sites in Staines.

The moratorium preventing high-rise developments on sites where Spelthorne Borough Council is the developer, imposed almost a year ago and lifted on the declaration of a senior Council Officer several weeks ago without a public announcement, has been referred by the full Council to its Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for a final decision this month. Three conditions had been attached to the moratorium, one was that there should be a public consultation on the future development of Staines; but the moratorium was lifted without any commitment to take any notice of the consultation's findings (which were overwhelmingly opposed to high-rise).

Plans for blocks of flats up to 11 storeys high on the Thameside House site just back from the river (where the Council is the developer) were approved by the Council's Development Sub-Committee also last month. This has now been referred by the full Council back to the Sub-Committee for reconsideration before a decision by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on whether to endorse it.

"We submitted a robust written statement and a 25-minuted oral statement to the Planning Inspector at the Inland Homes appeal hearing last month, and we have now sent to the Council our arguments against both the lifting of the moratorium and the proposed Thameside House development" said a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "The moratorium should never have been lifted on the say-so of a Council Officer and the immediate introduction of a proposal for mini tower-blocks on the Thameside House site suggests an orchestrated plan. We have to keep reminding the Council of its constitutional commitment to work in partnership with residents and to encourage the active involvement of the community in decisions that affect them ... there's been precious little real evidence of this so far and, not surprisingly, the community's anxiety on the high-rise issue has already turned to anger and a considerable lack of trust."

Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition – a Working Group of seven 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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