



20 MAY 2022

### **COUNCIL APPROVES 'HIGH-RISE HELL' PLAN FOR STAINES ... but it's not 'game over' yet ...**

A MOOD OF RESIGNED IMPOTENCE settled in the chamber of Spelthorne Borough Council last night as Councillors voted three-to-one to build almost three times more new homes every year for the next 15 years than the average it has achieved in recent years. Most will be in Staines. This follows the Council's acceptance of the government's housing target, despite not yet knowing if the target could be reduced as a result of changes in government policy currently under discussion, and despite important gaps in the Plan they approved.

Almost all the Councillors who spoke (18 of the 33 attending) disliked the Plan – some more angry about it than others; but most seemed relieved that the misery of it will be dumped on Staines. This was reflected in how they voted: all but one of the Staines Councillors (seven of the nine attended) voted against the plan, while all but two of the 26 from wards outside Staines voted for it.

"This was a disappointing but not entirely unexpected result because of the gross imbalance of the Plan. Staines has 20 per cent of the borough's population but will have to accept 55 per cent of the new homes to be built, with one new resident for every two here today," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "To achieve this, the town will be peppered with tower-blocks of tiny flats, with little protection for sensitive sites (the riverfront, Conservation Area, and immediately adjacent to existing residential areas). The town will lose some of its current open spaces and car parks, and it is unclear at the moment how all the necessary infrastructure for the planned over-development can be provided.

"The Plan won't become effective until it is passed as 'sound' by a Government Planning Inspector. There will be a public consultation on it this summer, the results of which will go to the Inspector along with the unaltered version of the Plan approved by Councillors last night. We will be fighting hard to mitigate some of the worst excesses of what is currently earmarked for Staines. It will be very important for residents to participate in the consultation and we will present our case for a better and fairer solution to the Inspector when that time comes. There are certainly opportunities for some of the burden to be shouldered elsewhere in the borough, and the government may yet reduce the housing target."

**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.

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