



27 July 2022

ARORA INQUIRY HIGHLIGHTS COUNCIL'S PAST FAILINGS ... "fractured and patently dysfunctional" ...

A HIGHLY CRITICAL REPORT on the functioning of Spelthorne Borough Council was released late on Monday evening following a hastily convened meeting of the Council's Development Sub-Committee. The independent investigation had been commissioned to examine the provenance and contract for the Arora hotel group's development of the Bridge Street Car Park in the sensitive riverside Staines Conservation Area announced in May 2020.

The 32-page report is comprehensive, balanced and welcomed by the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. While it's author, Ms Yinka Owa, found no evidence that rules had actually been broken, the report is particularly critical of how the Council's 'strong leader' model of governance was exercised, with decisions being taken within a "fractured and patently dysfunctional environment". Councillors come in for criticism too for a fundamental lack of understanding of how the Council made decisions under the 'strong leader' model, and for not ensuring they were sufficiently briefed and informed before taking or acquiescing in decisions.

The report makes a number of recommendations on the quality and timing of papers sent to Councillors to enable them to make informed decisions, on Councillor training, and on the use of external consultants. Ms Owa indicates she would have made many more recommendations if the Council had not already moved from the 'strong leader' model of governance to the Committee system which shares decision-making widely among Council members. The full report is available on the Council website.

LAST NIGHT, the Development Sub-committee met again and decided to refer a decision on a new proposed new Arora scheme and contract to an 'extraordinary' meeting of the full Council next Monday. After a lengthy discussion questioning and criticising the quality of the report and information put to them, the sub-committee's members removed from the proposed resolution a recommendation that the Arora scheme and contract should be approved. Questions on key aspects of the Arora scheme and contract tabled by the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition for answer at the full Council meeting have been rejected by Council officers on the technicality that public questions are not permitted at meetings designated as 'extraordinary'.

[Click here](#) for a 'quick and easy' questionnaire on the Council's plans for Staines.
[Click here](#) for a virtual flight around a specially commissioned 3D digital model of the 'Staines of the future' including the proposed Arora development.

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.

www.riversideresidentsstaines.org.uk

email riverside.residents.staines@gmail.com

FB Riverside Residents Staines