



Spelthorne Borough Council: Housing Strategy 2020-2025
January 2020

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Introduction and overview of Spelthorne

With excellent transport links, unique employment opportunities, plenty of green open spaces, we believe that Spelthorne is a successful place, where people want to live, work, and visit. However, we recognise that access to a range of appropriate, affordable housing options is vitally important to ensure that we can sustain and build upon that success.

Spelthorne is located on the south-west edge of London and in the north-west of Surrey, neighbouring the boroughs of Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead, Runnymede, Elmbridge, and the London Boroughs of Richmond upon Thames, Hounslow and Hillingdon. The north of the borough borders London Heathrow airport. Spelthorne is densely populated and has five main urban areas: Ashford, Shepperton, Staines-upon-Thames, Stanwell and Sunbury. Outside these urban areas:

- 65% is green belt,
- 30% of the total area is either flood plain or reservoir,
- 17% of the borough is water, and
- We have 12 miles of River Thames frontage.

Almost half of Surrey's 20 most deprived super output areas are in Spelthorne. Three are in the ward of Stanwell North, two in Ashford North and Stanwell South and one in each of Ashford East and Sunbury Common. Spelthorne has the highest number of lone parent families and the highest level of child poverty in Surrey; it also has the highest under-18 conception rate in the county. That said, residents are largely healthy, with life expectancy for both males and females slightly above the national average.

Whilst house prices remain well above the national average, most residents are owner-occupiers (73%), followed by private rented (13%) and social rented (12%).

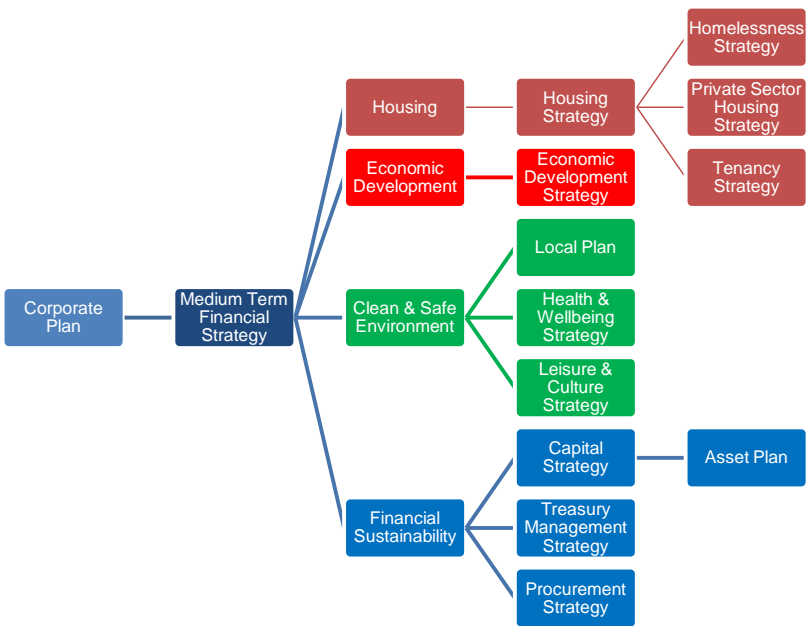
Spelthorne has a slightly lower population of under-30s (34%) compared to the rest of the country (37%), and a slightly higher population of 30-69 year olds (42%) compared with the UK average of (40%). The number of 70+ is 23%, which is broadly in line with the rest of the UK (24%).

Although the number of VAT and/or PAYE-registered business has fallen slightly over the past four years, Spelthorne has a low rate of unemployment: 1.4% of those economically active aged 16 to 64, compared to the South East (2.2%) and UK as a whole (3.5%). Heathrow Airport is a significant local employer, with 8.3% of Spelthorne's working population employed there. Significantly, 21.5% of those in work in Stanwell North are in low level employment compared to an average of 11.6% in Surrey. Average wages are slightly above regional averages at £630 per week for full-time employees.

How the strategy links in with the Council's wider work

Housing is one of the Council's four corporate priorities, and this strategy is the foundation for our approach to meeting our corporate aim:

"To strive towards meeting the housing needs of our residents, providing working families and others in housing need within the Borough with suitable accommodation."



**Note that links above between priorities / strategies do not accurately represent the relationships between the different documents as many strategies interlink with multiple areas of the Council's work.*

The Housing Strategy outlines the way in which Spelthorne will ensure that its work supports the aim of ensuring that we have the types of homes that we need, where we need them, at prices which residents can afford. We recognise that we cannot do this alone, so within the strategy, we set out how we plan to engage with partners and residents to support achieving our aims.

How the strategy was developed

Using grant funding from the Local Government Association through their Housing Advisers Programme, the Council worked with a consultant service to independently review the Council's delivery of affordable housing. This strategy was developed by a working group of elected councillors and relevant council officers, which considered the findings from the report.

Spelthorne Housing Strategy 2014-2019: Review of Action Plan

Strategic priority 1: Increase the supply of new homes and improve the tenure mix especially the provision of private rented accommodation

No.	What we said we would do	How we said we would do it	What progress we have made
1.1	Increase the supply of new homes	Encourage registered provider partners and private developers to develop and manage new homes in the borough.	Encouraging registered providers to develop outside of s106 sites remains a challenge due to the high cost, and availability, of land locally. Historically, we haven't been very proactive in engaging with RPs. A2Dominion are the only registered provider who have recently engaged in non-s106 development within Spelthorne. These developments yielded six affordable rented houses locally.
		Develop and maintain a pipeline supply of development sites in the Local development plan.	The Strategic Planning team is progressing the Local Plan in accordance with the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme. The team is currently assessing all possible sites, for allocation in the new plan, primarily for housing development to meet our identified needs. We will be consulting on this work and the draft plan in October 2019.
		Work with partners to identify requirements for specialist housing	As above, work on the new Local Plan is progressing. Once potential

		and ensure requirements are included in Local development plans.	housing allocations have been identified, the Strategic Planning team will be working with the Housing team, developers and affordable housing providers to assess the need for and quantum of specialist housing that can be delivered on specified sites and included within the Local Plan.
1.2	Develop a SBC housing company or Special Purpose vehicle for the purpose of developing new affordable homes for rent	Identify SBC landholdings that could be used for the development of new homes.	Knowle Green Estates was set up in May 2016 following the purchase of Harper House in Ashford. Since then, the Assets team has significantly expanded it's portfolio, and is currently working on six sites which will yield 283 privately rented homes, a number of which will be available to the Council's housing department for nomination. Overall, KGE has ambitious plans to deliver approximately 20% of the borough's housing need over the next five years, subject to planning.
		Commission a study on the options for developing a SBC housing company.	
		On the basis of the options, move to develop a starter scheme.	

Strategic priority 2: Improve the quality of existing homes

No.	What we said we would do	How we said we would do it	What progress we have made
2.1	Ensure that all social housing landlords comply with the decent homes standard.	Seek confirmation from all operating registered providers on their compliance with the decent homes standard and their timetable for achieving the standard.	<p>As of 1 April 2018, there is one property in the borough which fails the decent homes standard. We are engaged with the landlord of that property to resolve this.</p> <p>The Council's Environmental Health department has worked with social landlords to ensure that social homes achieve the decent homes standard. To April 2019, Environmental Health have assisted in ensuring 48 social homes brought to their attention achieve the standard.</p>
2.2	Develop a comprehensive Private Sector Housing strategy and implementation plan.	Private sector strategy and action plan agreed by Cabinet.	The Private Sector Housing Strategy was adopted in 2014, and has a strategy action plan which is reviewed by the Environmental Health service.
2.3	Improve access to the private rented homes in order to prevent homelessness, and to discharge the housing duty into the private rented sector.	Develop a local lettings agency to offer management services to the private rented sector.	<p>The Rent Assure Scheme was set up in 2016 to offer competitive market rent to landlords who offer their properties to the Council for homeless families for at least two years. This was in addition to the pre-existing Bond Scheme which was set up in 2007.</p> <p>Number of households housed via Rent Assure: 2016/17: 5 2017/18: 26</p>

			<p>2018/19: 48</p> <p>To April 2019, there are 59 landlords signed up to the rent assure scheme, across 78 properties.</p> <p>In addition, the Bond Scheme has supported a total of 90 households to access the private rented sector.</p> <p>2014/15: 38 2015/16: 21 2016/17: 29 2017/18: 1 2018/19: 1</p>
2.4	Maintain commitment to bringing empty homes back into use.	Bring 15 homes back into use through interventions.	<p>Aside from the statutory Council Tax collection function, there is currently no dedicated resource to supporting empty property owners bringing their properties back into use. Until March 2015, there was a 0.2 FTE resource, funded through grant, to work on Empty Homes. Since that grant funding ended, there has been no resource available to progress this action through enforcement.</p> <p>Number of homes brought back to use:</p> <p>2014/15: 5 2015/16: 0 2016/17: 0 2017/18: 0</p>

			2018/19: 0
		Increase the levels of enforcement action and ensure that potential CPOs are pursued.	<p>There is currently no enforcement action taken against the owners of empty homes. Spelthorne has issued no CPOs to date.</p> <p>2014/15: 0 2015/16: 0 2016/17: 0 2017/18: 0</p>

Strategic priority 3: Prevent homelessness

No.	What we said we would do	How we said we would do it	What progress we have made
3.1	Develop and adopt a comprehensive homelessness strategy that is compliant with the 'Gold standard'.	Homelessness strategy and action plan agreed by Cabinet.	<p>The existing 14-19 strategy was commissioned at Cabinet on 15 July 2014, with the final version approved by Cabinet on 30 September 2014.</p> <p>Due to workload pressures at the time, SBC never underwent a peer review in advance of applying for the Gold standard. In any event, the Gold standard programme is now obsolete following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and to be replaced with a new NPSS self-assessment tool.</p>
3.2	Develop a local lettings agency	Develop a local lettings agency to offer management services to the private rented sector.	To date, no management service has been set up for the Rent Assure scheme, but is something which is being actively considered by the Housing Options team. Given that in order to be competitive, the

			management service would need to cost very little to the landlord, the investment required to set up such a service, including rent accounting systems, and repairs contracts for example, generally make it cost-prohibitive presently.
3.3	Agree a policy that enables the discharge of the homelessness duty into the private sector	Agree policy.	Policy to enable to discharge of the homelessness duty into the private sector was approved at the same time as the Homelessness Strategy in September 2014.
		Communication strategy in place to enable the rollout of the strategy and to increase public awareness of the role of the housing options team.	The Housing Options team make all applicants aware that any duty accepted could be discharged into the private rented sector, and that there should be no assumption that a homelessness duty results in an offer of social housing.
3.4	Devise housing pathways for vulnerable households and individuals	Through the SBC Housing Forum, work with partners to identify vulnerable groups and to devise 'care pathways' to support their housing needs.	As a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Council is required to have pathway plans for a number of different client groups including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) persons released from prison or youth detention accommodation, b) care leavers, c) former members of the regular armed forces, d) victims of domestic abuse, e) persons leaving hospital,

			<p>f) persons suffering from a mental illness or impairment, and</p> <p>g) any other group that the authority identify as being at particular risk of homelessness in the authority's district.</p> <p>These pathway plans have been created in partnership with the relevant partner agency, and are 'living documents' which can evolve in time.</p>
3.5	Seek to end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.	Through the work of the Housing Options team and the local lettings agency ensure that all homeless applicants, or those vulnerable to becoming homeless are directed to PRS accommodation.	<p>Given the rise in homelessness locally and nationally, the continued rise in the costs of privately renting accommodation, and the desire of private landlords to convert their properties to 'nightly paid' accommodation – which is much more profitable for the landlord, but much more costly for the Council – achieving the aim of ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation remains a significant challenge.</p> <p><u>Number of different placements:</u> 2014/15: 115 2015/16: 146 2016/17: 126 2017/18: 149 2018/19: 135</p>

			<p><u>The number of all placements (including moves) in B&B over the past five years has been:</u></p> <p>2014/15: 138 2015/16: 213 2016/17: 200 2017/18: 233 2018/19: 219</p> <p><u>The average length of stay in B&B over the past five years has been:</u></p> <p>2014/15: 33 weeks 2015/16: 30 weeks 2016/17: 23 weeks 2017/18: 27 weeks 2018/19: 18 weeks</p>
3.6	Develop a three borough response to providing winter shelters.	Develop a project, including external funding to provide a winter shelter	<p>Each year, SBC contribute towards the cost of Transform Housing & Support running a winter shelter.</p> <p>2014/15 – Whiteley Village, Hersham (£5,000 SBC contribution) 2015/16 – Fairways, Staines-upon-Thames (£5,000 SBC contribution) 2016/17 – Fairways, Staines-upon-Thames (£5,000 SBC contribution) 2017/18 – Hersham Road, Walton-on-Thames (no SBC contribution)</p> <p>Unfortunately in 2017/18, the winter shelter had to close early as a result of staffing shortages. As a result, there was no financial contribution from SBC in this year. SBC are</p>

			currently reviewing their role in the winter shelter project.
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Strategic priority 4: Support residents to access affordable, well-managed market rent and social rented properties (only includes elements not covered in action plan above)

No.	What we said we would do	How we said we would do it	What progress we have made
4.1	Ensure that all residents approaching the Council for housing advice receive comprehensive advice on options including moving outside the borough.	Continue to provide specialist training and approach for SBC staff.	Everyone approaching the Council for housing advice receive a comprehensive initial assessment of housing need. During this appointment, all options are discussed and include options such as re-locating. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, SBC is required to complete a written assessment of housing need for everyone who is assessed as eligible and either threatened with homelessness, or actually homeless. This has bolstered the service offer given to clients.
4.2	Ensure full implementation of the Council's policy on discharge of homelessness duty into the PRS.	Consult with partners and appropriate agencies to the changes with the policy and implement.	<p>The policy has been in place since 2014, and all clients are made aware that any accepted duty can be discharged into the private rented sector. Over the past few years, we have achieved the following numbers of discharges into the PRS, either through Rent Assure or the Bond Scheme:</p> <p>2014/15: 38 2015/16: 21 2016/17: 34 2017/18: 27 2018/19: 49</p>

4.3	Ensure all social housing tenancies in the borough are let through choice based lettings and let on fixed term tenancies.	Implement of new scheme via our system Locata	<p>All social housing vacancies are let through the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme, which was most recently updated in 2018. The current scheme allows for direct lets of accommodation to be made in certain circumstances. Aside from those circumstances, all other vacancies, to which the Council have nomination rights, are let through choice based lettings.</p> <p>The tenure on offer to applicants depends on the relevant landlord's policy, although they must have regard to SBC's Tenancy Strategy which was last updated in 2012.</p>
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The national context and our current housing challenges

Whilst housing is one of our corporate priorities, a number of factors influence our ability to deliver our housing vision for Spelthorne. Many of these are as a result, both directly and indirectly, of national government policy and legislation.

The national policy context

Welfare reform has been ongoing since 2009, introducing a wide package of measures to reduce expenditure on benefits, and to promote the concept of 'making work pay'. Such measures have included:

- The overall benefit cap
- Introduction of Universal Credit
- Removal of the spare room subsidy
- Freeze on the Local Housing Allowance rates

Austerity has meant that local government services have received significant funding cuts over the past five years, including to:

- Revenue Support Grants – the money granted to local authorities to fund local services.
- Housing related support services – such as supported accommodation and floating support services, and changes to the way services are commissioned.

Significant changes to the law on homelessness were implemented in April 2018 through the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This piece of legislation amended the legal duties with Spelthorne, as the local housing authority, has towards certain people who find themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness. Changes included:

- Extending the time in which a household is defined as 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 days to 56 days.
- Placing homelessness prevention on a statutory basis regardless of priority need or whether someone may be intentionally homeless.
- Requiring authorities to provide personalised assessments and housing plans in all eligible cases, which contain 'reasonable steps' for both the authority and the applicant to take to prevent or relieve homelessness.

A national review of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is to be undertaken by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in 2019/20, which will assess the effectiveness of the changes in reducing homelessness overall.

In August 2018, the Government released its Rough Sleeping Strategy which set out how it would seek to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminate it by 2027. It makes 61 commitments, which focus on three key themes: prevention, intervention, and recovery. A Delivery Plan was published in December 2018 which provided more detail on how the target would be met.

A range of measures to raise standards in the private rented sector:

- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act which gives tenants the right to take their landlord to court in cases where their rented property poses health risks. The Act applies

to all tenancies created after 20 March 2019, with all existing tenancies being covered from 20 March 2020

- Extension of HMO licencing to include all properties which accommodate five or more people, from two or more separate households.
- Tenant Fees Act 2019 which bans certain letting agent fees, and capping the level of tenancy deposits required. The aim is to reduce the costs that tenants can face in accessing and sustaining a tenancy.
- Proposal to abolish 'no fault' evictions in the private rented sector. Section 21 notices currently allow a landlord to terminate a tenancy without a specific reason, outside of the initial fixed term. A consultation on this proposal is expected in the second half of 2019.

The Spelthorne context

Spelthorne's overall need for housing dominates the list of current housing challenges, fuelled by:

- The level of homelessness and use of temporary accommodation
- Affordability of the private sector
- Demand on the limited supply of social housing
- The limited number of active affordable housing providers

Homelessness

In common with other areas across the country, homelessness has been a growing issue. Since 2009, the numbers of statutorily homeless households has increased significantly¹, although the number has remained relatively stagnant over the past four years.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of statutorily homeless households	123	120	115	116

Over the same period, the average number of households in temporary accommodation per quarter has seen a correspondingly significant increase², meaning that the authority's gross spend on temporary accommodation is now regularly over £1million per year.

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Detailed local authority level homelessness figures. Section 1, Column e11g

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Detailed local authority level homelessness figures. Section 6, Column e69c

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of households in Temporary Accommodation (average per quarter)	104	126	112	103
Gross spend on temporary accommodation	£1,008,185	£1,557,019	£1,250,146	£1,165,946

Affordability and delivery of new affordable housing

Affordability of accommodation remains a serious issue for local residents. The median house price in Spelthorne has increased by 42% over the past five years³, to £385,000⁴. With a median annual salary of £35,404, a local resident would need over 11 times this amount to purchase an average home on the open market⁵.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
House prices: median price of dwellings sold in the year (Spelthorne)*	£299,950	£338,000	£390,000	£385,000
Median full-time wages (Spelthorne)**	£32,925	£34,066	£34,997	£35,404
Ratio median house price to median wage (Spelthorne)**	8.5	9.39	10.42	11.16

*House price data is recorded quarterly, and so an average across the financial year has been calculated.

**The affordability ratio and income data is recorded annually, and so the three datasets may not necessarily correspond.

Delivery of affordable housing has also been sluggish over the past four years, with only nine affordable dwellings completed in the 2017/18 financial year⁶.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Affordable dwellings completed (Net)	-27	124	46	9

This performance pales in comparison to the need. The Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update Report, prepared for the purposes of revising the Council's Local Plan, suggests an overall need of 459 additional affordable homes per year to 2035 – the vast majority being affordable or social rented instead of affordable home ownership⁷.

³ House prices: ONS, House price statistics for small areas, Datasets 9 and 24

⁴ House prices: ONS, House price statistics for small areas, Datasets 9 and 24

⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Live Table 577: ratio of median house price to median earnings by district, from 1997

⁶ SBC Authority Monitoring Report 2018

⁷ SBC SHMA Update May 2019, prepared by GL Hearn

Supply and demand of existing affordable rented housing

The availability of existing social housing stock is severely limited. In 2017/18, there were eleven applicants for every social housing vacancy, on average⁸, over double the levels from four years prior.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number on Housing Register as at 1 April	1,224	1,598	1,869	2,186
Number of lettings	209	249	197	199
Ratio applicants to vacancies	6:1	6:1	9:1	11:1

An additional pressure is that over 90% of the social housing stock is with one provider, A2Dominion⁹, which results in us being overly-reliant on that provider's policies and activities. There is also a disproportionately high presence of large providers, with only one provider classified as 'small' (owning less than 1,000 units).

PRP name	Size of organisation	General needs, self-contained social stock	% of overall stock in area
A2Dominion South Limited	Large	4438	90.41%
Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing	Large	250	5.09%
London & Quadrant Housing Trust	Large	95	1.94%
Paragon Asra Housing Limited	Large	86	1.75%
Catalyst Housing Limited	Large	34	0.69%
Ability Housing Association	Small	3	0.06%
Notting Hill Genesis	Large	2	0.04%
Mount Green Housing Association Limited	Large	1	0.02%
Total		4909	

It's important to note that A2Dominion's stock in Spelthorne accounts for roughly 25% of its low cost rented accommodation stock across its entire portfolio, with more than twice as many properties in Spelthorne as the next highest stock holding area in the London Borough of Ealing¹⁰.

⁸ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Live Table 600: numbers of households on local authorities' housing waiting lists, by district: England, and in-house recording

⁹ Regulator for Social Housing Statistical Data Release 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistical-data-return-2017-to-2018>

¹⁰ Regulator for Social Housing Statistical Data Release 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistical-data-return-2017-to-2018>

Local Authority	No. of low rented homes
Spelthorne	4,435
Ealing	1,985
Hounslow	1,408
Hillingdon	1,238
Bromley	913

Welfare reform

The government's ongoing roll-out of welfare reform policies through the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 is affecting the way in which the Council can respond to local housing pressures.

Local Housing Allowance rate freeze

Local Housing Allowance was implemented in April 2007 and is the system for calculating housing benefit entitlement for tenancies in the private rented sector. The amount of LHA is calculated based on the 30th percentile of local rents in the local area. Since 2016, the levels of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) have been frozen, and will remain frozen until at least 2020. This, coupled with the fact that in the years before the freeze was implemented, the increases in LHA did not keep pace with market levels, means that there are large shortfalls between market rents and the LHA. Spelthorne is mentioned specifically in research published by Shelter in 2017, as at that time it was an authority with one of the top ten biggest shortfalls between LHA and market rents for both families needing two bedrooms, and single people or couples needing just one bedroom¹¹.

Using data from the Valuation Office Agency data from December 2018, lower quartile rents per month are higher than LHA levels by up to £139 per month, for all property sizes except for four bedroom properties.

¹¹ Shelter: Analysis: Local Housing Allowance Freeze, March 2017. Retrieved from: https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1349012/Final_LHA_analysis.pdf

	Lower Quartile rent, pcm	LHA level	Shortfall
Room only	£525	£390	-£135
1-bedroom	£875	£774	-£101
2-bedrooms	£1,100	£961	-£139
3-bedrooms	£1,200	£1,199	-£1
4-bedrooms	£1,550	£1,658	£108

Source: Valuation Office Agency Private rental market summary statistics: October 2017 to September 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-october-2017-to-september-2018--2>

Benefit cap

The government now has an overall limit of how much any single household can receive in welfare. In 2019/20, this amount is set as £20,000 for couples and families with dependent children, and £13,400 for single person households. As of February 2019, there were 102 households resident in Spelthorne who have been capped, with amounts of up to £200 per week deducted from their benefit allowances. 84% of these are single-parent households, and 64% of these have more than one child.¹²

Universal credit

The replacement of a range of 'legacy' benefits into one monthly payment, with the claimant being responsible for paying their housing costs represents a massive culture shift from the previous welfare system. All of Spelthorne is covered by Staines Job Centre Plus, which started a rollout of Universal Credit to new claimants as from November 2018. As of February 2019, there were 805 households claiming Universal Credit, of which 61% were not in employment¹³. This number will continue to rise until the end of the managed migration of all welfare claimants onto Universal Credit, which is currently scheduled for 2023.

Research undertaken by the Residential Landlords Association (RLA) in October 2018 found that 61% of landlords had experienced a tenant on Universal Credit going into arrears in the previous twelve months, up from 27% in 2016, and 38% in 2017. The amount owed to landlords was £2,390 on average, with 77% of possession claims involving a tenant on Universal Credit being primarily as a result of rent arrears¹⁴.

Further research, published by the DWP in July 2018, suggested that Universal Credit was having a direct effect on claimants' ability to maintain rent payments:

"Slightly more than one third of claimants receiving UC payments towards their housing costs were in arrears in both surveys (36 per cent in Wave 1 and 35 per cent in Wave 2).

¹² DWP Benefit Cap Statistics: Households capped to February 2019 (2 May 2019)

¹³ DWP Universal Credit statistics: claims, monthly starts and people on Universal Credit up to 14 March 2019, Table 3.2 People on Universal Credit by employment and Local Authority, February 2019 to March 2019

¹⁴ Simcock, T.J., (2018). Investigating the effect of Welfare Reform on Private Renting. Manchester: UK. Residential Landlords Association. Retrieved from: <https://research.rla.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/investigating-effect-welfare-reform-private-renting.pdf>

Among those who were in arrears, two thirds (65 per cent) said they fell into debt after they made their claim for UC.”¹⁵

Austerity

In line with other local authorities across the country, financial austerity is affecting the delivery of many local services. As a lower tier authority, Spelthorne is particularly sensitive to the financial situation of Surrey County Council. As reported in our Capital Strategy recently, the cost of offsetting budgetary cuts at county level is approaching £500,000.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

As part of ongoing work on the new Local Plan for Spelthorne, a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was carried out in April 2018. This study identified the needs for up to 34 new Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots for the period up to 2041. How the Council will approach meeting this need will be contained within the new Local Plan.

Local Community Infrastructure

We recognise the community concern around the need for local community infrastructure alongside the delivery of new homes. This matter is dealt with as part of the Local Plan work carried out by the Council's Strategic Planning team. Much of the infrastructure needed to support the Local Plan will be identified through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and the Staines Masterplan. These studies will consider the Borough's infrastructure requirements including social, physical and green and blue infrastructure. They will set out what is needed, where it is needed and when it is needed.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a levy that local authorities can choose to charge on new development in their area. Spelthorne started levying CIL on new developments from 1 April 2015. The money raised through CIL can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure projects.

Most types of key infrastructure are the responsibility of bodies such as Surrey County Council, the NHS and other utility providers. In order to work effectively with Infrastructure providers we set up the Infrastructure Advisory Group, known as the IAG in early 2018. This group is made up of key officers and stakeholders who come in to discuss infrastructure provision. The purpose of IAG includes:

- To provide a forum for joint working on infrastructure projects and funding between officers across different teams within Spelthorne Borough Council, Surrey County Council and other infrastructure providers/partners
- To review bids and informal expressions of interest for CIL expenditure and other funding sources
- To make informal recommendations on future spend from CIL and S.106 monies

¹⁵ DWP Universal Credit Full Service Survey by IFF Research. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/714842/universal-credit-full-service-claimant-survey.pdf

- To provide updates to Management Team on infrastructure funds, spending and future projects
- To advise the CIL Task Group of the Group's informal recommendations for spending CIL
- To use the Group's activities to inform the new Local Plan and the associated Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Since 2018, the IAG have met with a number of key infrastructure providers including Highways, Education and the local Clinical Commissioning Group. As a result, we have now published our 'bidding form' online and the CIL Task Group is now able to consider bids for CIL funding.

The CIL Task Group is established for Councillors and Officers to work jointly and collaboratively to advise the Spelthorne Joint Committee on CIL and make recommendations on bids for CIL monies allocated to it by the Borough Council. The membership of the Task Group includes:

- Strategic Planning Manager (Chair)
- The Borough Council Portfolio holder for Planning and Economic Development
- A County Councillor for the Spelthorne Division who will be the Chairman of the Joint Committee where the Chairman is a County Councillor or the Vice Chairman where the Vice Chairman is a County Councillor

Other officer representatives from either the Borough Council or County Council may be invited to provide advice to the Task Group but they have no voting rights.

Empty homes

As of May 2019, there were a total of 423 empty homes in Spelthorne.

Period	Empty Properties
1-6 Months	78
6-12 Months	125
12-24 Months	156
24 + Months	64
Total	423

Source: in-house monitoring

Category	Properties	Longest Empty (months)
Empty Uninhabitable/Major Works	20	147
Empty Unoccupied & Unfurnished	26	15
Long Term Empty - Class C	311	23
Long Term Empty Premium	66	453

Source: in-house monitoring

Aside from the statutory Council Tax collection function, there is currently no dedicated resource to supporting empty property owners bringing their properties back into use. Until March 2015, there was a 0.2 FTE resource, funded through grant, to work on Empty Homes. Since that grant funding ended, there has been no resource.

With a total dwelling stock of approximately 42,000 in the borough, the current level of empty properties suggests that approximately 1% of the borough's properties are empty – although this would also include properties which would ordinarily be brought back into use without Council intervention. Whilst as a percentage this is low, when considered against the level of emergency accommodation use, and the numbers on the Housing Register, it becomes more significant.

Another point to note is that the 66 Long Term Empty Premium properties are those which are unfurnished and unoccupied, and have done so for at least the last two consecutive years. Whilst the numbers are relatively small in comparison to total dwelling stock, bringing this number of properties back to use would provide significant opportunities for the Council to support homeless households.

Heathrow expansion

Some joint work has already been undertaken across a number of Councils to understand the potential impact on Heathrow on the need for additional housing. Early indications are that it will not have a significant impact on the need for additional permanent housing in the longer term. Any emerging data will be fed into the strategy as required. However, there will be shorter term impacts from construction workers who require accommodation for the term of the expansion (up to 2050) which may affect the ability of the Council to access the private sector market as readily.

Our strategic priorities for the next five years

Priority 1: Enabling the delivery of more affordable homes

We need to make sure that our residents can access accommodation which meets their needs. We know that house prices and many private rents are at points which are out of reach to many who make valuable contributions to our community. We know that people in housing need have to wait far too long on our housing register before they are considered for affordable housing. We will therefore work to enable the delivery of more affordable homes. We have already taken the decision to use Knowle Green Estates where appropriate to support the delivery of new homes. What we need to ensure is that we support the delivery of a wide range of tenure options. We will support Knowle Green Estates to deliver a range of tenure options which meet the needs of local residents. These will include:

- **Emergency** accommodation to support local people who find themselves homeless. This will generally be accommodation on a very short term, usually nightly, basis. We will seek for this accommodation to be dispersed across the borough to ensure that local neighbourhoods are sustainable.
- **Temporary** accommodation to support homeless people on a more medium term basis, whilst other longer term options are explored. We would expect this to be offered on an assured shorthold basis. Whilst we would seek to disperse this accommodation throughout the borough, there is traditionally more stability in this tenure option when compared with emergency accommodation.
- **Affordable** private rented which will provide assured shorthold tenancies let at up to 80% of market rental levels, as per the Government's guidelines, and where possible capped at Local Housing Allowance levels. Initially, these tenancies will be offered to those moving on from temporary accommodation, and those owed a duty under homelessness legislation. We will seek to deliver this type of accommodation through the purchase of s106 affordable housing units on housing developments. The Council's vehicle for doing so is, in which case via Knowle Green Estates. Those units purchased under s106 is under a will legally remain obligation to retain the units as affordable private rented housing in perpetuity. as This will well as on also include land-led developments where the Council will 'voluntarily' be providing affordable housing outside of any legal obligation to do so.
- **Private** rented accommodation on schemes, let at market rates. This accommodation will be offered on an assured shorthold basis.
- **Key worker** housing, through an in-depth study on the demand for such accommodation locally. We would anticipate that any such accommodation is offered on an assured shorthold tenure, at rents up to 90% of market levels, with schemes reserved for certain categories of public sector employees.

How we will achieve this

- Working with Knowle Green Estates to develop its tenure offer (as above), as well as using initiatives such as One Public Estate to unlock land opportunities, maximising the number of units delivered.
- Engaging with Registered Providers in a more proactive way, encouraging new providers to the area, reviewing the use of lettings policies and looking again at our Tenancy Strategy to ensure that social landlords are offering tenures which meet local need.

- Set up agreements with Registered Providers so that where they seek to dispose of affordable housing locally, that the Council is offered first refusal on any sale.
- Developing our approach to planning viability, making sure our staff and elected members maximise the number of affordable homes being provided in new developments, and ensure that they are equipped to robustly challenge developers who do not deliver affordable housing policy compliant schemes.
- ~~Reviewing-Ensuring our future s106 agreements~~ ~~agreements to make sure that they~~ meet local housing need, and support the Council's strategies on affordable housing.
- Reviewing the Council's approach to bringing empty homes back into use, including looking into the merits of an incentive scheme.
- Develop our approach to shared ownership as a tenure, to make sure that local households in housing need are prioritised for new schemes.
- Identifying the level of need for specific types of accommodation, such as disabled adapted, dispersed or accommodation for larger families, and developing an acquisition / delivery programme.
- Working with Knowle Green Estates to establish the demand for key worker accommodation locally, to address both current and future needs.

Priority 2: Promoting independence and wellbeing

We know that we have an ageing population, and that there are huge social and economic benefits of supporting people to remain living independently in their own homes, rather than moving to residential care. We already have a number of services available to local residents to support them to retain independence and promote wellbeing. We want to include these services within our wider strategy of creating sustainable and affordable housing options for local residents.

How we will achieve this

- Reviewing the number, level and location of supported accommodation in the area.
- Work with Surrey County Council to review and progress the offer for Extra Care locally, and the scope for the development of further schemes.
- Promote the Disabled Facilities Grant service, and work with partners to lever in resources to further fund and deliver the scheme.
- Review the Spelthorne Personal Alarm Network service offer.
- Work with partner agencies and housing providers to support efforts with hospital discharge programmes.

Priority 3: Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping

Homelessness has remained a significant issue for Spelthorne, particularly in the face of growing rents, a limited amount of social housing stock, and out-of-reach house prices. We will work to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping through a range of measures which will be detailed more specifically in our Homelessness Strategy.

How we will achieve this

- Reviewing the Council's Homelessness Strategy.
- Developing our service offer to meet the needs of homeless people, particularly those who are single and childless, and those with multiple and complex needs.
- Maintaining a prevention focussed housing options service, and looking to introduce new ways of working where they have been successful in other authorities.
- Make best use of existing social housing stock, and working with social housing providers to ensure that their service offer is appropriately meeting the needs of those in housing need.
- Ensuring our offer to private sector landlords is competitive, robust, affordable, and suitable.
- Working with Surrey County Council to sustain the existing level of housing-related support.

Delivery and monitoring of the strategy

Action Plan

Priority 1: Enable the delivery of more affordable homes across a range of tenures

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
	Review the Council's Tenancy Strategy	Social landlords are offering tenures which meet local need.	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	December 2020	
	Review the Knowle Green Estates Tenancy Strategy, in response to the review of the SBC Tenancy Strategy to incorporate the range of tenure options needed.	Knowle Green Estates delivers the types of homes most in need.	Residential Estates & Facilities Manager <u>Property & Development Manager</u> ; Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	July 2020	
	Set up disposal protocols for Registered Providers with stock in Spelthorne.	The Council safeguards affordable housing in the borough.	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	June 2020	
	Secure Investment Partner Status of Spelthorne Borough Council with Homes England	Secure ability to received grant funding for housing delivery.	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	March 2020	
	Agree tenancy and management arrangements for Knowle Green Estates properties delivered as affordable housing.	To ensure service delivery meets or exceeds competitor's service.	Group Head Regeneration & Growth; Group Head Community Wellbeing	July 2020	

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
	Develop a procurement framework for the housing delivery programme	To procure under the housing delivery programme efficiently.	Property & Development Manager; Corporate Procurement Manager	June 2021	
	Develop a Housing Charter and set up an Annual Housing Summit with A2Dominion.	Relationships between the Council and A2Dominion at a senior level are maintained and feed into a bi-annual operational liaison.	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	June 2020	
	Set-up six monthly operational liaison meetings with relevant departments within A2Dominion.	Relationships between the Council and A2Dominion at an operational level are maintained and developed.	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	December 2020	
	Hold meetings with five g320 Registered Providers to encourage them to develop in the area.	A more diverse range of RPs are attracted to develop in Spelthorne.	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager; Property & Development Manager	December 2020	
	Create a Shared Ownership Strategy to equip the Council to make the most effective use of the quantity of shared ownership coming forward from housing associations . To include:	Local residents in housing need are prioritised for shared ownership schemes.	Housing Strategy & Policy Officer	December 2020	

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant pPriority framework for Registered Providers to follow. • To develop relationships with Registered Providers on re-sales. • Exploring the merits of a financial incentive scheme for households vacating social rented housing in Spelthorne. 				
	Establish a working group involving key worker sectors, and housing providers, to investigate the demand for key worker housing in Spelthorne.	Key workers are prioritised for local housing.	Housing Strategy & Policy Officer	March 2020	
	Develop an Empty Property Scheme to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • joint working protocols with relevant internal and external stakeholders. • the creation of an up to date and comprehensive database of empty properties, with established procedures to maintain an accurate database going forward. • the circumstances in which the Council will use the powers of enforced sale, compulsory purchase and empty dwelling management 	Interventions and resources are targeted effectively. To provide a balanced approach to the different requirements of individual empty properties.	Housing Strategy & Policy Officer; Senior Environmental Health Manager	September 2021	

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
	<p>orders, using an objective risk-based approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> financial incentives such as grants to owners of empty properties to encourage their renovation and use as residential accommodation for people in housing need. consideration of financial disincentives, such as increased Council Tax premiums. the benefits of working in partnership with an established housing provider. opportunities for cross-boundary joint working. 				
	Produce an information pack for owners of empty properties, downloadable from the Council's website.	Easily accessible and understandable information may assist with owners taking a proactive independent approach.	Housing Strategy & Policy Officer; Environmental Health	September 2021 ¹⁹	
	Run a publicity campaign highlighting the problem of empty properties and the council's approach to reducing them.	Increased number of residents and stakeholders will be aware of the	Housing Strategy & Policy Officer; Environmental Health	January 2022 ²⁴	

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
		strategy leading to increased uptake of empty properties initiatives			
	Carry out a comprehensive review of our standard s106 agreements and nomination agreements to include, where possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pre-emption rights for Knowle Green Estates to be able to purchase affordable housing provided through s106 agreements affordable rents capped at LHA 	Ensure that forthcoming affordable housing meets local need and supports the Council's strategies on affordable housing	Principal Solicitor; Housing Strategy & Policy Manager; Property & Development Manager; Planning Development Manager	March 2020	
	Explore what steps we can take to improve our approach to planning viability.	We robustly challenge developers who fail to deliver affordable housing policy compliant schemes.	Planning Development Manager; Group Head Regeneration & Growth	June 2020	

Priority 2: Promote independence and wellbeing to enable people to remain in their homes

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
	Carry out a comprehensive supported housing needs analysis in partnership with	We have the right number of supported homes	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	December 2020	

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
	current housing providers and commissioners, to include Extra Care.	in the right place with the right amount of support in the right locations			
	Carry out a fundamental review of the SPAN service offer to future-proof the existing service and become an innovator in the use of new technology.	<p>Increase in subscribers by 15% over the course of three years</p> <p>Reduction in the number of calls going to call monitoring by 20% over five years with the addition of extra telehealth services.</p>	Senior Manager Independent Living	August 2020	
	<p>Review our DFG Policy to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the provision of additional services which enable people to live independently b) exploring opportunities around how DFG is spent c) a reflection of the Surrey Heartlands Digital Strategy d) methods of recycling grant and/or kit 	A policy in place by April 2021	Senior Manager Independent Living	April 2021	

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
	a joined up service offer with health and social care				
	Integrate hospital discharge with CCG social prescribing initiative, including the Ashford Hub, and the use of Homesafe packs.	Reduction in hospital re-admissions (measured by CCG)	Senior Manager Independent Living	Report progress to Health & Wellbeing Board by May 2020.	
	Establish access to EMIS to enable a holistic social prescribing service for residents.	Social prescribers can access appropriate information efficiently and provide an excellent service	Senior Manager Independent Living	December 2019	
	Carry out a review of the local service offer for Independent Living services, improve the mapping and signposting of local offers. This will include a needs analysis to determine any gaps which need to be filled.	Residents are able to access independent living services which are relevant to them.	Senior Manager Independent Living	March 2020	

Priority 3: Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
	Complete a comprehensive review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy	Appropriate efforts are made to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping. To be legally compliant.	Housing Strategy & Policy Officer	New strategy in place by April 2020	

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
	Carry out an annual lettings review to identify and inform any changes which may be needed to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.	Those most in housing need can access social housing. Advancing equality of opportunity.	Housing Strategy & Policy Officer	Annually from December 2020	
	Work with A2Dominion to carry out a review of age-restricted accommodation in Spelthorne.	To ensure that the designation of social housing is in line with the demographics of those seeking it.	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	September 2020	
	Review the Council's private rented sector offers to ensure value for money, whilst also attracting landlords to offer their properties to us.	To promote the use of private rented accommodation for homelessness prevention and relief. The Council obtains value for money.	Group Head Community Wellbeing	Ongoing, in time for 2021/22 budget preparations.	
	Lobby Surrey County Council for a continuation of the level of funding provided for housing-related floating support in Spelthorne.	To safeguard the Council from an increase in cost transference from Surrey CC.	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	Ongoing, in time for 2021/22 budget preparations.	
	Complete the White House Hostel project which will provide the main supported housing for single homeless, including	To improve the service offer to single people, particularly those with multiple and	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	Occupation by April 2021	

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
	those with multiple and complex needs, including: a) Construction management b) Facilitate the service provider connecting with local service providers c) Securing funding from Homes England	complex needs, supporting them to move onto independent living in settled accommodation. To meet statutory obligations.			
	Complete the Harper House rebuild project which will provide the main supported housing for homeless families, including: a) Construction management b) Procurement of new housing management and resident support provider c) Procurement of fixtures and fittings d) Revising relevant occupancy agreements, house rules, and check in/out procedures e) Securing funding from Homes England	Provide good quality accommodation to local homeless families. To improve the move-on journey for families, reducing the length of stay in emergency accommodation.	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	Occupation by April 2021	
	Research and investigate possible ways of implementing choice-based lettings to Knowle Green Estates affordable housing to provide an effective option to prevent or relieve homelessness.	To give residents access to a diverse range of affordable accommodation. To ensure affordable	Housing Strategy & Policy Manager	April 2020	

Number	Task	Aim / Measure	Lead	Timescales	Notes
		housing is allocated to those most in need. To create balanced, sustainable community,			

Monitoring of the strategy

The responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this strategy and its action plan is delegated to the Council's Strategic Housing Group (SHG).

SHG exists to ensure that Spelthorne Borough Council has a focussed strategic approach on housing matters, in order that Spelthorne's housing need is identified and met.

The objectives of SHG are:

- To decide priorities and focus of the group for the coming year.
- Develop strategies for dealing with issues (which may translate into projects to be reviewed).
- To ensure all housing strategies dovetail with other relevant strategies e.g. Asset Management Plan, Capital Strategy, etc.
- Develop and monitor the progress of the Housing Strategy Action Plan.
- Monitor key areas of concern (such as emergency accommodation and shortage of affordable housing) and make strategic decisions on approaches to mitigate the impact.
- To make decisions on operational matters which impact the delivery of strategic priorities.
- To share information on housing and housing-related issues (including changes to legislation).
- To identify and allocate resources to help meet the priorities identified.
- To ensure key politicians and partners are effectively communicated with.
- To receive updates on Knowle Green Estates acquisitions and developments.
- To consider and agree corporate responses to government consultations which directly or indirectly affect housing.

Membership of SHG includes:

- Deputy Chief Executive(s) (Chair)
- Joint Group Heads Community Wellbeing (Vice-Chair)
- Portfolio Holder – Housing
- Portfolio Holder – Investment Portfolio and Management, and Regeneration
- Group Head Regeneration and Growth
- Head of Corporate Governance
- Deputy Group Head Community Wellbeing
- Housing Strategy & Policy Manager
- Housing Options Manager
- Housing Benefits Manager
- Senior Environmental Health Manager
- Accountant (Housing)

SHG meets approximately once per month, and will commit to reviewing the strategy Action Plan at least every quarter, making recommendations and decisions as necessary to ensure the delivery of the strategy.

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Glossary

Bed and Breakfast (B&B) – Accommodation which the Council sources for homeless households to live in whilst more longer term solutions are found. The Council usually pays for these placements on a nightly basis, and it cannot reclaim all of the cost of the placement from either the homeless household or the Government. As a result, it costs the Council a significant amount of money per year to pay for these placements.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) – Monetary grants for property adaptations to meet the needs of a person with a disability which prevents them from otherwise living comfortably day-to-day.

Extra Care - Specialist housing that offers care and support services on-site, generally for those aged 55+. Care levels are usually higher than sheltered accommodation.

g15 – A body which represents the ten largest housing associations in London, including A2Dominion.

g320 – A body which represents smaller housing associations in London, defined as those with fewer than 1000 homes.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 – Legislation introduced to amend the legal duties placed on local authorities with an emphasis on earlier targeted homelessness prevention.

Key worker accommodation – Accommodation let to essential service public sector employees, usually at a discount of 10-20% off market rates.

Knowle Green Estates - A company wholly owned by Spelthorne Borough Council, set up to develop residential accommodation within the borough.

Local Housing Allowance – These rates are used to calculate a tenant's entitlement for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing element. These levels are set by the Government and should be based upon the 30th percentile rents in the local area.

Pathway plans – a detailed support plan developed for persons deemed vulnerable (as outlined in 3.4 of the Housing Strategy 2014-2019 action plan review).

Registered Provider (RP) – Provider of social housing. For example, A2Dominion is a Registered Provider and owns the majority of social housing stock in Spelthorne.

Sheltered accommodation – Accommodation which usually comprises self-contained units with some shared communal spaces. Schemes are generally designed for those aged 55+.

Supported housing – Accommodation that offers additional support. This type of accommodation is not usually age restricted, but specific schemes may be designed for residents with specific needs (i.e. alcohol, mental health).

S106 agreement – A legal agreement usually between a private developer and the Council to secure the delivery of one or more schemes to make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms. Schemes can include on-site or off-site affordable housing, play areas, travel vouchers or public transport initiatives.

Temporary accommodation – Accommodation offered to homeless households who are subject to some form of duty under homelessness legislation. In Spelthorne, this is likely to be a 6 month tenancy.

Viability - Process of assessing whether a site is financially viable, by looking at whether the value generated by a development is more than the cost of developing it. This includes looking at the key elements of gross development value, costs, land value, landowner premium, and developer return.