



RIVERSIDE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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RESIDENTS' PLEA TO COUNCILLORS: DON'T MAKE HIGH-RISE A POLITICAL FOOTBALL ... nothing must compromise Arora enquiry ...

Staines residents and some councillors are fearful that the fight against high-rise developments in the town, including the 14-storey Arora hotel project in the riverside Conservation Area, will become a party-political football that could derail the campaign against these schemes.

"Vigorous and virtually unanimous opposition to the current draft plan to pepper the town with tower-block developments was a high priority in last week's Borough and County Council elections in Staines, on the door-step and in candidates' literature," says a spokesperson for the coalition of Staines riverside residents' organisations. "But it became clear in the closing stages and aftermath of the election that inter-party and inter-personal rivalries now risk the baby being thrown out with the bathwater.

"The independent enquiry into the background and contract for the Arora project was announced ten weeks ago and was widely welcomed at the time by councillors and the community. But the timing of last week's release of the enquiry's terms of reference was seen by opposition councillors as political opportunism," continued the coalition's spokesperson. "We have to recognise the strength of feeling on this; but residents will be unforgiving if councillors exploit this as an opportunity for party-political point-scoring at the expense of what is, after all, a vital piece of local democratic accountability. The terms of reference for the enquiry are comprehensive, robust and very welcome. A thorough independent enquiry is essential, overdue and urgent. So the task now is to get on with it. Nothing must be allowed to compromise its scope or progress.

"We all need to remember that the Arora scheme is an integral element in the current proposal to turn Staines into high-rise heaven for developers and high-rise hell for residents".

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

Supported by the Staines Town Society.

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