



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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INDEPENDENT ENQUIRY INTO ARORA SCHEME FOR STAINES CONSERVATION AREA

An independent enquiry into the provenance and development agreement between Spelthorne Borough Council and Arora Group was announced yesterday evening by Council Leader John Boughtflower. The scheme for a 14-storey 342-room hotel with significant conference, banqueting and retail facilities plus more than 200 apartments in the sensitive riverside Staines Conservation Area has been the subject of growing controversy since it was announced in early May last year.

Councillor Boughtflower says "An independent enquiry has become inevitable. Many questions about the project and the contract remain unanswered. Councillors and the community are entitled to know more than has so far been revealed to clear the air if nothing else. When I was elected Leader last June I pledged the Council would become more open and transparent, and take more account of the needs and views of residents and the Councillors they elected."

Terms of reference for the enquiry, its timing and who will lead it, are expected to be announced soon.

"The announcement of the Arora scheme and contract last Spring triggered the replacement of the Council's former Leadership team and this alone begged a lot of questions," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents Coalition. "Our research into it since revealed a good deal that alarmed us, not least the dissembling and obfuscating correspondence and discussions with Council Officers. We concluded some time ago that the Arora scheme was the product of a corrosive cocktail of secrecy, over-reach, extraordinary power in very few hands, and the absence of both proper scrutiny and local democratic accountability. Since then there has been a damning internal review of the Council's past developments and investments practices. This on top of everything else led to our call for an independent investigation, clearly a conclusion that is widely shared among Councillors including the Leader and his Cabinet".

For more background go to:['birth of a scandal'](#) web link....

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