

Item 8 - Questions from members of the public

Question 1. A. McLuskey

In the light of the utter pointlessness of the Esso pipeline about to be laid from Southampton to Heathrow and the tarnished reputation of the organisation's parent company will Spelthorne Council agree to press for a cancellation of this deeply disruptive and anti-environmental project?

Question 2 Mr A Woodward

The Council persists in stating that they are legally bound to comply with the housing numbers from central Government, using this as a justification for releasing green belt and employing consultants to provide a rationale for this. There are clearly exceptional circumstances in Spelthorne, large areas of green belt, the area already covered by water and the high levels of flood risk, so could the Leader explain why no consideration has been given to using an alternative methodology for assessing housing numbers, as set out in the relevant Government guidance? [Housing and economic needs assessment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444444/Housing_and_economic_needs_assessment_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

The relevant paragraph of the guidance is given below.

Where an alternative approach results in a lower housing need figure than that identified using the standard method, the strategic policy-making authority will need to demonstrate, using robust evidence, that the figure is based on realistic assumptions of demographic growth and that there are exceptional local circumstances that justify deviating from the standard method. This will be tested at examination.

Question 3 Mr N. Rowe

The Council's press release yesterday (7 July) "Spelthorne Borough Council to make crucial decisions on new Local Plan strategy" begs a number of questions to which we hope the Environment & Sustainability Committee, or the Chair of E&S at full Council, will provide answers:

There is detail on setting a target amount of 'greenbelt' to be released for development.

Why has the Committee not also defined a target limit for the height of new developments in Staines?

Question 4 Mr N. Rowe

The Council's press release yesterday (7 July) "Spelthorne Borough Council to make crucial decisions on new Local Plan strategy" begs a number of questions to which we hope the Environment & Sustainability Committee, or the Chair of E&S at full Council, will provide answers:

There is reference in the press release to excluding any sites not already identified for inclusion in the Local Plan.

Why have other sites been excluded for consideration, particularly as this will inevitably encourage overdevelopment of identified sites?

Question 5 Mr N. Rowe

How will the results of the recent public consultation on the future development of Staines play into any decision on high-rise developments in Staines, who will do the

analysis, who will draw conclusions from it, and how open/transparent will this process be?

Question 6 Mr N. Rowe

The Committee expresses a wish to “proceed without further delay” with implementing the Local Plan. How can the Council proceed with the Local Plan when the work has not been started (let alone completed) to determine whether Staines’ infrastructure can be upgraded (let alone afforded) to accommodate the level of development currently contemplated? The government has made it clear that infrastructure constraints should be taken into account when setting “a sustainable housing target” and work on this has not yet been done. In recent discussions I was told by Surrey County Council (in a meeting also attended by an SCC Councillor) that an analysis of the infrastructure issues relating to the draft development plan for Staines would probably cost about a £100,000 which SCC would undertake if asked to do so.

Question 7 Ms K. Sanders (OAN)

How can Council agree that we should plan to meet 611 dpa without also agreeing AT THE SAME TIME an Infrastructure Delivery Plan that matches that and does the Council concede that, by not taking a proportionate approach to housing growth, unconstrained growth of 9,165 units cannot be SUSTAINABLY built on 70% of the land in Spelthorne (i.e. Spelthorne's total area LESS the 30% covered by the absolute environmental constraints of waterbodies and functional floodplain)?

Question 8 Ms K. Sanders (OAN)

Given councillors repeated commitment to Spelthorne's wider Green Belt as a whole (which covers 65% of Spelthorne's total area), does the Council agree that being forced to build 100% of the 9,165 units on only 35% of Spelthorne (give or take 1 or 2%) would represent a STRONG reason for restricting the housing number under Para 11b of the NPPF?

Question 9 Ms K. Sanders (OAN)

Would Council concede that any self-imposed limit of Green Belt release is arbitrary and not strategically robust or defensible (be it the 0.6% of all Green Belt land now suggested or the 1.6% proposed by the Preferred Options consultation) and that there is no built-in mechanism to shut Pandora's Box once it has been opened?

Question 10 Ms K. Sanders (OAN)

By the Council's own admission, it has now exhausted all potential options for meeting needs in the urban area. Where does Council propose putting any requisite essential infrastructure yet to be identified (e.g. schools and health services) that would go along with such a high level of growth? Also, given that Surrey County Council classes, to all intents and purposes, all of the non-urban area in Spelthorne as a Biodiversity Opportunity Area, would Council agree that any housing or commercial development in the non-urban area would be detrimental to biodiversity and would make it more difficult for the borough to achieve the MANDATORY biodiversity net gain, which is likely to become planning law in 2023, potentially before Spelthorne's new Local Plan is signed off?

Having exhausted all potential options for meeting needs in the urban area and having done the Duty to Cooperate exercise, would the Council agree it is NOW time to calculate a "Policy on" housing target?