



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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STAINES RESIDENTS PROBE COUNCIL'S APPARENT "WEB OF DISSEMBLING AND DECEIT"

Residents in Staines-upon-Thames are stepping up pressure on Spelthorne Borough Council to "come clean" on what they are calling an apparent "web of dissembling and deceit" on emerging plans to pepper the town with tower-block developments of tiny flats. A coalition of six riverside residents' organisations sent a four-page Freedom of Information request this morning to the Council's Leader and Chief Executive, setting out their concerns and 14 related questions ([click here](#) for full text). A spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition issued the following statement today:

"Our alarm, the reason for the FoI request, relates to the growing number of sites being earmarked by the Council for new tower-block developments up to 15-storeys high; the Council's reluctance to share this 'vision' and its far-reaching implications with the community; and its apparent determination to implement the plan piecemeal one tower-block at a time ... all this against the backdrop of not even knowing if the town's infrastructure can support the overall scheme which is designed to dump into Staines some 45 per cents of the borough's entire housing target.

"Our coalition of residents' organisations came together last summer to fight the Council's plans to destroy the appearance and amenity of the sensitive riverfront Staines Conservation Area with a 14-storey Arora hotel and apartment complex and much else that was emerging in the so-called 'Staines Masterplan'. The Council's leadership at that time was summarily replaced. Since then:

- A Task Group was created to revise the 'Staines Masterplan', but has yet to report and in the meantime more tower-block sites have been identified with two Planning Applications now pending.
- Our own researches into the provenance and contract relating to the Arora scheme concluded that it 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 ... and this deal is now the subject of an independent external enquiry commissioned by the Council's current leadership.
- A recent damning internal enquiry revealed many concerns about the Council's past investment policies and practices that required borrowings of more than £1billion and led to auditors refusing to sign the authority's accounts.

"However, we believe all of this may prove to be the tip of a larger iceberg, with much of great importance still to be discovered to complete the picture that appears at this point to have many unsavoury aspects. The Council must come clean on what is beginning to look like a web of dissembling and deceit."

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

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