



RESIDENTS' COALITION CALLS FOR ENQUIRY INTO ARORA HOTEL SCHEME

A call for a full enquiry into the provenance and contract for the Arora hotel and apartment scheme in the sensitive riverfront Staines Conservation Area has been lodged today with the Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council. This follows the leak of an internal review into a series of developments and investments by the Council's Officers and former Leadership.

"The leaked report lifts the lid on a pattern of behaviour that we believe is 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," says a spokesperson for the Coalition. "It brings into question the whole Staines Masterplan to pepper the town with tower-bock developments of shoe-box flats. The Arora scheme is a particularly appalling consequence of this and must be stopped. That's why we have written to the Council Leader to call for a full enquiry."

The coalition is demanding the enquiry includes a close examination of:

- The bidding and evaluation process, including the identity of the only other bidder (whose bid was a much closer match in terms of size to the Council's brief).
- The role of the Chief Executive and other Officers in the process and in maintaining its secrecy.
- On what grounds Officers concluded the scheme is compatible with its location in the sensitive riverside Staines Conservation Area (despite being two-and-a-half times the height and several times the mass of anything elsewhere in or close to the Conservation Area).
- Why only four Councillors (the then Leader, his wife and two others appointed by the Leader) were involved in or aware of the process and content of the resulting contract before it was signed and announced.
- Why was the contract pushed through an emergency Cabinet meeting at, we believe, very short notice despite protests from Cabinet members that they needed more time to consider the scheme and contract.
- Given its highly controversial features (including its size, location, lease arrangements, financial and other implications) why was the contract not referred to or called in by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- What relationships existed between the Chief Executive and/or the former Leader with the Arora Group prior to the invitation to bid.

Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition – a Working Group of six residents' organisations serving the interests of some 700 residents on both sides of the river. Supported by the Staines Town Society.

www.riversideresidentsstaines.org.uk

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