



To:
All members of the
Corporate Policy and Resources
Committee

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Date: 23 June 2023

Supplementary Agenda

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee - Monday, 26 June 2023

Dear Councillor

I enclose the following items which were marked 'to follow' on the agenda for the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee meeting to be held on Monday, 26 June 2023:

- 8. Local Plan Pause - External Review** **3 - 58**
Report to follow.

Yours sincerely

Karen Wyeth
Corporate Governance

To the members of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee

Councillors:

J.R. Sexton (Chair)	J.T.F. Doran	M. Lee
C. Bateson (Vice-Chair)	S.M. Doran	L. E. Nichols
M.M. Attewell	D. Geraci	O. Rybinski
M. Beecher	M. Gibson	K. Rutherford
J.R. Boughtflower	K.M. Grant	H.R.D. Williams
J. Button	K. Howkins	

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Substitute Members: Councillors: D. Clarke, N. Islam, M. Bing Dong, S.A. Dunn,
A. Gale, S.N. Beatty, M. Buck and E. Baldock

Corporate Policy and Resources Committees

26 June 2023

Title	<i>Local Plan pause - Review by critical friend</i>
Purpose of the report	To make decisions and a recommendation to Council
Report Author	Management Team, Strategic Planning, Governance, Communications
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	Not applicable
Corporate Priority	Community Affordable housing Environment Service delivery
Recommendations	<p>Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decide whether the vision dated December 2021 should be used as a baseline 'benchmark' vision against which the Regulation 19 Submission version of the Local Plan will be assessed and to make a recommendation to Council to adopt the vision for this purpose. (Appendix B). 2. Decide whether to agree the draft provisional specification of works drawn up by the proposed 'critical friend' for the review (which is subject to Group Leaders' sign off), or whether to stipulate more requirements (Appendix D) 3. Decide whether to issue a direct award contract to Catriona Riddell Associates (CRA) to undertake a review of the Local Plan, or to seek other quotations. 4. Decide whether to give delegated authority to the Chief Executive and the Group Head of Corporate Governance to enter a contract with CRA (if that is the decision of the committee) 5. Decide whether to delegate authority to determine the public consultation strategy (form, structure, timeframes, level of public engagement and associated budget) to the Head of Communications and Customer Experience in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee (CPRC) once the visioning exercise has been completed, or to bring the matter back to CPRC once the visioning report has been finalised.

	<p>6. Decide where the costs for the review and intensive public engagement will come from.</p> <p>7. Decide whether to set a date for the Extraordinary Council meeting for 14 September 2023 in line with the motion agreed at the ECM on 6 June 2023, or another date.</p> <p>8. Note the risk considerations.</p> <p>9. Note the likely position the process will have reached within the three-month timeframe.</p>
<p>Reason for Recommendation</p>	<p><i>A request has been received from four of the five political group leaders that review of the Local Plan is undertaken.</i></p> <p><i>Due to the importance of the issue to our local communities, residents and business, and the interests of full openness and transparency, this matter is being brought to CPRC for councillors to make a decision, and, if minded, to recommend to Full Council the proposed Vision to be formally adopted.</i></p>

1. Summary of the report

- 1.1 Following the Council decision on 6 June 2023 to pause the Examination Hearings for a period of three months, Group Leaders have met and have specified a range of actions ('the proposed actions') they wish to see undertaken to deliver the outcomes outlined in the motion which was agreed at that Council meeting.
- 1.2 The proposed actions raise a number of matters which require clarification and/or a decision by the Committee, which are outlined within the report. The benchmark vision will need to be recommended to full Council for a decision.
- 1.3 The report also outlines challenges around delivering all the proposed actions within the suggested timescale, and the risk this process consequently places on progressing with the current submission version of the Local Plan.

2. Key issues

Background to motion to pause Local Plan

- 2.1 On 6 June 2023 an Extraordinary Council meeting was held to make a decision on a request that the Planning Inspector pauses the Local Plan Examination Hearings (known as EiP) for a period of 4 months to allow new members to be briefed on the Local Plan. It stated:
 - *“That the Planning Inspector pauses the Examination Hearings for a period of four (4) months in order that the new members (councillors) can be fully instructed as to the policies of the Local Plan and the implications on the Borough.”*
- 2.2 The original Motion proposed was amended just prior to meeting and the following was agreed by Council:

- *"Spelthorne Borough Council formally requests the Planning Inspector to pause the Examination Hearings into the Local Plan for a period of three (3) months to allow time for the new council to understand and review the policies and implications of the Local Plan and after the three-month pause the Council will decide what actions may be necessary before the Local Plan examination may proceed."*

Appendix A sets out the background to the recent motions in more detail.

Subsequent feedback from Group Leaders

2.3 Group Leaders (4 of 5) met on 13 June 2023. The Leader subsequently advised the Chief Executive on 15 June of their requirements to deliver the actions outlined in the agreed motion ('the proposed actions').

- *As per our meeting earlier today, the Group Leaders have decided to seek the involvement of a critical friend leading up to this it will be necessary for all councillors to be briefed on the vision we all worked on before it was voted down and the local plan as it is in its current form. These sessions will replace the briefing that [strategic planning were] proposing to make. This process will involve the relevant officers and councillors working in conjunction with the critical friend. The critical friend will be asked to compare the previously agreed vision, set against the local plan that currently stands, the objective is to determine the differentials and advise what course of action is required to be taken to bring them into closer alignment where possible. As discussed, please can you set aside a date for the ECM in September for this matter to come back to full council with regard to the council agreeing next steps.*
- *The ultimate aim of the 3-month pause is to find a way forward for the local plan which:*
 - *Keeps the Examination process 'live' so that the new plan can be delivered as soon as possible and provide certainty for local communities but also for all of those that will have a role in delivering it, including infrastructure providers and developers.*
 - *Ensures (as far as possible) support from all councillors for the plan going forward so that they can feel confident that they are reflecting the views of their local communities and the plan can be considered 'the Council's Plan'.*
 - *Manages the risks for the council, particularly in relation to finance, speculative applications/ unplanned growth, impact on local communities across Spelthorne and government intervention.*
- *To do this we need to:*
 - *Agree a shared vision for Spelthorne, with the Local Plan being a key part of its delivery – this is likely to require an intense period of public engagement during the 3-month period and may require additional resources.*
 - *Assess what (if any) changes to the local plan's strategy would be needed to deliver the vision and whether these could (a) be managed through the Examination process or (b) whether a more fundamental*

change to the plan's strategy is needed. Initiate discussions with the Planning Inspectorate to explore options.

- *If (a) agree what Main Mods would be required in advance of the next stage in the Examination (post three month pause), what new evidence would be required to support this (in addition to the vision) and what evidence would need to be updated.*
- *If (b) agree a new timetable that ensures the plan can be delivered as soon as reasonably possible, taking into account any new/updated evidence needed (this will require a full audit of evidence and identification of any gaps e.g., design codes, flood risk and infrastructure) and public engagement/ consultation.*
- *Prepare a robust risk management process which considers all risks associated with both (a) and (b)*
- *Initiate discussions with neighbouring authorities immediately to consider any cross-boundary implications and with key partners (especially Surrey CC, Environment Agency) to explore further any potential implications for them of a change in strategy.*

2.4 Officers understand the three ultimate aims. We are fully aligned with the desire to keep the Examination process alive and providing certainty, that there is support from councillors for a 'Council' Plan and managing the risks for the Council. Consequently, several matters arise from the proposed actions which require the Committee's consideration. These are primarily around the capacity to deliver within the very tight 3-month window and necessary decisions and actions that need to be taken and delivered on. The Committee should understand all the steps that need to be taken to ensure that the proposed actions from the Group Leaders can be delivered in the way envisaged.

2.5 **Vision** - The Vision for Spelthorne referred to in the proposed actions was previously considered by Full Council on 9 December 2021, but the motion to use it to inform the Local Plan and its policies was not passed (see **Appendix B** for background, vision and strategic objectives). A Committee recommendation to full Council would therefore need to agree to adopt the Vision as a baseline document (to review the Local Plan against) in order to use it as outlined.

2.6 Committee members need to be aware that if, after the visioning process, a revised document which moves away from the 2021 Vision is produced, then the amended Vision would also require a full Council decision to formally adopt it. Committee members should note that the draft provisional specification of works received late afternoon of 22 June 2023 at section 3 (1) states:

- "As a matter of urgency, **revisit the Vision for Spelthorne** previously developed to see whether this still reflects the priorities of the new Council and if not, what needs to change. This will then provide a high level framework within which to test the draft local plan strategy and consider whether it is still appropriate and if not, how significant the changes are likely to be to bring the draft local plan into line with the vision."

- If there are changes to the 2021 Vision as a result of the critical friend visioning exercises, then this may need to go to Council in August (depending on what the outcome of those conversations are).
- 2.7 It is also worth councillors noting the Local Plan already sets out very clearly how it aligns with and will deliver on the five CARES priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021 – 23 (which was adopted by Council). **Appendix C** provides more detail.
- 2.8 **Critical Friend** - Officers agree there is a need to bring Councillors up to speed with the Local Plan process, and indeed offered their full professional support. As the Chief Executive was instructed to cancel the proposed officer briefings and 1-2-1 sessions are not currently taking place, any 'critical friend' that is appointed would need to be confident there is sufficient scope within the proposed 2-3 visioning sessions to bring Councillors up to speed about the Local Plan process (legislative framework), and some basic training on the Spelthorne Local Plan and planning policy, before Councillors can understand the vision and its purpose, and then undertake review of the policies. There are 26 policies in the Local Plan as well as 55 individual proposed sites allocations. This will present a significant challenge within the time available.
- 2.9 Members will need to consider whether the suggestion set out in 2.8 is what they would expect to see as opposed to the provisional draft specification of works (**Appendix D**), which is to:
- “provide an effective challenge role that helps both officers and Members explore all options, including those that have not yet been considered, and determine the key risks. [XXX] will not undertake a forensic analysis of all technical evidence or local plan but will aim to help ensure that all avenues are explored in developing a sound and legally compliant plan that can be supported by the council going forward either through the current process or through a revised process.”
- 2.10 **Specification of work** – the proposed actions outline a range of work to be undertaken by any appointed 'critical friend' but is very high level. A provisional draft specification of works was received late on 22 June 2023. (**Appendix D**). The Committee will need to decide in principle whether they are comfortable with draft specification or whether amendments should be made. A specification of works is necessary to ensure full transparency on the scope/outcomes plus any key performance indicators the consultant is required to achieve and focus discussion at the visioning sessions.
- 2.11 **Procurement of consultant** - Group Leaders have requested the direct appointment of Catriona Ridell Associates (CRA) who undertook the previous visioning work outlined in section 2.3. Officers would normally go out to market to obtain quotations from appropriate consultants for the work outlined in the proposed actions. The Committee will therefore need to decide whether to make a direct appointment in this instance and whether to give delegated authority to the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Group Head of Corporate Governance to enter any contract to appoint CRA (this is on the understanding the contract value would be under £5k).
- 2.12 **Public engagement** – the proposed actions outline the need to enter an intense period of public engagement, and this will need to include all interested parties – communities, residents, businesses, visitors, landowners,

and developers. Committee will need to decide what this intense engagement should involve (e.g., face to face stakeholder engagement, digital and print campaigns and the timeframe). Committee are asked to note the time needed for responses to be received, collated, analysed and reported back on. This is particularly important bearing in mind that we are about to move into the summer holiday period (when many officers, members of the public and other stakeholders are likely to be away) and the resourcing required to undertake this work. It is unlikely that sophisticated, qualitative surveys would be achievable within the timeframes of a three month pause.

- 2.13 Consultations are normally run in-house; however, we do not have the capacity or the technical knowledge to run such an intensive public engagement exercise at this time. There are two options open to the committee:
- If councillors wish to undertake a multi-media consultation with face to face and events, the Committee will need to agree to use an external consultant to undertake the work and identify a budget to be used to fund any additional support required to undertake this work. As an example, the original Leisure Centre consultation that was outsourced in 2018 came in at a significant cost. A Surrey Authority recently outsourced the cost of their communication assets (alone), including digital, video and print collateral for their masterplan, for a cost in the region of £30k.
 - However, if the public engagement strategy was delivered in digital channels only, a limited consultation could take place before the end of September. Committee will need to decide on the form and structure of the engagement as there is currently no direction or understanding of the type of engagement they would like to see enacted and what we are asking stakeholders to respond to.
- 2.14 Committee should note that the Leader has stated that:
- “As mentioned, the easiest way to engage with residents will be via the resident’s associations, setting out 5 key points (wish list) the residents have concerns about and to prioritise these from 1 to 5”.
- 2.15 **Timescales** - Officers agree that it will be essential to keep the examination process ‘live’, otherwise there is an increased risk that it may have to be postponed to a later date and/or that the examination process is stopped altogether, due to the need to draft a new plan with very significant potential additional costs.
- 2.16 Completing all the proposed actions is likely to take more than three months (see outline timetable in section 11). Any extension to the agreed three-month pause would need to go back to Full Council for approval at close to the 6 September as reasonable.
- 2.17 By applying several assumptions, the likely point reached by the beginning of September is one of the four below:
- **either** that the vision exercise and the public engagement only on the consultation will have been completed (assuming a three-week consultation in August). No work will have been done on collating or analysing the responses.

- **or** that the visioning exercise will have been completed by the critical friend and councillors, the intensive engagement strategy will have been developed by the Comms team/or external consultants (with a strategic steer from the Group Leaders to ensure it is reflective of their needs) and the consultation exercise will be ready to start.
- **or** a pared down digital led public consultation could potentially be delivered, dependant on types of questions Committee would like to see being asked, with rudimentary findings reported to Full Council.
- **or** to 'engage with residents will be via the resident's associations, setting out 5 key points (wish list) they residents have concerns about and to prioritise these from 1 to 5'.

3. Options analysis and proposal

The Committee is asked to decide a number of matters arising from the proposed actions:

Vision

3.1 Option 1 - Agree the 'Benchmark' Vision (**Appendix B**)

The 2021 Vision currently has no formal Council status. Whilst it was developed in conjunction with most councillors (under a previous 4-year term), it still 'sits outside the system'. To give the Vision legitimacy as a Council document, Committee must formally recommend it to Council to formally adopt it as a 'Benchmark Vision' against which the Local Plan and its policies can be reviewed (as per the Group Leaders' proposed actions in section 2).

3.2 Option 2 - Not agree the 'Benchmark' Vision

Committee might decide that for reasons of speed and expediency they do not need to agree the Vision on the basis it represented the views of Councillors who sat under the previous 4-year term (who would have attended numerous committee meetings, training sessions and task group meetings).

3.3 Option 3 – agree an alternative 'Benchmark' Vision

It is open to the Committee to decide whether they wish, at this stage, to amend the 2021 Vision so that it is more reflective of the aspiration of the new Council. If the Committee wish to follow this route, then it is recommended they agree the appointment the 'critical friend', hold the visioning session with the express intention of drawing together an alternative vision (there would need to be a different specification of works to cover) At the end of that process, there is the option to bring the alternative Vision back to Council for approval (to lend it legitimacy).

Specification of works

3.4 Option 4 - Agree the provisional draft specification of works (**Appendix D**)

Committee need to decide whether the draft specification of works is sufficiently clear to ensure full transparency on the scope of the work and the anticipated outcomes, and that all councillors are clear about what is expected of them, enabling a focused debate on the right issues. Committee

need to note that there is no mention within the specification of training for new Members. The Committee need to be comfortable that the visioning exercises will be productive. New Members will need to consider whether they are comfortable in attending workshops without a fundamental understanding of the planning process, in the knowledge they will be expected to discuss issues around what the Local Plan should deliver and make key decisions on the future of the currently submitted Plan.

Option 5 – Agree whether additional elements are required for inclusion on the draft specification of works

Members of the Committee may wish to consider whether the specification accurately reflects the original or the amended motion agreed by Council on 6 June and whether they would like to see it amended in any way to incorporate councillor training, in order for them to be brought up to speed with the Local Plan, (which was a key purpose of pausing the hearings as per the motion)

It is also open to members of the Committee to decide whether there are any other elements that they might wish to see included.

Appointment of a ‘critical friend’

3.5 Option 6 - Agree the direct appointment of Catriona Riddell Associates (CRA)

Council have agreed a three month pause to the Examination process to review the policies and implications of the Local Plan. Group Leaders have said they also want to use CRA to undertake a ‘critical friend’ review. The principle of ‘a second opinion’ on the Local Plan in relation to whether it meets the objectives set out in the previously unadopted 2021 Vision is understood (**Appendix B**).

3.6 If this route is taken it is recommended that the Committee authorise the relevant delegations to ensure any contract is entered into in a timely manner (both from an audit and a risk mitigation point of view).

3.7 Option 7 - Agree to seeking quotations from more than one contractor to act as the ‘critical friend’ in accordance with the Council’s Contract Standing Orders.

There are other external bodies who can provide a similar service, including the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) who are linked to Local Government Association (LGA), the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) or the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE). Members of the Committee do have the option to go out to seek quotes from these alternative bodies and undergo what would effectively be a streamlined procurement process (with or without CRA being included to bid for the work).

3.8 If this route is taken it is recommended that the Committee authorise the relevant delegations to ensure any contract is entered into in a timely manner (both from an audit and a risk mitigation point of view).

Public engagement

3.9 Committee will also need to decide on the form, structure and timeframes of the intensive public engagement and how it will resource this.

Extraordinary Council meeting (ECM)

3.10 Option 8 – agree ECM date for 14 September 2023

Members should note that the motion agreed at the ECM on 6 June 2023 was to pause for three months, and to decide what actions may be necessary before the Local Plan examination may proceed. A meeting will need to be held close to the 6 September as practicably possible – Thursday 14 September is being suggested as the most appropriate date (bearing in mind some schools do not go back until the very end of the preceding week and councillors may not be available).

Agreeing a date now will give everyone certainty. It should be noted that the timetable in section 11 clearly sets out the earliest possible place we will have reached in the proposed actions process by that date.

4. Financial implications

4.1 Resourcing the proposed actions

- a. The Strategic Planning team have an allocated budget of £125,000 for the Local Plan for 2023/24 (and the team have already been utilising this budget for EiP costs to date). This figure is based solely on the costs of the EiP (to pay the costs of the examination process, counsel and specialist advisors who need to be available over the EiP), and any other technical work (e.g., 'Modifications') to get to the point of recommending the Local Plan for adoption.
- b. The proposed actions do not have a budget and could result in a Revenue Budget overspend which will need to be funded corporately.
- c. 'Critical friend' costs – It is understood to be £5,000. Last time this exercise was undertaken it came out of a corporate budget.
- d. If any evidence review is to take place before 'vision-setting', this would need to be conducted by an external source. The evidence to support the currently submitted Local Plan has been produced or procured by the Council. The Plan would not have been agreed for submission to the Planning Inspectorate by the Council in 2022 if there were concerns about missing or out of date information. There is no budget for this.
- e. Consultation costs which are estimated could be in the range of £10k to £50k. However, costs are very difficult to quantify at this stage without indication from the Committee on what we are asking stakeholders to engage with, how and when.

4.2 Resourcing any changes to the Local Plan

The 6 June ECM report set out the possible range of financial implications depending on the direction of travel that councillors wished to take. Key information is set out below for ease:

- a. Were the Council to have to refresh its evidence base which is nearing the end of its lifespan (including updating the transport modelling, viability and possibly flooding) we estimate the cost could be around £100k (for which

there is currently no budget). This would be in addition to the costs already incurred to date on the Local Plan.

- b. Over the 6-year period spent getting to this point it is estimated that the figure for consultants, legal advice, and public consultation is around £1m. On a very rough calculation, officer time over the same period is £1.3m.
- c. If we withdrew and took another 2 years to reach the same stage, officer costs alone would be roughly half a million pounds.
- d. Delays to the adoption of the Local Plan are likely to increase the prospect of planning applications coming forwards (on green belt sites in particular). The cost of defending a major appeal at public inquiry will be in the order of £100k per appeal.

In addition, to the above, it is considered that from a resourcing point of view there is a possibility that a landowner or developer (either individually or collectively) may look to bring a judicial review action to the High Court to challenge the Local Plan. There is no budget allocated for this (for comparative purposes the Debenhams judicial review in the High Court has cost the Council just over £100k costs).

If a review of the evidence is necessary after the 'vision-setting', this will need to consider whether the existing evidence base is sufficient to support any changes. If the changes are significant and/or relate to the overall Local Plan strategy, new and/or updated evidence would be required to support a new approach.

5. Risk considerations

- 5.1 Firstly, it is important to note there is full agreement between councillors and officers that there are a lot of uncertainties and that a robust risk management process which considers all risks would be beneficial. The officer team will work with internal audit colleagues to develop this.
- 5.2 At the Council meeting on 6 June 2023, officers reported a substantial number of risks associated with pausing the Local Plan process. Some members will be familiar with these, as they have been reported at numerous meetings. Please see link to the report here. ([Public Pack\)Supplementary Agenda - Extraordinary Council - Request to Pause the Local Plan Examination Agenda Supplement for Council, 06/06/2023 19:00 \(spelthorne.gov.uk\)](#))
- 5.3 Appendix A of that report is replicated here as **Appendix E**, so members of the committee do not need to cross refer to the other report.
- 5.4 Some of the key risks are:
 - a. Alienating some parts of the community who want the plan adopted
 - b. Pressure to meet unmet housing need for adjoining boroughs
 - c. Unsuitable development can come forward on green belt sites

- d. Unsuitable development come forwards in Staines
 - e. Cannot bring forward improvements to key community and health infrastructure
 - f. Cannot deliver higher levels of affordable housing which our residents in housing need deserve
 - g. Cannot give the additional protection, such as zoning, to Staines which would be provided by the Development Framework
- 5.5 The proposed actions which have been brought forward by the Group Leaders have been broken down at a rudimentary level to work out how long the process might realistically take. This is set out in section 11 'Timetable for implementation'. If a three-week consultation period were to take place in August, then officers are collectively indicating a final ECM date of mid-November. If the summer holidays were avoided and the process moved back a month, then a final ECM would be in mid-December.
- 5.6 This means that officers collectively are advising that if the full timetable is agreed, then the 'pause' in the Examination hearings would have to be extended by a further 2 or 3 months minimum.
- 5.7 None of the risks around the pause, or the benefits of continuing with the Examinations, identified in the ECM report of 6 June 2023 have changed. However, the likelihood of some of these risks becoming reality are likely to increase the longer the pause takes. For example, a planning application for a travelling show people site adjacent to Desford Way, Ashford (proposed for allocation in the new Local Plan on a green belt site) has just been validated (Ashford South ward).
- 5.8 It is worth noting that the proposed actions do bring additional risks into the process. Due to the very short timescale given for officers to deliver this report it has not been possible to provide an in-depth risk assessment, so the main new key risks are bullet pointed below:
- a. The compressed timetable to deliver the proposed actions after the completion of the proposed review by the 'critical friend' runs the considerable risk of failing to deliver a high quality end product especially due to restricted staff availability over the summer holiday period (5 weeks to review the outcome of the visioning, undertake intensive public engagement, collate and analyse responses, assess those against the Local Plan and pull together a report withal the information as set out the proposed actions is incredibly ambitious).
 - b. An estimated further delay in the adoption of the Local Plan of between five to seven months from June 2023 (see section 11 for more detail). The ECM on 6 June set out a revised timetable which indicated that if there was a pause of four months from June 2023 then the potential adoption would move out to May/June 2024. Delivering the proposed actions will move the potential adoption back by a further one to three months – taking it to June/July or August/September 2024.

- c. A risk assessment will need to be prepared in line with the proposed actions which will include the extent to which the Local Plan might be able to be refined. This will be prepared and released on completion. Committee should also note that it will ultimately be the Inspector's decision as to the level of change that can be accommodated within the existing Examination.
- c. If Councillors decide they wish to amend that 2021 Vision to reflect their new aspirations, at that stage it would be recommended that officers undertake a review of any revised vision against the current Local Plan, to assess the risks of potentially starting a new process. This amended vision would need to come back to a further Extraordinary Council meeting for formal agreement before going out to intensive public engagement (adding further delays).
- d. There is a risk that the public would not be sure about the purpose of the public consultation and what it is looking to achieve, particularly when many of them may have already responded to the wide-scale consultation already undertaken on the Local Plan. There needs to be consideration on whether the engagement will be full-scale or a pared down consultation. The consultation strategy for the Local Plan lasted 3 months and included briefings, events and a digital and print campaign. There is a risk we may not get engagement because it is not normally advisable to consult during the summer. There is a reputational risk that residents and other stakeholder groups could view this consultation as not meaningful and rushed.
- e. The provisional draft specification of works refers to discussions with local stakeholders and in particular local communities and the development community. It is not clear whether this is as part of the 'intense period of public engagement' or separate discussions and to what extent these discussions will inform future progress during and after the 'vision-setting'. The development community is not a single body and will represent different interests.
- f. Using the residents associations as the conduit for public engagement on the vision would exclude the public, a large number of other stakeholders and interested parties, including statutory consultees, who we would normally seek views from when plan-making and what the Local Plan should deliver. Although this exercise could be seen as 'outside' the plan-making process, it will inevitably direct the future path of the Local Plan should changes to the strategy be agreed as a result.
- e. The public could form a different view on the alignment of the Local Plan and the benchmark vision (to that of councillors) which would then need to be accurately reflected in the report back to the ECM.
- f. As a principle we cannot engage an external consultant to lead on the intensive public engagement until Council has agreed on the vision and the Committee has decided what we are asking for residents to engage on.

- g. There is a limited risk that a third party asks DLUHC to intervene to continue with the Examination process, or that ministers themselves decide to intervene.
- h. Extending beyond 3 months risks the availability of the current Inspector which could result in a further delay if he is already programmed in to deal with another EiP. We do not know whether this might result in having to start the EiP process again with a new Inspector.
- i. At a time of a tight budget position creating the risk of significant additional budget pressures as set out in the report above
- j. The cancellation of the proposed training sessions with Councillors has delayed the opportunity to bring them up to speed on the Local Plan.
- k. If further evidence is required, this could take several months to obtain and incorporate, and would have significant resourcing and cost implications.
- l. Discussions with neighbouring authorities are integral to the Duty to Cooperate (DtC). Even if the hearings resume after the three-month pause, there will be the need to update the Inspector on aspects of legal compliance, which includes DtC, and certainly in the case of a much longer pause and/or change to the Local Plan strategy. In any case, updated DtC statements of common ground are needed for other DtC partners' own Local Plans, such as Elmbridge who are expected to submit their Plan to the Secretary of State later this summer. There may be challenges with engaging immediately when it is not clear what the engagement will be discussing.

6. Procurement considerations

- 6.1 The Council's Contract Standing Order require that where a contract is awarded below £5,000 initially local suppliers must be sought. If no local supplier can be found, then regional suppliers should be sought. If the selected supplier is not local or regional then approval to proceed must be sought from the Group Head, and the variation must be added to the Contract Standing Orders Exemption Report.

7. Legal considerations

- 7.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) require local planning authorities to review Local Plans (such as the Borough Local Plan) every five years to ensure policies remain relevant and effectively address the needs of the local community. This is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which sets out the process that should be followed to review local plans. Reviews should be completed no later than five years from the adoption date of the Plan.
- 7.2 The Council undertook to meet its statutory requirement set out above by reviewing the relevant planning documents and policies as part of the production of a whole new Local Plan in 2017, in large part as a result of the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. Other considerations

- 8.1 It is assumed that Group Leaders have discussed and agreed the proposed actions with their Group Members.
- 8.2 Internal audit resource will need to be allocated to develop the robust risk management process, which may mean other work currently undertaken by the team will need to be re-prioritised.

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 These matters have been addressed throughout the development of the Local Plan. It will be for the internal critical friend to address in their sessions with councillors.

10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 These matters have been addressed throughout the development of the Local Plan. It will be for the critical friend to address in their sessions with councillors.

11. Timetable for implementation

The timetable is based on several assumptions (below), the proposed actions received from the Group Leaders and is estimated to be the absolute minimum period within which the proposed actions could be met:

- Entirely dependent on members making decisions in a timely manner but that they make the decisions that align with the accelerated pare down process (e.g. quickest route possible in time period agreed by Full Council)
- Immediate consultant availability if Committee approve the engagement of CRA (now confirmed in provisional draft specification).
- Councillors can make the visioning sessions.
- Council decision on 13 July is to agree the 2021 Vision in parallel with/before the critical friend sessions.
- No Council decision required after the critical friend sessions if an alternative Vision were agreed (and before any consultation).
- External comms consultants can be mobilised immediately if required.
- All the necessary staff are available throughout the entire summer holiday period to prioritise this work.
- The intensive public engagement will be via the residents associations, setting out 5 key points (wish list) the residents have concerns about and to prioritise these from 1 to 5
- Any variance from the above will impinge on the ability to deliver in the three-month timescale.

Action	Timeframe Consult in Aug	Timeframe Avoid August
CPRC decision	26 June	26 June
Appoint critical friend (assuming Committee approve their engagement – can be done at	27 June	27 June

risk in advance of the Vision being agreed by Council)		
Set visioning specification between Group Leaders and CRA	10 July	10 July
Council to consider Recommendation for the 2021 Vision	13 July	13 July
Councillor visioning session (relevant officers invited to attend**)	24, 25, 27 July	24, 25, 27 July
Critical friend draft report (assuming above dates work)	By 4 August	By 4 August
Initial officer review of critical friend draft (subject to no need for new evidence or a revised Vision)	w/c 7 August	w/c 7 August
Critical friend final report (Group Leaders sign off)	Second week August	First week August
Preparation of documentation for consultation and engagement (twin tracked)	Second week August	August
The Council undertake intensive public engagement via the residents associations* (using external consultants)	Last two weeks August	First two weeks in September
Very rudimentary assessment of the outcome of the public engagement and assessment against the Submission version of the Local Plan, writing report, receiving strategic steer, finalising report, issuing report	First two weeks in September	
ECM Options will be: agree the work done, or a further period of pause for more work to carried out	14 September	14 September

The above timetable indicates the quickest route to proceeding to Full Council with the results of the pared down public consultation.

*Noting that this is not aligned with the Council's Communications and Engagement Strategy and Council's Statement of Community Involvement (in relation to the Local Plan).

** subject to availability over the summer holiday

12. Contact

12.1 Management Team, Strategic Planning, Communications, Governance

Background papers: There are none.

Appendices:

- A** Background to decision making
- B** Proposed 'benchmark' vision (December 2021)
- C** Local Plan preparation, destination and objectives
- D** Provisional draft specification of works
- E** Appendix A from ECM on 6 June 2023

Background – decision making

A report went to an Extraordinary Council on 6 June 2023 entitled “Request to ‘pause’ the Local Plan Examination hearings”. Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 6 June 2023, 7.00 pm - Spelthorne Borough Council.

In that report all councillors were asked to decide on whether or not to agree that:

“The Planning Inspector pauses the Examination Hearings for a period of four (4) months in order that the new members (councillors) can be fully instructed as to the policies of the Local Plan and the implications on the Borough.”

Immediately prior to the meeting an amended motion was put forward:

“Spelthorne Borough Council formally request the Planning Inspector to pause the Examination Hearings into the Local Plan for a period of three months to allow time for the new council to understand and review the policies and implications of the Local Plan, and after the three-month pause the Council will decide what actions may be necessary before the Local Plan examination may proceed.”

This was then debated and agreed by Council. The Planning Inspector was informed of the decision the following day (7th) and a letter was received on 8th from the Planning Inspector to confirm that in this specific circumstance a pause in the examination for a period of three months would be reasonable.

A request has since been received (15 June 2023) from four of the five political group leaders (not the Conservatives).

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Vision background

New councillors may not be aware of the vision being referred to.

Back in the summer of 2021, the then Leader (Cllr Nichols) and Deputy Leader (Cllr Sexton), wanted to explore the possibility of a visioning exercise being undertaken in respect of the Local Plan. At that point, a report was being considered on a revised strategy by the Environment and Sustainability Committee (13 July 2021). At that meeting the committee resolved:

To agree the revised strategy for the new Local Plan to meet our housing need by releasing a small amount of Green Belt, reducing the impact on Staines by not including an additional allocation, including opportunities to reduce some building heights in Staines if this is the outcome of the Staines Development Framework consultation and allow for more family homes with gardens to be built.

Alongside agreeing the revised strategy, members of the Committee also resolved:

That they would benefit from independent support and advice on the formulation of a strategic vision for the borough.

- a) To undertake an exercise of member engagement focused on developing a shared understanding and/or their role in formulating the Local Plan.
- b) To develop a shared vision for the borough that is endorsed by a majority of members.
- c) To appoint a suitably qualified external advisor to facilitate members in formulating the vision.
- d) To incorporate the vision into the Local Plan documentation by no later than the end of October 2021.
- e) Once the vision has been agreed it will be used to review existing policies and inform future ones

A request was subsequently received from the Leader that a direct appointment be made to Catriona Riddell Associates to facilitate that vision. The Leader advised:

(1) they wanted to create something that councillors could own against which the emerging Local Plan could be assessed

(2) there was 'currently' no member led vision of the plan – the only vision was to meet government-imposed housing targets

(3) all advice to date had come for one source (i.e., officers) and councillors needed a second opinion

(4) councillors needed an opinion that would present a genuine alternative perspective so they could be sure they had considered all the options

(5) it was agreed that any vision would be tested with officers before it was finalised to create a vision that can form the basis of a sound plan (and that councillors expected officers to defend their position where they felt it necessary)

(6) a vision was not just about housing numbers but should reflect aspirations for infrastructure, biodiversity, or social gain.

The direct appointment was made by the Chief Executive, under delegated powers, in early August. The entire process was member-led. The report and recommendations were provided to the then Leader and Deputy Leader. Officers were given the chance to comment on the draft and worked with the then Deputy Leader on a revised vision the professional planning team were comfortable with. It was then passed back to councillors to undertake further internal consultation before a final version was agreed by the councillors.

A motion was put to Council on 9 December 2021 stating:

“There has been real concern amongst residents and councillors about the lack of a Vision for Spelthorne. To create one, three important Visioning sessions were held and the councillors attending worked hard to produce a Vision. An opportunity has been given to all councillors to review it and it has also been checked by officers to ensure it is sound. I therefore move that:

Council incorporate the Vision into the new Local Plan and from the next meeting of the Local Plan Task Group use it to review existing policies and inform future ones.”

The motion fell and the vision was not therefore used in the way originally envisaged.

Final Vision and Strategic Objectives for Spelthorne

OUR VISION

Spelthorne is a high-quality place to live, work and do business, with significant natural environment assets and an excellent location on the edge of Surrey and next to London, providing access to a wide range of different centres and services.

We want our residents to be proud of Spelthorne.

We aim to maximise the potential of all that the Borough has to offer, meeting our changing development needs over time whilst ensuring that this is sustainable by taking every opportunity to reduce our carbon emissions and therefore our impact on the planet; improving the overall health and wellbeing of our communities and environment; and delivering high quality places and services.

To do this we will be:

- **Inclusive**, ensuring that our decisions and actions reflect the diverse needs of our communities and that all have the opportunity and the ability to engage with the Council on an ongoing basis.
- **Efficient**, prioritising our resources to focus on the things that will have the greatest benefit for all of our residents and exploring opportunities for joint working and sharing skills, expertise and experience with other local authorities.
- **Collaborative**, working more effectively with our residents and local stakeholders to achieve our shared objectives for improving Spelthorne as a place to live, work and do business, and for enhancing public services across the Borough.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To achieve our Vision and provide a framework for all our policies and priorities for the next five years, we will focus on six overarching Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Objective 1: Improving the quality of our places

We will improve the overall quality of Spelthorne as a place to live, work and do business by meeting our development needs as far as possible within the context of our Vision for sustainable growth, ensuring that new development is delivered in the right places, supported by the right infrastructure, reflects the character of our distinct communities and improves the overall quality of our built and natural environment.

Why is this important?

Planning is one of the most important roles the Council has, shaping how Spelthorne as a place looks, feels and functions. If we get this right and ensure that new development is in the right place, is properly supported by the right infrastructure and is high quality and well designed, it can significantly enhance what the Borough has to offer. If we get this wrong, it can have a disastrous impact on the lives of our residents and on our businesses, irreversibly damage our natural environment and significantly reduce our ability to address the immediate and increasing challenges arising from Climate Change.

It is vital therefore that we strive to deliver sustainable development across the Borough which meets the needs of our residents in a way that enhances the overall quality and function of our towns and villages, does not compromise our valuable open spaces and reduces our carbon emissions. It is also important that we build resilience into the way we plan for the future so that we can respond to, as yet unknown, external economic, technological and other changes which are often beyond our control, as has clearly been demonstrated through our recent experiences with the Covid Pandemic and flooding.

The spaces between buildings play an important role in how a place feels and functions and can actively help improve the wellbeing and safety of our communities. High quality 'public realm' can also have a direct impact on the viability of our town centres, encouraging people to visit because of the overall experience, not just the retail offer. It is therefore vital that we improve the quality of our public spaces across Spelthorne but especially in the more urban settings such as our town and neighbourhood centres.

How will we achieve this?

- We will ensure our new Local Plan and Staines Development Framework provide a robust basis for meeting the development needs of our residents by:
 - delivering high-quality, well-designed buildings that maximise the use of existing brownfield sites and reflect the character of the diverse communities across the Borough.
 - ensuring all new development contributes towards reducing our carbon emissions.
 - harnessing the wide-ranging benefits of our natural environment.
 - improving the overall quality and accessibility of our green and open spaces.
 - increasing opportunities for active travel and use of public transport options; and
 - supporting high quality, resilient and versatile high streets.
- Through our Development Management function, we will ensure that all proposed new development contributes towards meeting our Vision and Strategic Objectives, working

proactively with applicants to ensure that proposals are good enough to approve, not bad enough to refuse, challenging applicants on the quality of the proposals where necessary.

- We will work with applicants to maximise the potential from developer contributions, challenging the evidence presented where necessary (especially on viability), ensuring that all opportunities are taken to deliver the infrastructure and wider benefits that new development can offer.
- We will proactively engage with the development industry and other stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of what ‘good and healthy’ development looks like in Spelthorne and what is needed to deliver this and to manage the impact of the Permitted Development on the viability and character of our centres.
- We will ensure that the height and design of developments are sympathetic to the character of the local area including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, as set out in the NPPF and where necessary place a height restriction on buildings in certain locations to reflect the prevailing character of the local area. For example, within zoning in Staines it is unlikely that buildings higher than 10 storeys would be acceptable. However, we will implement a robust design-led approach to assess the justification for any deviation from this and ensure that any proposals support wider objectives.
- We will invest in new and innovative approaches to planning, especially where this leads to a clearer understanding for our residents around what is being proposed, what it would look like and how it would function (e.g. use of 3D images and other digital technology).
- Our approach to supporting sustainable development will be inclusive and fair to all our residents, ensuring that all places feel invested in with improvements for all our diverse and distinct communities.
- We will maximise the potential of our own land and assets to contribute to meeting our Strategic Objectives, helping to deliver the right type of housing to meet our needs (especially affordable housing) and improving our natural environment assets to increase access and maximise the wider benefits, particularly in relation to the health and wellbeing of our residents and reducing our impact on Climate Change.
- We will explore all opportunities to improve the public realm across Spelthorne, starting with an initial review of town centres, with a view to ensuring that all spaces are attractive, accessible, safe and contribute to improving health and wellbeing and reducing our impact on the planet (e.g. more open spaces and urban gardens, focal points, benches, less use of concrete, water fountains).

Further resources and information

[National Model Design Code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Better neighbourhoods \(urbed.coop\)](http://urbed.coop)

[Design and Conservation Panel - Cambridge City Council](#)

[Useful healthy place making resources | Town and Country Planning Association \(tcpa.org.uk\)](http://tcpa.org.uk)

[The 20-minute neighbourhood | Town and Country Planning Association \(tcpa.org.uk\)](http://tcpa.org.uk)

[Livewell Development Accreditation | Essex Design Guide](#)

[Development Management Challenge Toolkit | Local Government Association \(pas.gov.uk\)](http://pas.gov.uk)

[Services for large developments | Building control for large developments | Thurrock Council](#)

[Peer challenge and remote peer support | Local Government Association \(pas.gov.uk\)](http://pas.gov.uk)

[Surrey Development Forum](#)

[Third report on local authority housebuilding published | The Bartlett School of Planning - UCL – University College London](#)

[UK's #1 3D smart city design & planning platform | VU.CITY - VU.CITY. The Smart City Platform](#)

[How can digital planning better support healthier place-making? – Digital Task Force for Planning \(digital4planning.com\)](http://digital4planning.com)

Strategic Objective 2: Maximising the value of our natural environment

We will protect and, where possible, improve our high-quality natural environment assets, recognising the critical and multi-functional role these play in terms of providing leisure and recreation opportunities; improving the mental and physical health and wellbeing of our residents; enhancing the quality, feel and function of places; and reducing our impact on the rate and scale of Climate Change.

Why is this important?

Spelthorne has a rich and diverse natural environment, with its extensive rivers and reservoirs and green spaces, which are cherished by both our own residents and those that live in surrounding areas. This makes a significant contribution to the overall quality of life in the Borough, supporting improvements to the physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and playing a key role in addressing the immediate and increasing challenges around Climate Change.

It is therefore vital that we invest in these areas, taking all opportunities to improve overall quality and provision, and working with local communities, partners and landowners to invest in nature recovery and increase accessibility to those areas that are not fulfilling their potential.

How will we achieve this?

- As part of our response to the Climate Emergency we will develop a clear framework for managing and investing in our green spaces and water resources, working with partners to ensure that we have shared objectives in terms of the role these play in building resilience to Climate Change, improving the health and wellbeing of our communities, and providing opportunities for active travel and for recreational and leisure activities.
- We will limit the impact of development on Green Belt and green spaces, protecting them for the health and well-being of residents, wildlife and generations to come. A full cost-benefit analysis will be carried out as part of our local plan process to ensure that the overall integrity of the Green Belt (both within Spelthorne and in relation to the wider strategic purposes of the Metropolitan Green Belt) is maintained. No changes to the current boundary will be considered unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the benefits (exceptional circumstances) such as meeting our housing need, including affordable housing, are likely to significantly outweigh the environmental costs, as required by national policy. Our Vision and strategic priorities for Spelthorne will help to frame the factors considered through this process. Once the extent of the Green Belt has been set through the local plan, we will look to landowners to maximise the potential of our Green Belt to support delivery of our corporate objectives of improving the health and well-being of our environment (nature recovery) and our communities (especially in terms of access to green spaces).
- We will work with our local communities and landowners to enhance these areas in terms of improved accessibility, nature recovery and amenity value, maximising the benefits of even the smallest place for our communities.
- We will work with the Surrey Nature Partnership to develop a strategy for enhancing the biodiversity of our Borough, opening up opportunities for nature recovery, including 'rewilding' sites that continue to play an important Green Belt function but are limited in terms of their wider values and contribution to our Strategic Objectives.
- We will work closely with our partners, especially Surrey County Council and the Environment Agency, to explore all potential opportunities for improving the use and accessibility of our rivers, and reducing flood risk through the River Thames Scheme

Further resources and information

[Surrey's Greener Futures Update - August 21 \(ddInk.net\)](#)

[Surrey Climate Commission |](#)

[Biodiversity Opportunity Areas | Surrey Wildlife Trust](#)

[River Thames Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Habitat Project - Greening Surrey's urban spaces - Surrey Hills Arts](#)

[Smartscape \(scotscape.co.uk\)](#)

[Oxford City Council and Grosvenor: developing and NHS-healthy new town | Local Government Association](#)

[Discover Surrey Transport Plan to Have Your Say – Commonplace](#)

[Issue details - Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan \(LWCIP\) - Spelthorne Borough Council](#)

Strategic Objective 3: Improving our connectivity

We will improve our overall connectivity around Spelthorne and with the wider area, providing a wider choice in terms of active and sustainable travel, recognising the key role Spelthorne plays in supporting London’s economy, and in providing access to Heathrow Airport. We will explore opportunities to make Spelthorne a leading borough in terms of digital connectivity, reducing the need for our residents to commute and therefore our carbon emissions, and consequential improvements to their overall health and wellbeing.

Why is this important?

Spelthorne’s proximity to London, Heathrow Airport and the Motorway Network provides residents with excellent transport connections to a range of centres and services, as well as to wider national and international destinations. However, being part of Surrey means that it does not receive the same transport investment and opportunities (via TfL) as adjoining London Boroughs, despite Spelthorne’s strong functional relationship with London and with Heathrow Airport. A more integrated approach to improving our connectivity across administrative boundaries would help Spelthorne realise its full potential as a place to live, work or do business, and would help shift transport solutions away from car dependency with wider benefits to local communities in terms of movement around the borough, health and wellbeing and building resilience to Climate Change.

The impact of the Covid Pandemic has significantly changed the way many of our residents live and work and our how our local businesses operate, with much more reliance on digital connectivity than ever before. Continuing investment in this will help to address the stress of daily commuting for many of residents, building business efficiency and reducing our carbon emissions. It is therefore vital that we improve all aspects of Spelthorne’s connectivity and not just transport, providing more support for flexible working across the Borough.

How will we achieve this?

- We will continue to work with Surrey County Council, the Surrey Future Steering Board and other partners to escalate our case for including Spelthorne within TfL Zone 6 for travel and ensure that improving rail connectivity (in terms of services frequency) is a priority within the Surrey Infrastructure Plan and Surrey Rail Strategy.
- We will work with Surrey County Council to improve the overall transport connectivity across Spelthorne by agreeing shared outcomes from the new Local Transport Plan and Spelthorne’s Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- We will explore opportunities to support our residents in working flexibly and maximising the potential of digital connectivity, for example through the provision of shared office space and hubs.
- We will continue to work with our partners of the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group to ensure that Spelthorne gains the maximum benefits in terms of the Borough’s connectivity as a result of Heathrow Airport’s planned expansion programme.

Further resources and information

[Discover Surrey Transport Plan to Have Your Say – Commonplace](#)

[Issue details - Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan \(LWCIP\) - Spelthorne Borough Council](#)

[The Surrey Rail Strategy - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

[Surrey Future - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

[Heathrow Strategic Planning Group :: Home](#)

Strategic Objective 4: Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities

We will take all opportunities to enhance the overall health and wellbeing of our residents, ensuring that they have fit and healthy homes, good access to open spaces and clean air, and an environment that provides a safe place to live and move around in.

Why is this important?

Through our roles and responsibilities as a council, we can directly influence the quality of life of our residents. Ensuring they have access to suitable, good quality housing and open spaces;

improving the quality of the air they breath; and providing safe and pleasant routes for cycling and walking can all contribute significantly to improving the health and wellbeing of our residents. It is vital therefore, that every action we take should be considered in terms of its impact on the physical or mental health and wellbeing of our communities, and proactively changing our approach where this does not result in a measurable improvement.

How will we achieve this?

- We will ensure that our planning and building control functions maximise the opportunities to increase provision of affordable housing to meet our needs and to improve the quality of new and existing housing in terms to providing healthy and sustainably constructed homes.
- We will seek opportunities to improve air quality and mitigate against the impact of poor air quality by maximising the potential from our natural environment and green spaces, increasing tree coverage, especially in urban areas and along main roads.
- We will work with local communities and landowners to bring back into use and improve the amenity and health value of open spaces that are not currently accessible or open to the public.
- We will review our public spaces and pedestrian routes along main roads to ensure that they provide safe, healthy and attractive environments, ensuring that all the different needs of our communities are taken into account (e.g. wheelchair access, areas around schools, use of prams).
- We will proactively assess all our policy and funding decisions to consider the impact on health and wellbeing of our communities (i.e. through Health Impact Assessments) and make clear what actions we will take as a council to ensure positive impact.
- We will use our own land and assets to contribute to the meeting the housing needs of our residents.
- We will use our own land and assets to support the delivery of affordable homes where this can be achieved without compromising our other strategic policies and priorities and where it is financially prudent to do so. We will also explore opportunities to purchase additional brownfield sites in order to contribute to affordable housing supply and therefore help meet the needs of our residents as set out in the most recent Spelthorne Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- We will encourage sufficient space between main carriageways and residential developments, so that any development is further away from main traffic carriageways, in order to mitigate the effects of air quality health issues related to traffic emissions for both residents and pedestrians

Further resources and information

[Campaign: The Healthy Homes Act | Town and Country Planning Association \(tcpa.org.uk\)](https://www.tcpa.org.uk/campaign/the-healthy-homes-act)

[RTPI | Enabling Healthy Placemaking](#)

[Healthy Placemaking Report.pdf \(designcouncil.org.uk\)](#)

[Health Impact Assessment Tools: Simple tools for recording the results of the Health Impact Assessment \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[PHE Healthy Places - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[A rapid scoping review of health and wellbeing evidence for the Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards - NEER015 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)

Strategic Objective 5: Engaging with our local communities

We will engage more effectively with all our local communities across Spelthorne in a way that is inclusive, with the same high value placed on meeting all of their distinct and different needs, and responsive, demonstrating how we have listened and responded to what we have heard.

Why is this important?

It is vital that all residents across the Borough feel that they have had an opportunity to input into how services are delivered and how the Council's priorities and policies reflect the diversity of needs and the different perspectives of its residents. This is particularly important in how we shape Spelthorne as a place, with early and ongoing engagement with all of our communities a priority in the local planning process and in the design of new development. This is also particularly important because it is a key part of our Council Constitution.

How will we achieve this?

- We will develop a new (corporate) approach to engaging with our communities, with dedicated resources focused on ensuring that this is proactive and inclusive and can be maintained on an ongoing basis. This should also maximise the potential of new and innovative approaches to engagement, especially through digital tools and social media platforms.
- We will prioritise those places and sectors within the community that feel less represented or included and explore ways of improving engagement, ensuring all of our residents feel that they have been involved and/or have been equally represented as we develop and deliver our Vision and Strategic Objectives.

- We will make sure any formal public consultations carried out as part of our planning functions has a clear response so that all our residents and stakeholders know how their views have been taken into account and influenced the outcome.
- We will explore opportunities for working more collaboratively with partners, especially Surrey County Council, to align and streamline our respective consultation processes, helping to avoid confusion and maximise the benefits and outputs for residents.
- Adhere to the 'purpose' of the Council Constitution Article 1

Further resources and information

[Government announces 10 councils to test the use of digital tools in planning process - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Sefton Borough Council– Strengthening consultation through partnership working | Local Government Association](#)

[Blueprint - Winchester City Council](#)

[Brighton & Hove climate assembly \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#)

[Role of Community Champions networks to increase engagement in context of COVID-19: evidence and best practice, 22 October 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: State of the Borough Report | Waltham Forest Council](#)

[Get involved | Waltham Forest Council](#)

Strategic Objective 6: Collaborating to improve service delivery for our residents

We will work more effectively with Surrey County Council, neighbouring authorities and other strategic partners by collaborating on ways to improve service delivery across Spelthorne on behalf of our residents and businesses and to help achieve our Vision and Strategic Objectives.

Why is this important?

The Council has significant responsibility in terms of service delivery for our residents and in helping to shape Spelthorne as a good place to live, work and do business. But there are a number of services and functions that directly influence Spelthorne as a place which are the responsibility of others, especially Surrey County Council. The decisions of our neighbouring local authorities, both in Surrey and London, also impact on how Spelthorne functions and what is offered to our residents. Ensuring that we work positively and on an ongoing basis with our strategic partners is therefore essential if we are to achieve our Vision and Strategic Objectives.

How will we achieve this?

- We will work with Surrey County Council to review and improve how the Spelthorne Joint Committee works to ensure a more integrated approach to service delivery for our residents and to agree some shared outcomes based on our Vision and Strategic Objectives.
- We will work collaboratively with Surrey County Council and other strategic partners to develop a potential County Deal which aims to provide a more integrated and efficient service delivery for our residents and increases the overall investment in Spelthorne as a place.
- We will host an annual meeting with our neighbouring authorities to share current work priorities, explore opportunities for joint working and share experience and good practice.

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Page 8:

How are Local Plans prepared?

- 1.8 Local plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy, in accordance with section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the NPPF.
- 1.9 In preparing the Local Plan there are a several stages which must be undertaken. The process involves the gathering and analysis of the evidence necessary to support decision making, extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders including our residents, businesses, neighbouring authorities and other public sector partners, statutory bodies and the development industry.

Issues and Options Consultation 2018

- 1.10 The first consultation on the emerging Local Plan (Regulation 18 consultation) took place in May and June 2018. The Council consulted on the Spelthorne Issues and Options Consultation Paper¹, which set out the key issues affecting Spelthorne and the options considered for how we could meet our needs. The paper identified the challenges and constraints for development as well as the opportunities Spelthorne offers for growth and set out four strategic options for development, a brownfield focus; a Green Belt focus; a Staines focus; or a combination of the above.
- 1.11 The key issues raised during the consultation were as follows:
 - Concern over an increase in high rise development
 - Loss of Green Belt
 - The impact of development on infrastructure
 - Affordable housing
 - Parking
 - Maintaining the vibrancy of Staines-upon-Thames

¹ The consultation paper and further details on the Issues and Options Consultation can be found here: www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/19957/Issues-and-Options-Consultation-2018

Preferred Options Consultation 2019

- 1.12 The public consultation on the Spelthorne Local Plan Preferred Options² document took place between November 2019 and January 2020. The Consultation took the form of Policies and Site Allocations documents, setting out the preferred approaches to be considered. The selection of sites follows the preferred strategy, following the previous consultation, to maximise building on land in urban areas such as town centres, particularly Staines-upon-Thames, and to consider releasing some 'weakly performing' Green Belt for development.
- 1.13 The key issues raised during the consultation were as follows:
- Highways related issues (congestion / highway safety)
 - Green Belt
 - Infrastructure
 - Housing
 - Biodiversity and wildlife
 - Pollution – Air / Noise / Water
 - Flooding
 - Site specific issues regarding proposed allocations

Pre-Submission Publication Version 2022


- 1.14 The public consultation on the final draft of the Local Plan (Regulation 19 consultation) will take place from June to September 2022. The Pre-Submission Publication Version is the version of the Plan that the Council intends to submit to the Planning Inspectorate for examination by an independent Inspector. Any proposed changes to the final draft Local Plan are submitted alongside the Plan for the Planning Inspector to decide which are appropriate. The Staines Development Framework as an SPD does not require submission to the Planning Inspectorate but as both documents are so intrinsically linked it is the right approach for them to be considered together.
- 1.15 The starting point for a Local Plan examination is the assumption that the Council has submitted what it considers to be a sound plan. The plan is positively prepared, based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements; is justified by robust evidence; can be delivered; and is consistent with national policy. The Pre-Submission Publication version of the Spelthorne Local Plan is considered to meet the test of soundness and is therefore a step closer to examination and eventual adoption.

Our Destination and Objectives

- 2.4 The **Spelthorne Corporate Plan (2021-23)** sets out our five overarching 'CARES' priorities and 15 more specific themes to focus on. By 2037 our **Local Plan** seeks to have achieved the priorities set out within it.

Our Priorities



 <p>Community</p>	<p>Our destination: Our communities are at the heart of everything we do, we have built strong relationships with our residents and businesses, and have forged links within those communities, so that they feel empowered, included, supported, safe and healthy.</p>
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Strong Communities

- 2.5 We are working with our partners and the community to deliver high quality place making that incorporates amenities and services for all in Spelthorne.
- 2.6 The Local Plan is supporting this by:
- Engaging with individuals, residents' associations and other community groups so that they are better informed and have opportunity to participate in the Local Plan and Staines Development Framework preparation
 - Seeking the views of the local businesses community to support the vitality and resilience of our towns and economic areas, such as the Staines Business Improvement District.

Safe Communities

- 2.7 We have safe places to live, visit and do business, with safe streets and open spaces.
- 2.8 We are supporting this by:
- Working with Surrey County Council to make our roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists, with new cycle lanes/walkways and reduced speed limits where needed.
 - Working with our partners and developers to ensure that high quality design, which supports natural surveillance and creates safe and welcoming streets and spaces is at the heart of placemaking in the Borough.

- Engaging with Surrey Police to identify additional needs from the new development that could be met through developer contributions.

Healthy Communities

2.9 Our communities are staying healthy for longer.


2.10 We are supporting this by:

- Working with our healthcare, voluntary and community partners to identify need for additional facilities that could be funded through developer contributions.
- Implementing policies which seek to improve residents' health and wellbeing, promote active and healthy lifestyles and tackle health inequalities.
- Supporting a range of leisure facilities to enable people to stay fit and healthy, including parks, our Green and Blue Infrastructure network, community gym equipment and leisure centres.

Enhancing Local and Strategic Infrastructure

2.11 We are supporting this by:


- We are supporting the provision of the right infrastructure to meet our communities' changing needs and the demands of a growing population.
- Working with partners we are identifying the necessary health, educational, leisure and cultural infrastructure to meet our needs, assisted by developer contributions.

	<p>Our destination: We have supported the delivery of affordable and market housing which meets the needs of all sections of our communities by supporting the development of new homes of a variety of type, size and tenure.</p>
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Delivering New Homes

2.12 We are supporting this by:


- Allocating sites to meet our identified housing need.
- Implementing policies which provide a mix of homes for all members of our community.
- Working with colleagues and partners to promote the delivery of affordable homes that meets the needs of all our communities.

	<p>Our destination: We provided support to our business communities to help enable them to recover, be resilient to economic challenges, be dynamic and respond to the changing economic and retail climate.</p>
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Supporting Economic Recovery

2.13 We analyse the needs for employment floorspace and implement and deliver policies which:

- Protect businesses premises.
- Assist future business growth and adaptation.
- Support placemaking, regeneration and development of infrastructure.
- Attract visitors to the Borough.

	<p>Our destination: We worked with our communities and partners to minimise our effects on the environment, played our part in tackling climate change and to moved further towards a clean, green and attractive Borough and protected biodiversity.</p>
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Tackling Climate Change

2.14 We recognise the effects that climate change could have on our Borough. Having declared a climate emergency, we recognise the need to work with residents and businesses to achieve cleaner and greener lifestyles.

2.15 We are supporting this by:

- Ensuring Local Plan policies are in conformity with the Climate Change Strategy to require new development to incorporate measures to lower the Borough's carbon emissions.
- Working with the Environment Agency and through the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, ensure that new development is directed to areas of lowest flood risk. Incorporating the River Thames (Flood Relief) Scheme and other flood mitigation initiatives within the Plan.
- Conserving and enhancing our urban open spaces and Green and Blue infrastructure network, which plays a key role in the sustainable management of surface water run-off and holding floodwaters.
- Ensuring preservation of the Borough's valued historic environment.
- Enhancing and extending the Borough's Green and Blue Infrastructure network at all scales to deliver multiple benefits for people, wildlife and the environment.
- Mitigating the impact of the loss of Green Belt through the innovative use of Green and Blue infrastructure solutions to create high-quality space for people

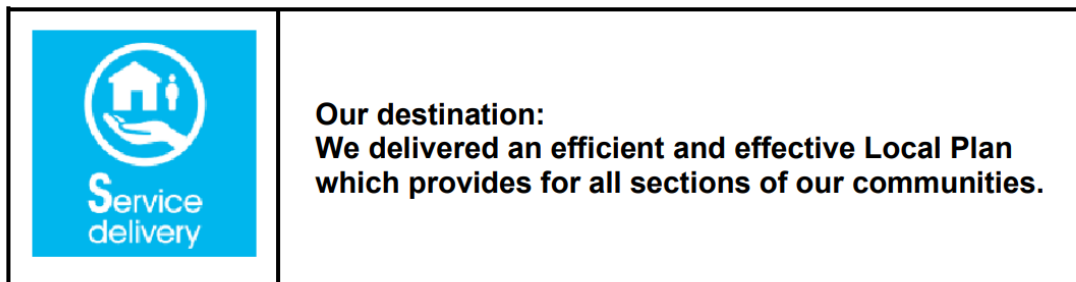
and wildlife, while supporting the sensitive integration of new development into the wider landscape and Green Belt.

Delivering Sustainable Development

2.16 We have progressed towards more sustainable communities – which manage their social, environmental, and financial resources to meet current needs, while ensuring that adequate resources are available for future generations.

2.17 We are supporting this by:

- Implementing Local Plan policies to safeguard the environment against air, noise, light and water pollution and remediating land contamination.
- Local Plan policies and allocations which support the requirement for biodiversity net gain, through partnership working and the use of Nature Recovery Strategies.
- Implementing Local Plan policies to encouraging waste prevention and promote recycling.
- Implementing Local Plan policies to promoting sustainable travel, including actively supporting improvements to public transport access to Heathrow.
- Promoting residential development that is sustainably located with access to existing services and transport hubs.
- Promoting energy efficiency for new buildings and refurbishments.



Effective Service Delivery

2.18 We are supporting this by:

- Ensuring Local Plan objectives cascade from Corporate Strategy and its priorities.
- Working with partners including Surrey CC, Surrey Police, NHS to ensure the provision of services to support our Borough's growing population.
- Identifying needs and communicating and collaborating with partners about the Borough's planned growth.
- Ensuring the Local Plan and its requirements on developers are viable and capable of delivery.
- Implementing and monitoring Local Plan policies and enforcing against those who do not comply with the requirements.
- Regularly reviewing and updating the Local Plan.

Spelthorne Local Plan

**Proposal for Critical Friend Support
June 2023**



Spelthorne Local Plan: Proposal for Critical Friend Support

June 2023

Context for the Review

1. Spelthorne Borough Council submitted its draft Local Plan for examination in November 2022 with the first stage examination hearings taking place in May. However, following the Local Elections, the council requested a pause in the examination for three months which the Planning Inspector has accepted. This is to bring the new councillors up to speed with the local plan process and contents and to allow the new council to understand and review the policies where necessary. After the three month period the council will decide what is needed (if anything) to allow the examination of the plan to continue.
2. To support the Council (both the officers and Members) through this process, the Council Leadership has invited Catriona Riddell to provide some external help. Catriona is a highly qualified planner with considerable experience working both within and with local authorities to develop their plans (see CV attached). Although Catriona works across the country, most of her experience has been in the South East and specifically within Surrey, so she has extensive knowledge of the area and the issues Spelthorne is facing. In 2021, Catriona also supported the previous council in their attempt to develop a shared vision within which the local plan could be prepared but this was not adopted in the end. Catriona represents the planning profession in a number of roles at the national level and is therefore engaged with Government Officials on a wide range of issues, including future reforms to the planning system.
3. By the end of the three month pause the Inspector has granted, the council will have to decide what the next steps are for the local plan. To do this, they will have to be confident that this is the plan the (new) council would like to see come out of the examination process and be adopted, and that it reflects their vision for Spelthorne and their communities. The ultimate aim should be to keep the plan process moving forward through examination in order to have an up-to-date framework for development as soon as possible, minimising any risks in the meantime and providing the certainty needed for all those that will play a part in its delivery. To do this, and acknowledging the limited time available before a decision will have to be made, it is proposed that the council should focus on the following:
 - (1) As a matter of urgency, **revisit the Vision for Spelthorne** previously developed to see whether this still reflects the priorities of the new Council and if not, what needs to change. This will then provide a high level framework within which to test the draft local plan strategy and consider whether it is still appropriate and if not, how significant the changes are likely to be to bring the draft local plan into line with the vision. A decision will then be needed on whether any changes could be managed through the existing plan-making process and examination or whether a more fundamental change to the plan's strategy would be needed. Discussions should be initiated with the

Inspector as soon as the initial process has been undertaken and there is some clarity over the direction of travel. In either case, a new timetable should be presented along with other supporting documents at the end of the three month period so that everyone involved has some clarity.

- (2) **Prepare a full risk assessment** setting out all the risks to the council of delaying the local plan process further. This should involve fiscal risks but also risks associated with potential speculative development, impact on local communities around uncertainty and potential actions / interventions from the Government.

4. To support both processes, the council should also initiate:

- An **evidence review** to ensure that all relevant evidence is up-to-date and if not, where evidence would need to be updated or where there are any potential gaps in evidence (for example, to support the latest national policy requirements on building climate resilience and on design codes).
- **Discussions with neighbouring authorities** and statutory consultees to ensure they are fully aware of what the council is doing and why but also to improve overall collaboration in the process.
- **Discussions with local stakeholders**, particularly local communities and the development community.

The role of a Critical Friend

5. In undertaking any 'critical friend' role it is important to acknowledge that there is no single approach to plan-making, there are always different interpretations of technical evidence and there are usually many different spatial options which deliver the same objectives (albeit to different degrees). Catriona will therefore provide an effective challenge role that helps both officers and Members explore all options, including those that have not yet been considered, and determine the key risks. She will not undertake a forensic analysis of all technical evidence or local plan but will aim to help ensure that all avenues are explored in developing a sound and legally compliant plan that can be supported by the council going forward either through the current process or through a revised process.

6. Specifically, the role will involve:

- Facilitation of a workshop for both councillors and officers to explore the relevance of the previously developed Vision for Spelthorne and whether changes are needed to reflect more accurately the new Council's priorities.
- Working with officers to support the risk assessment and evidence review.
- Supporting the Council, if necessary, at the proposed meetings with neighbouring authorities, statutory consultees and local stakeholders.

- Providing independent professional advice and help to promote a healthy debate around the issues and challenges the Council faces.
- An independent report summarising the key issues and providing clear recommendations to inform the next steps.

Proposed Costs

Estimate for all support set out in Paragraph 6 between June and the end of September 2023 =

Additional Information

Catriona is available to start the commission straight away and will prioritise this work going forward to ensure that it supports the Council's current timetable, although she will be on annual leave for some of the time in late July/ early August (but will still be easily contactable for urgent queries etc).

For any further questions regarding the proposal, please contact Catriona by either email or phone (see contact details below).

Local Plan Information sheet

Extraordinary Council meeting
6 June 2023



Option 1

The Planning Inspector pauses the Examination Hearings for a period of 4 months in order that the new members (councillors) can be fully instructed as to the policies of the Local Plan and the implications on the Borough.

Benefits

- 1 councillor engagement
- 2 3 Peer Review recommendations

Risks

alienates sections of community who want plan adopted asap

government deadline of December 2023 to adopt a plan will not be met

no demonstration that housing needs will be met over adoption period

pressure to deliver unmet housing need for adjoining boroughs

lowers certainty around housing delivery and 5 year land supply

unsuitable planning development can come forward on Green Belt

plans continues to come forward in developed area/green space

limited weight will apply to policies in publication version of the Local Plan

further inappropriate development comes forward in Staines

unsuitable Gypsy, traveller and travelling show people sites

potential of future increases in housing needs numbers

re-scheduled examination hearings can not be convened

risk of legal challenge from individuals with the benefit of an allocation sites, or those interested to see the early adoption of the local plan

Option 2

Not to agree the request, and continue with the Local Plan Examination Hearings, on the basis that Council will have further opportunities to review the Inspectors Report before making any final decision on whether to adopt the Local Plan or not.

Benefits

1 up to date Plan as per timetable

2 no review required for 5 years

3 deliver CARES priorities

4 policies to respond to climate emergency

5 greater proportion of affordable housing on all sites

6 delivering homes to meet a variety of needs

7 improved green and blue infrastructure and more open space protection

8 improvements to key community and health infrastructure

9 enhancing Spelthorne's unique character

10 a new vision for Staines-Upon-Thames

11 support for the local economy and business

12 a new sixth form college

Risks

councillor engagement with Local Plan process

failure to demonstrate councillor responsibility and strategic direction

Option 3

To support the request but for a shorter period of time of two month to ensure momentum is maintained on moving the Local Plan forwards whilst councillors are fully instructed.

Benefits

- 1 the benefits are the same as listed in **Option 2** - it is recognised councillors would have to allocate sufficient time for Local Plan training.

Risks

risks are the same as listed in **Option 1**



reduce benefits of Local Plan delivery as they will not be delivered as quick



spelthornelocalplan.info



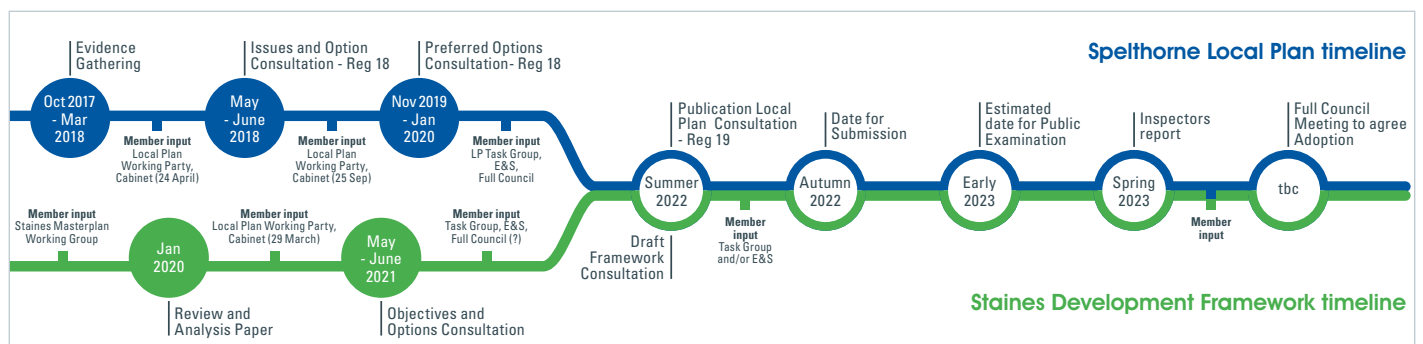


Pre-Submission Spelthorne Local Plan 2022-2037 and Staines Development Framework Consultation

The Local Plan sets out how and where development will take place across the Borough over the next 15 years and will affect every resident in Spelthorne. It is important that you read this summary and have your say.

The full documents are available to read on our website

www.spelthorne.gov.uk/localplan and paper copies are available to view at the Council Offices and all libraries in the Borough. Please see the last page of this article for further details on how to find more information and respond to the consultation.

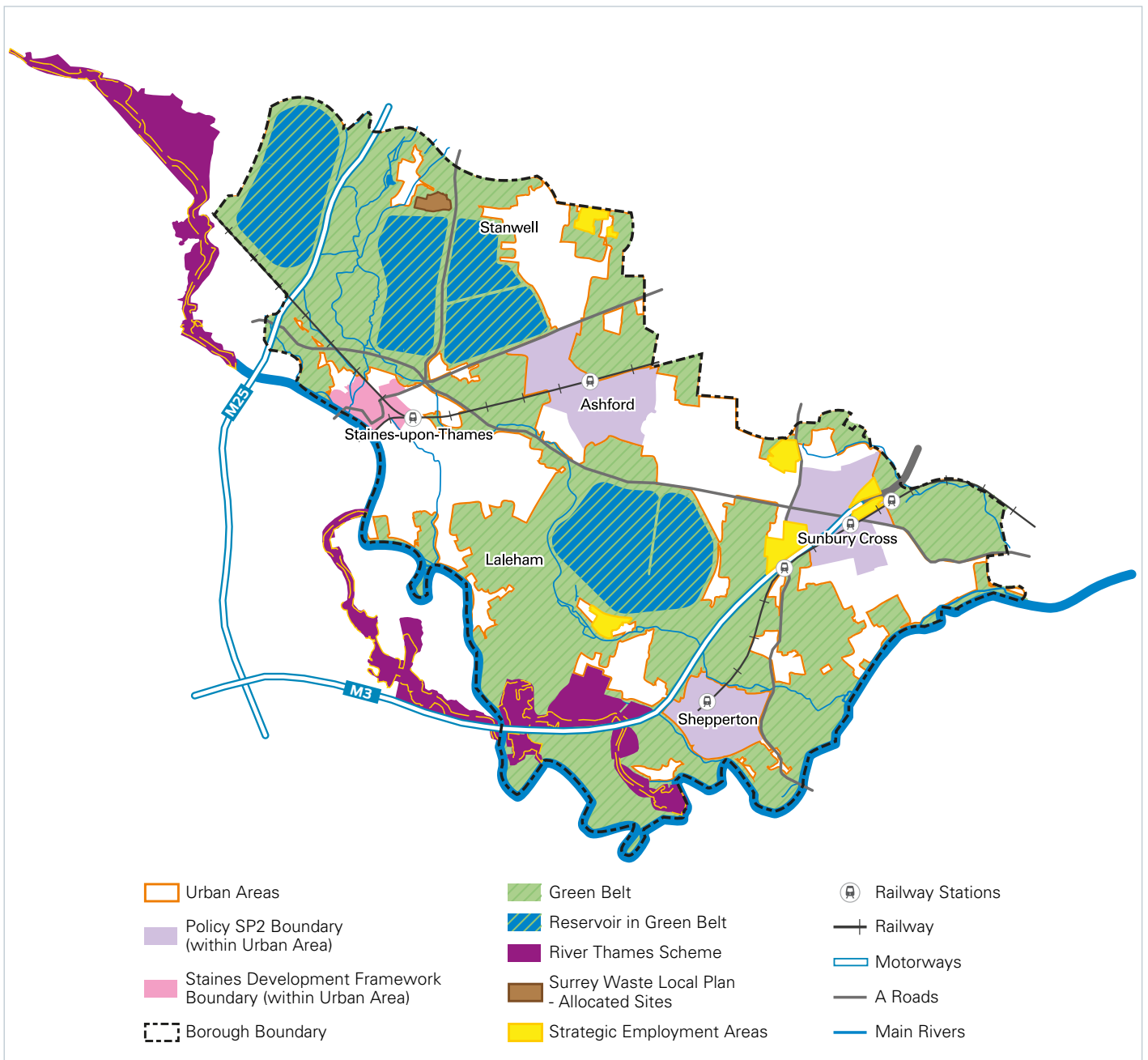


Why do we need a new Local Plan?

All Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are required by the Government, to provide a long-term plan setting out how we will meet our future needs. In Spelthorne, as in much of Surrey and the South East, successfully and sustainably accommodating this growth and new development presents a real challenge. This challenge is all the greater in Spelthorne due to our extensive Green Belt, much of which comprises waterbodies and areas at risk of flooding, which limits the supply of land which is suitable and available for the level of development required to meet our housing need. An up to date, evidence based Local Plan allows us as a Borough to take a proactive approach to planning for and managing

growth in a way that most benefits our present and future residents, while protecting what is most important.

If we do not have a Local Plan development will still take place, however we will not be able to use our own policies to determine the type and location of development, which may result in increased risk to, for example, our strategically important Green Belt, attractive open spaces and heritage assets. We will also be less able to require the improvements to our infrastructure, such as highways and green and blue infrastructure, which are essential to support additional development and deliver a wide range of benefits for our residents.



Benefits to our community of the new Local Plan:



The climate emergency

The Plan responds positively to the climate emergency with more robust up to date policies and will be supported in time by more detailed guidance for developers and homeowners in a new a Supplementary Planning Document



Affordable housing

Policies which set out ambitious affordable housing targets, especially on undeveloped sites and mean that it will be much harder for developers to backtrack on their promises



Homes to meet a variety of needs

Delivery of a range of homes that will meet a variety of needs including providing family homes with gardens and enhanced standards for those with additional needs



Green and Blue Infrastructure

The Plan supports the delivery of new Green and Blue Infrastructure, offers greater protection for existing open spaces with the new Local Green Space designation and will enable the enhancement of sports and recreation facilities



A new Sixth Form college

A new Sixth Form college in Sunbury to support further education for our students so many will not need to travel out of our Borough to access courses



Improvements to key infrastructure

Improvements to key infrastructure such as education and healthcare to support growth, including an innovative new health and wellbeing centre in Staines-upon-Thames



Enhancing Spelthorne's unique character

Policies which focus on maintaining and enhancing Spelthorne's unique character, recognising the sensitive areas need greater protection and setting positive design standards



An new vision for Staines-upon-Thames

An exciting new vision for Staines-upon-Thames that will bring new life to the town, enhancing access to the river, improving pedestrian and cycle links, creating new open spaces and managing development opportunities

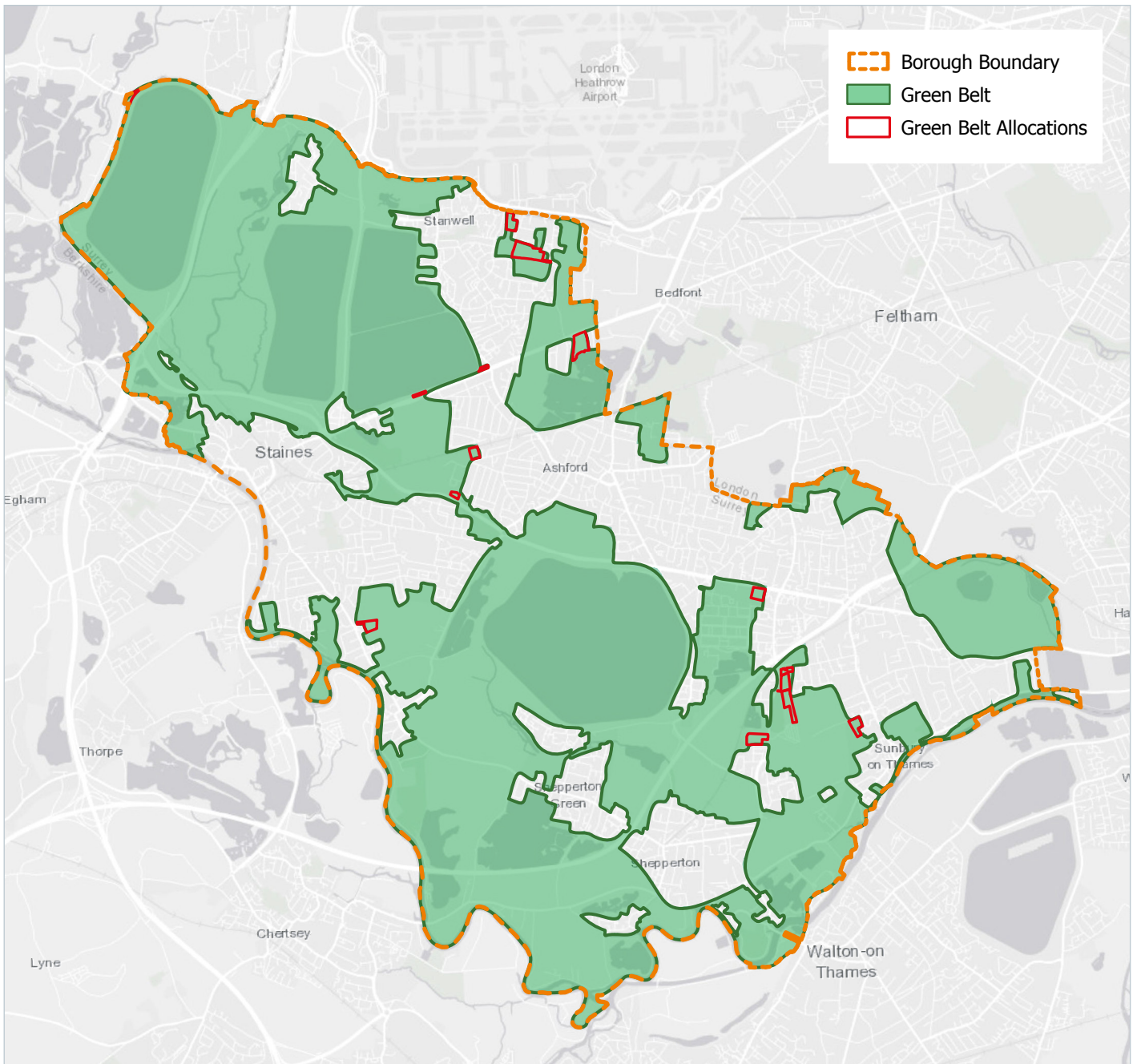
Local Plan Strategy

The Spelthorne Local Plan 2022 – 2037 sets out how we can achieve a sustainable future for Spelthorne that protects and enhances our Borough, delivers a wide range of benefits for our residents and meets our future housing needs.

The Plan seeks to deliver 9,270 homes over the Plan period, which equates to an average of 618 homes per year. This figure is Spelthorne’s objectively assessed need, based on the Government Standard methodology, which is set out in the NPPF and the accompanying

Planning Practice Guidance.

To meet our housing need, while managing the impact of new development on Staines, the Local Plan strategy agreed by the Council is to release a small amount (approximately 0.7% / 24.8 ha) of Green Belt. This approach will allow for more family homes with gardens to be built, as well as offering the opportunity for lower building heights in the more sensitive areas of Staines-upon-Thames.



Place Shaping

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and states that good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Development should contribute to creating places that encourage mixed communities, promote walking and cycling, improve access to public transport, and ensure that new development connects with existing parks and open spaces for recreation. Our plan will also protect the Borough’s historic environment, including our listed buildings and Conservation Areas which contribute to the Borough’s character, sense of place and quality of life.

The Council declared a climate emergency in October 2020 and recognises that climate change is the greatest challenge currently facing us. Every decision we take must count towards reducing carbon emissions and climate change mitigation. Our Local Plan will help to support the transition to a low carbon future, helping to address the climate emergency, taking account of flood risk.



Spatial Policies

The spatial policies provide the basis around which the Council can secure improvements to the centres in the Borough. This allows for all development needs to be considered within suitable locations including housing, employment and retail space. This is reflected through an area-based approach which sets out a hierarchy for development types which suit the size and character of the area. This will lead to improvements to the benefit of residents and users through enhanced public spaces and accessibility.

As well as considering the urban environment, there is also an approach to the Borough’s river network. This allows for opportunities to improve the local environment and biodiversity as well as ensuring that impacts on the network are avoided or mitigated.

Housing

Different groups within our community, including families, older people, younger people, people with disabilities requiring more specialist accommodation and the Gypsy and Traveller community have differing accommodation needs. The policies within the Plan set out how a wide variety of high-quality homes, of all tenures, types and sizes, which meet the needs of our residents will be delivered.

The Borough’s accessible location, together with the diverse natural environment and prospering economy means the Borough offers a good quality of life. While this has many positive impacts, the desirability of Spelthorne as a place to live does have a negative impact on affordability. The policies within the Plan set out ambitious targets for meeting the needs of our residents who are not able to afford adequate housing on the open market.



Environment

Two of the most pressing challenges to be addressed at all scales in the 21st century are climate change and the loss of biodiversity. Addressing these challenges, as well as supporting development which delivers health and wellbeing benefits for our community, lies at the heart of achieving sustainable development. The natural environment plays a key role in meeting these objectives and as such the protection and enhancement of the Borough's natural environment is fundamental to the success of the Plan and securing a sustainable future for Spelthorne.

Spelthorne benefits from a diverse natural environment, highly valued by our communities and offering a wide range of benefits; our natural environment plays a key role in making the Borough an attractive place to live and work. Recognising the importance of both protecting the existing natural environment and delivering high quality development which provides further enhancements, the policies within the Plan set out how this will be achieved over the next 15 years.



Economy

Economic performance is an important indicator of the 'health' of the Borough. Ensuring the vitality and viability of Spelthorne's centres and shaping these to be appealing places for local residents and visitors to access for shopping, leisure and entertainment purposes remains a key strand of the Local Plan. The Borough's location provides a strong basis for attracting visitors and new businesses. Providing a diverse mix of business and facilities enhances the attractiveness of these centres and provides for the needs of local people within their communities and employment opportunities for a wider population.

The Borough provides a home to major companies such as Shepperton Studios and BP, which are valuable contributors to providing local employment opportunities and supporting the local economy. Retaining these and identifying suitable locations for other high-profile companies to locate in Spelthorne are important parts of the Borough's economic and employment performance.

Infrastructure and Delivery

To support a sustainable future for the Borough, infrastructure provision is a key element in the delivery of a Local Plan. Infrastructure includes transport and physical infrastructure (including roads and cycle lanes), social and community facilities (including schools and youth facilities) and green infrastructure (including open and green space). The Council is required to identify the infrastructure needed to support the development proposed over the next 15 years. This is done through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

To compile an IDP the Council undertakes ongoing engagement with providers, developers and other key stakeholders to establish the impacts of new development on essential infrastructure within the Borough. The IDP outlines any potential gaps in provision and identifies what new infrastructure is required to mitigate some of the potential effects of the levels of development being proposed. This, together with the policies in the Plan, sets out how the needs of the Borough will be met over the plan period.

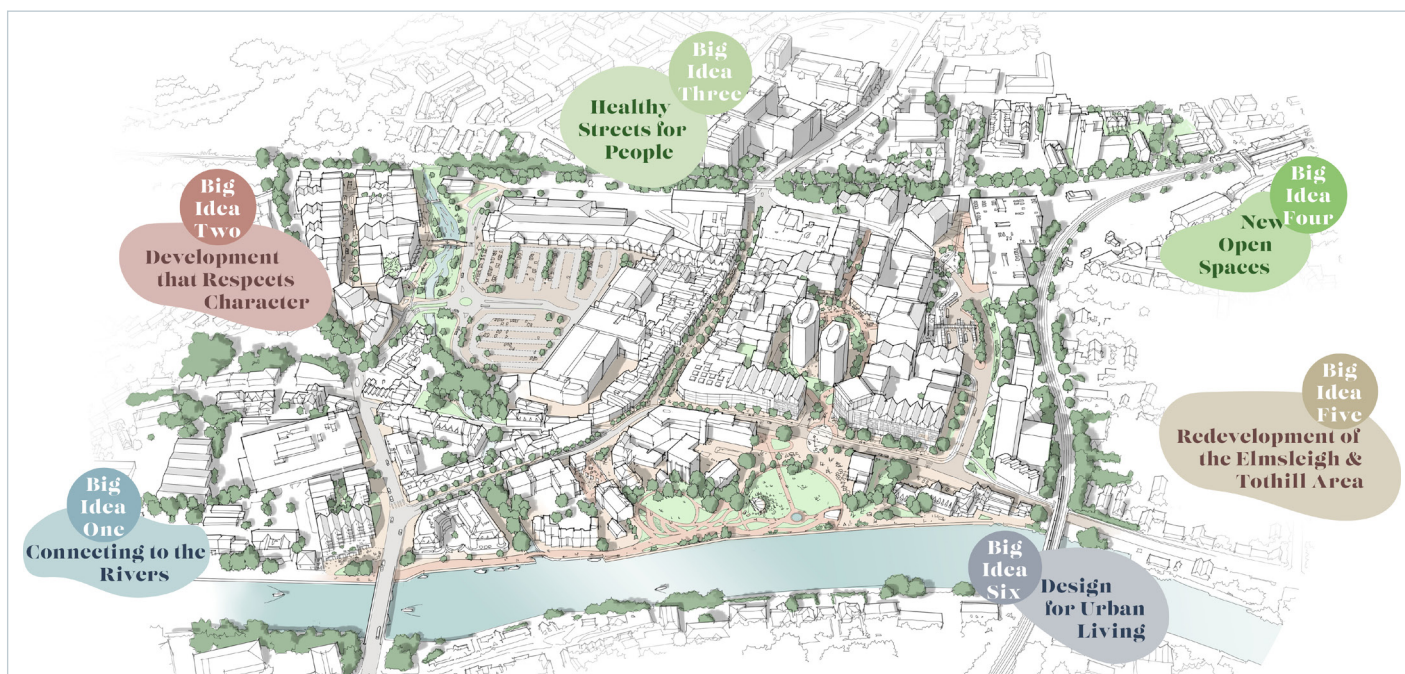


Staines-upon-Thames Town Centre Development Framework

The Development Framework sets out six 'big ideas' to ensure that Staines-upon-Thames can move into the future and successfully become more liveable, more sustainable and can provide more of what

local people need and want. By building on its assets such as the River Thames and grasping big new opportunities for change through planned growth, the town centre can ensure it will be successful

into a changeable future. These 'big ideas' are woven through all the Development Framework's strategies and implementation priorities.



Big Idea One: Connecting to the Rivers

The River Thames is a huge asset to Staines-upon-Thames but is underused and poorly connected. The Development Framework sets out a number of ways to make it a true destination and hub for Staines-upon-Thames. These include the potential for new community facilities within an extended Memorial Gardens, an improved street environment on Clarence Street and Thames Street, improved crossings between the High Street and river, new connections through development sites to link locations in the town to the river, and the use of new development in the town to face towards the river to provide a more active and secure environment in Memorial Gardens.

The Rivers Colne and Wraysbury also run through the centre and offer the potential to create different river environments for leisure and recreation including new and

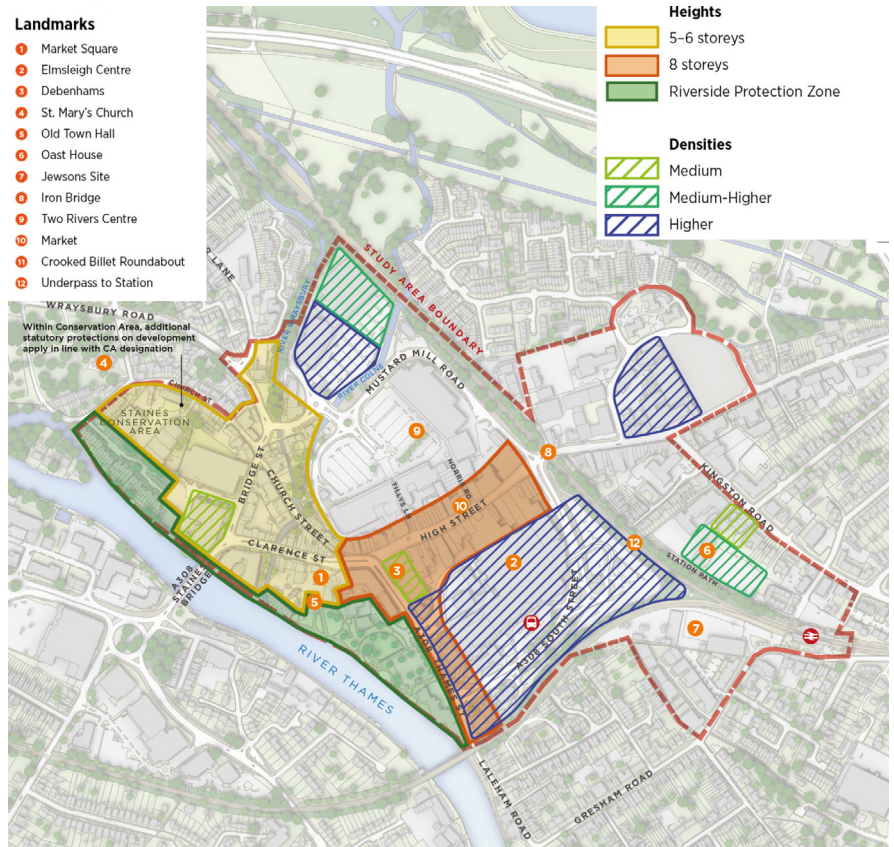
improved connections and river restoration to improve biodiversity, manage floodwater and provide a new type of open space.



Big Idea Two: Development that Respects Character

The Development Framework sets out where and how new development could be accommodated within the town centre. Central to this is understanding what needs to be protected to ensure the distinct character of Staines-upon-Thames is retained and enhanced, while ensuring that new homes, facilities, jobs and public spaces can be delivered successfully.

A new 'zoning' plan makes this clear, providing guidance on the appropriate heights of future buildings in particularly sensitive parts of the town centre, protecting the riverfront, and also highlighting locations where higher-density developments, complying with clear design principles, would be best located.

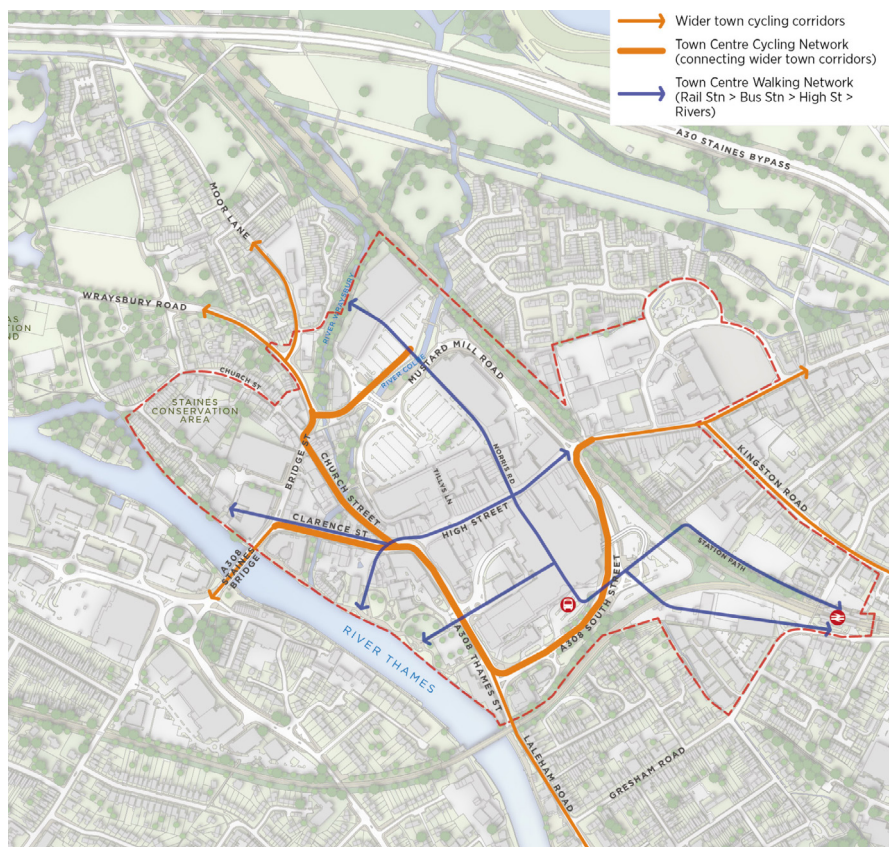


Big Idea Three: Healthy Streets for People

Too many streets in Staines-upon-Thames are dominated by vehicle traffic, with over two-thirds passing through the centre en-route to somewhere else. Major roads cut the High Street off from the riverfront. For a future where the town centre is more liveable, sustainable and attractive, now is the time to begin the process of changing this and transforming streets into places where people feel comfortable walking, cycling and using outside space for more activities.

The Development Framework sets out an aspiration for transformation of the A308 through the town centre, demonstrating how its space may be better configured to support walking, cycling, planting and street trees and space for street activities such as cafés and events.

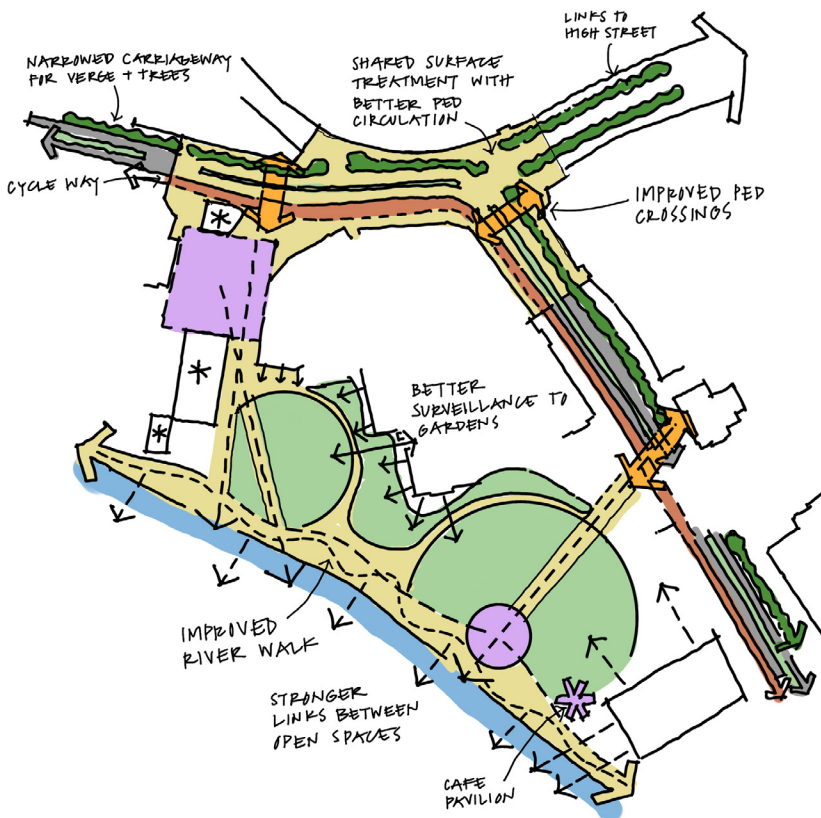
Away from the main vehicle routes, there are opportunities to provide new and higher quality street connections through areas identified as suitable for redevelopment such as at Two Rivers North and the Elmsleigh Centre.



Big Idea Four: New Open Spaces

Staines-upon-Thames currently lacks a variety of open spaces in the town centre. To support an increase in town centre living and create new destination spaces for activities and leisure, the Development Framework sets out the opportunity for a variety of new publicly accessible open spaces, each of different character and intended use, to complement existing provision. These could include green urban squares, riverfront plazas, event space and natural spaces based around the River Colne, creating new areas for informal sports, meeting places, leisure activities, events and street life.

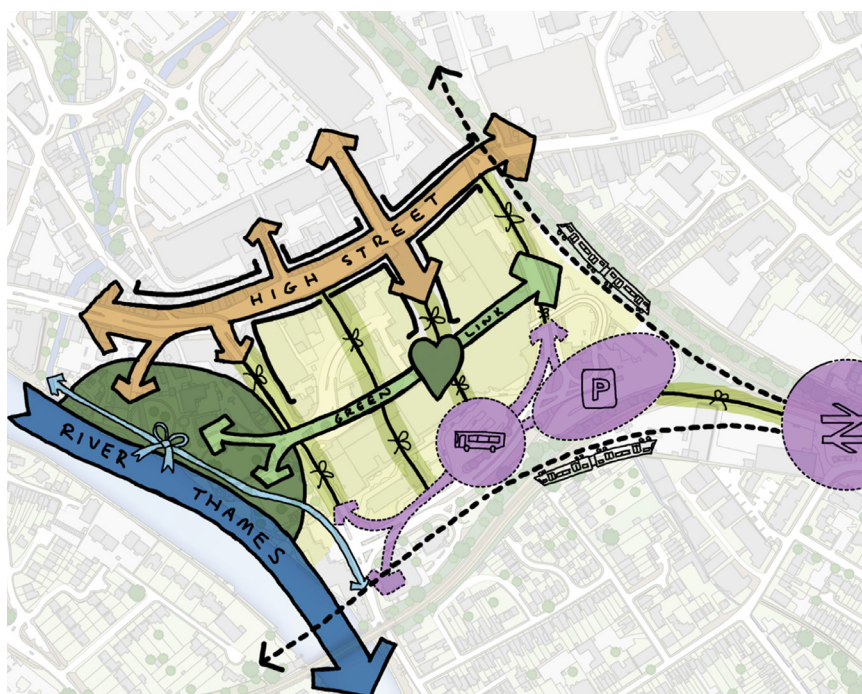
Improved facilities at Memorial Gardens, turning the Riverside Car Park into high-quality open space with new café or community facilities facing onto the park and river, would be an early priority. Coupled with future public space improvements on Thames Street and a redevelopment at the Elmsleigh Centre, this could reactivate and reconnect the whole south-eastern quarter of the town centre.



Big Idea Five: Redevelopment of the Elmsleigh and Tothill Area

Town centres are changing, with the traditional dominance of retail receding in importance and a resurgence in a mix of activity-based uses including community, civic, leisure and residential. Whilst a relatively strong centre, Staines-upon-Thames is experiencing a fall in demand for larger retail spaces, pressure for new homes and local aspirations for a wider variety of uses and facilities.

The Elmsleigh Centre is a successful shopping centre but its design is increasingly showing signs of obsolescence. The area surrounding it, including the car parks, South Street, and the service roads, do not make a positive contribution to the quality and character of Staines-upon-Thames. Redevelopment of this area to provide new streets, open spaces, homes, flexible facilities and commercial/retail space in a new neighbourhood would make a huge contribution to revitalising this part of town and supporting the sustainability of the town centre.



Big Idea Six: Design for Urban Living

The town centre has been identified by the Local Plan as having the potential to accommodate thousands of new homes in a location easily accessible by sustainable means of transport, with most facilities on the doorstep, and with easy access to a variety of open spaces. New residents can provide new vitality and footfall to support a diverse mix of town centre businesses, contributing to ensuring the town centre can continue to cater for its wider catchment.

The Development Framework sets out a series of design principles to ensure that residential schemes deliver great places to live, contribute to the wider town, and avoid creating new problems for new and existing residents. These are grouped into three themes: People-Friendly Streets, Attractive, Long-Lasting Buildings and Quality Homes for All.



How to respond to the consultation:

www.spelthorne.gov.uk/localplan

The full Local Plan and Staines Development Framework documents are available to read on our website along with all of the research and evidence documents which supports them.

You can respond online
www.spelthorne.gov.uk/localplan.

Paper copies of the documents are available to view at the Council Offices and all libraries in the Borough.

The best way to respond is using the website (a response template in available online) but you can also email local.plan@spelthorne.gov.uk or write to us: Strategic Planning, Spelthorne Borough Council, Knowle Green, Staines-upon-Thames, TW18 1XB

Consultation closes at 11.59pm on Tuesday 5 September 2022

