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## BRIDGE STREET CAR PARK DEVELOPMENT

### RESIDENTS' COALITION TO FIGHT FOR A BETTER SOLUTION

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**“A carbuncle on the face of a much-loved friend”. Prince Charles said it first, but he could have said the same about what is currently planned for the redevelopment of the riverfront Bridge Street Car Park, Staines.**

Spelthorne Borough Council has signed a contract with the Arora Group to build a 14-storey 300+ room hotel and 200+ apartment complex on the Bridge Street Car Park site. Four residents' organisations representing the interests of some 400 residents who would be among the worst affected by it have come together to do two things: Prevent the scheme from being built, and ensure whatever is built on the site is in keeping with the character and skyline of what's around it in this sensitive riverfront Conservation Area. We want to protect the appearance and amenity of the riverfront and town as a place to live, work and visit.

This is the first in a series of newsletters to keep residents on both sides of the river up to date on what we are doing to oppose the current plan and work with the Council for a better solution.

#### **Why the scheme must not be built**

The contract between Spelthorne Borough Council and the Arora Group was signed in April and announced in May. In June the Leader of the Council was replaced and the rest of his cabinet followed. In July the new Leadership team pledged to improve 'democratic accountability' in the borough, listen to residents and take more account of their needs. In August four residents' organisations close to the car park site created a Working Group coalition to put that pledge to the test.

To get our campaign off the ground we have lobbied the Leadership and relevant Ward Councillors in Spelthorne and Runnymede Borough Councils, relevant Council committee members in Spelthorne, Surrey County Council (highways authority), and the MPs for Spelthorne and Runnymede.

#### **Our main arguments against the scheme are:**

- The site is in the Staines Conservation Area and there are clear national regulations and policies requiring the Council to 'preserve or enhance' its character and appearance, and 'seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness'.
- The size of the development would add an intolerable burden to the already crippled road and other infrastructure at and around Staines bridge.
- There is a golden opportunity for a development that will preserve and enhance the architectural personality, skyline and public realm of Staines riverfront. Our coalition of residents' organisations wants to work constructively and positively with the Council to achieve this.

Questions have been raised about the propriety of the scheme's provenance and other aspects of the Council's recent financial history. We will leave it to others to determine if the Arora Group contract was the product of a fair, transparent and correct process.

## Next steps

Several other high-rise developments are in the pipeline as part of a draft 'Masterplan' for Staines under the Council's former Leadership. The new Leadership has created a Working Group to review the plan. We have urged the Council to put on hold planning consideration of all high-rise proposals until this work is done.

Our coalition of residents' organisations will continue the fight. We will continue to lobby Spelthorne and Runnymede Borough Councils, the highways authority, local MPs and others who we think can assist our campaign.

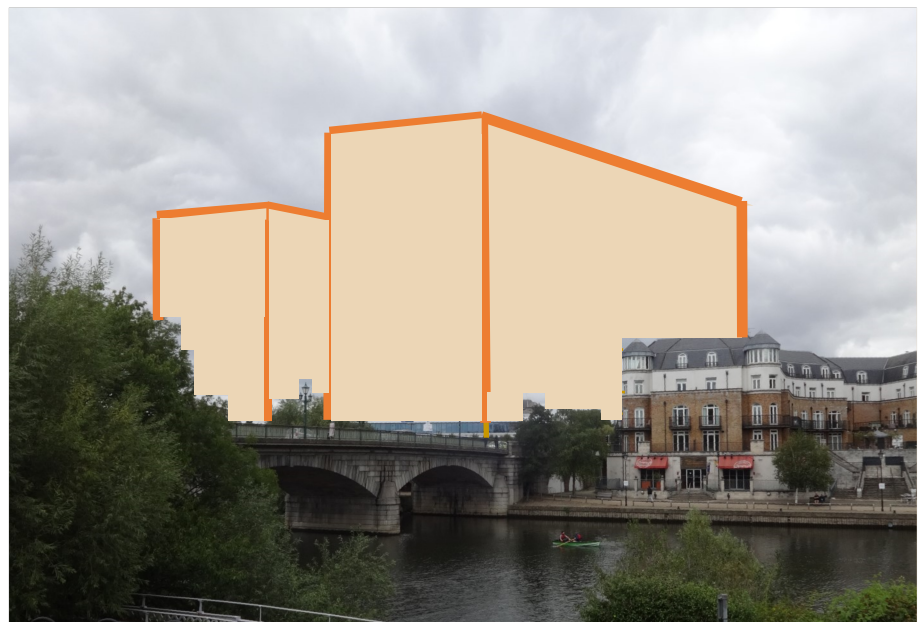
At some point we may need the active support of residents ... so watch this space!



Artist's impression of the Arora scheme, as published on the Arora Group website. We estimate the height of the building at 41.25m (compared with 17.3 m of the Thames Edge apartments on the right hand side of the illustration).

We believe the estimates to be accurate and have asked Arora Group (more than once) to confirm or comment.

The size (but clearly not the appearance of the Arora scheme) using the above estimates. We have shared this too with Arora Group for confirmation or comment.



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