

Environment and Sustainability Committee **Information on the evolution and timeline for the Surrey Place Ambition 2050**

At its meeting on 18 January 2022, the committee asked for additional information on where the matter had been discussed, plus which post holders had been involved, as well as the level of councillor involvement.

Background

Governance - Surrey Future Steering Board

The Surrey Place Ambition 2050 is a Surrey Future Partnership document. It is not a Surrey County Council document per se, but they are leading on pulling the document together and the consultation is being done by them. Its preparation has been overseen by the Surrey Future Steering Board. The Board comprises Surrey County, all the Surrey Districts and Boroughs plus representatives of other key stakeholders such as the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (West Surrey), the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (East Surrey), Gatwick Diamond and Surrey Wildlife Trust. It is an officer only group (led by a Chief Executive from a Borough – by agreement), but reports into Surrey Chief Executives Group and Surrey Leaders Group at the appropriate time.

Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership - Step Up Town 'designation'

The EM3 LEP covers West Surrey and large parts of Hampshire. According to the chair of the LEP Board on EM3's website:

"We understand that our purpose is to work in partnership with local businesses and local government to steer us towards the world we want to create in the future. We need growth if we are to generate the prosperity which will pay for the housing, healthcare, and council services that we all want and people in our local communities need. Our job as a Local Enterprise Partnership is to invest to support productivity, collaborate with others, identify local strengths and meet local challenges; all to make growth benefits our people and enhances our places".



<https://www.enterprisem3.org.uk/>

It should be noted that Staines-upon-Thames has been identified as a Step-up Town by the Enterprise M3 LEP for nearly 8 years. It first appeared in the Enterprise M3 Economic Plan 2014 – 2020. In that document step up towns were identified as “areas of latent economic potential, which currently experience barriers to growth that impacts upon the overall performance of the Enterprise M3 area. Our Step-up Towns’ Growth Packages include a series of catalytic transport and infrastructure measures to alleviate congestion and enhance capacity, town centre renewal to promote inward investment, skills centres of excellence and interventions to unlock housing sites”.

The Plan is an EM3 approved document and had no statutory status from a planning point of view. As it is not a Spelthorne document it would not have gone to Cabinet for comment or approval as it is not a Council policy. However the Chief Executive and the Leader(s) at the time would have been aware of the document from attending the EM3 LEP Chief Executives and Leaders meetings.

The aim of such a ‘designation’ was to highlight those areas (alongside Growth Towns such as Woking and Basingstoke) where EM3 were more likely to focus funding opportunities (for infrastructure projects).

<https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/content/doclib/2340.pdf>

This was carried forward into the EM3 Strategic Economic Plan (2018-2030) which again identified Staines-upon-Thames as a Step-up town, “to realise untapped potential by focusing on activities to stimulate growth and deliver improved commercial, retail and residential opportunities”.

<https://www.enterprisem3.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-02/Strategic%20Economic%20Plan%202018.pdf>

Further analysis was done by EM3 in 2019 of all their towns, and reference is made in that document to the Surrey 2050 Place Ambition and the Longcross-Staines-Heathrow Strategic Opportunity Area

https://enterprisem3.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-02/EM3%20Towns%20Study%20Final%20Report%20v4.0%20Part%202%20Future%20Growth%2020.1.19_0.pdf

There have been some positives from a funding point of view (sustainable transport for the Wider Staines area – Staines to Heathrow, Brooklands College, and Egham roundabout). £0.5m was also allocated for a gigabit rollout in Staines (though this did not proceed as commercial operators are undertaking a phased rollout across the borough without any funding injection).

Surrey Place Ambition and the Longcross-Staines-Heathrow Strategic Opportunity Area

The Surrey Place Ambition 2050 Draft Implementation Framework is looking to deliver “good growth which requires long term commitment and investment”. It makes clear that it “will be delivered through collaboration with many different strategic stakeholders and partners and through various plans and strategies many of which have already been developed” and that “growth will be implemented through a number of strategies.” Para 2.1 on page 4 sets out that “Surrey Borough and District Local Plans ...are vital for the successful implementation of the spatial elements of the Place Ambition, both testing and delivery.”

Surrey Place Ambition 2050

It is therefore very clear that the document is merely pulling together existing/emerging strategies and local plans into one document across the County (effectively just collating in one place what is already known and in place or being worked on by all the districts and boroughs). It is also making it clear that it is *then* for the boroughs and districts to implement locally, and not the County. The document will have no statutory

basis in terms of the decision making process of Spelthorne Borough Council in relation to the Local Plan or determining planning applications.

There is nothing new in this draft document that has not either been in the public domain for a number of years (Spelthorne Borough Councils desire for a Southern Light Rail access from Staines-upon-Thames to Heathrow, and Staines as an EM3 Step Up Town), or is not being developed by Spelthorne Council and therefore in the public domain since work first started on the document (e.g. Staines Development Framework).

The Surrey Place Ambition 2050 Draft Implementation Framework runs to 45 pages, and just 4 pages (9 – 12) relate to the Strategic Opportunity Area (SOA) covering Spelthorne and Runnymede. The SOA links together the importance of Heathrow to the EM3 area, the step-up town designation for Staines-upon-Thames and the strategic development of Longcross (combination of its designation as part of a multi-site enterprise zone some years ago and 1,700 homes in Longcross Garden Village).

Four Priority Outcomes are identified (only 2 and 4 apply to Spelthorne):

1. Delivery of the new community at Longcross including connectivity improvements, especially links to Chertsey (including for secondary schools) and wider area
2. Improved rail connectivity to Heathrow, Guildford and Woking
3. Support productivity growth in key sectors along the corridor; Enterprise Zone at Longcross likely to become a significant hub for creative industries and key employment location
4. Delivery of a Development Framework for Staines which will set out the opportunities to deliver new homes, commercial activity and vital infrastructure

Pages 11 and 12 set out the proposed strategic interventions up to 2030 to deliver these outcomes:

Rail connectivity (2)	All partners are committed to enhancing southern rail access to Heathrow (County, Spelthorne, Runnymede, HAL, DfT etc)
Development Framework (4)	Production and delivery of the Framework, improvement to A308, transport interchange, pedestrian movement (Surrey - highways infrastructure, Spelthorne - framework, Health and Wellbeing Board - pedestrian)

There have been two draft versions of the document. The first draft was produced in May 2019 and the second in November 2021. This latter document is the one which is currently out to consultation and which was presented to the Environment and Sustainability Committee on 18 January 2022.

<https://www.surreysays.co.uk/environment-and-infrastructure/placeambition/>

The timeline below starts in the immediate run up to the May 2019 first draft, and finishes in December 2021 with the consultation on the second draft.

Version 1 Surrey Place Ambition

Spelthorne Borough Council operated a Strong Leader and Cabinet model at this time. The portfolio holder for strategic planning and assets was the then Leader.

10 May 2109

Surrey Chief Executives considered the draft document.
No representatives from Spelthorne were at that meeting.

16 May 2019

Surrey Futures Steering Board agreed the draft Place Ambition document. This included reference to the Strategic Opportunity Areas (Longcross- Staines-Heathrow Corridor)

Chief Executive attended this meeting

6 June 2019

The strategic lead officer from another borough discussed the draft document. Both the Chief Executive and Leader attended this meeting

(The Board agreed to briefings rather than a more formal approach as the document is non-statutory. The idea was that it would evolve/be subject to updating).

It is understood there was concern expressed at the time by the Chief Executive and the Leader that this document was aimed solely at Surrey's ambitions at the time for a Unitary bid. The advice given was that any and all County strategic plans would need to fall out of Spelthorne Borough Council's Local Plan work stream. It is understood that the then Leader briefed his conservative group who were equally dismissive and concerned about its possible covert Unitary status.

There was no formal report to Spelthorne's Cabinet as this was an early draft of a non-statutory document. Nor was there an update to Cabinet at a briefing on this document (as advised at the E&S meeting).

The links below set out the Councils clear and emphatic response to Surrey's fully developed proposal for a Unitary bid which only saw the light of day in the summer of 2020. The Councils 'dim view' of the first draft of the Surrey Place Ambition 2050 document needs to be seen through this lens.

<https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/19639/Spelthorne-alerts-residents-to-Surrey-s-unitary-authority-plans>

<https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/19636/Spelthorne-responds-to-Unitary-Authority-Plans>

<https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/19703/Spelthorne-Borough-Council-unanimously-vote-to-oppose-Surrey-wide-Unitary-Authority>

11 July 2019

Surrey Place Ambition Conference held to publicise Version 1. Chief Executive and Leader invited to attend alongside other officers, but did not do so. The Strategic Planning Manager did attend the conference.

Version 2 Surrey Place Ambition

Political governance

The Council operated under the Strong Leader and Cabinet system until May 2021. There were two Leaders during this period. Under the first, the portfolio of strategic planning sat with the Leader. Under the second, strategic planning moved away from the Leader and sat with a Cabinet portfolio holder. A briefing took place on the document but did not feature heavily in discussions with portfolio holders. At no point, were officers advised to change the approach previously set out in the draft document.

From May 2021 the Council has operated under the Committee System. Strategic Planning falls within the remit of the Environment and Sustainability Committee and the Chair and Vice Chair. A briefing took place on the document but did not feature heavily in discussions with the chair and vice chair. At no point, have officers been advised to change the approach previously set out in the draft document.

Priorities of the Council during this period (September 2019 – November 2021)

Covid-19

Spelthorne was the first Council in Surrey, and possibly nationally, to declare it was putting itself on an emergency footing in response to the COVID 19 pandemic on 13 March 2020. For

at least the next six months virtually the whole council was re-oriented to focus on supporting our most vulnerable residents, communities and businesses with our emergency response. <https://democracy.spelthorne.gov.uk/documents/s27114/Report%20on%20emergency%20response%20to%20COVID-19.pdf>

Nearly two years on, and the Council is still heavily involved in helping the residents and the business community to recover. This has had to be our main focus, and is a fundamental tenet of why we exist as a Council. <https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/recoveryplan>

Local Plan and Staines Development Framework

Progress has been made on the Local Plan throughout this period. Members of the committee will be well aware of this work, that of the Local Plan Task Group and the absolute necessity of delivering a Local Plan in a timely manner. This has been the main focus of the strategic planning team, alongside the previous proposals for the expansion of Heathrow and the Staines Development Framework.

The first reference to a Staines 'masterplan' appears in the Spelthorne Local Plan – Issues and Options Consultation May 2018 (Option 3 page 25). <https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/19959/Issues-and-Options-Consultation-documents>

It is also referred to in the Spelthorne Local Plan – Issues and Options Consultation Response Document dated September 2018 (pages 1 and 4 where the pie chart shows Option 3 Staines focus was the preferred option). <https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/19957/Issues-and-Options-Consultation-2018>

It is for these reasons that Surrey Place Ambition 2050 Version 1 dated July 2019 referred to a Staines Masterplan/Staines Development Framework.

However, work could only be undertaken once a consultant had been appointed to assist with delivering this masterplan – now development framework. A Cabinet report on 6 November 2019 approved the concept of a Staines Masterplan and authorised officers to go out to tender.

<https://democracy.spelthorne.gov.uk/documents/s24006/Cabinet%20-%20SUT%20masterplan%20report.pdf>
<https://democracy.spelthorne.gov.uk/documents/s24007/Masterplanning%20Specification%20v8.0.pdf>

Work started in earnest on the process of coming forward with a development framework with the appointment of David Lock Associates (February 2020) and the setting up of the initial councillor Task Group in June 2020.

The masterplan was again referred to in the Spelthorne Local Plan – Preferred Options Consultation Response Document September 2020:

“The Preferred Spatial Strategy consulted on aimed to meet Spelthorne’s housing needs by releasing some weakly performing Green Belt, intensifying development in urban areas and by producing a masterplan for Spelthorne’s largest town, Staines upon Thames, to seek further opportunities for growth beyond the sites identified in our Strategic Land Availability Assessment. Production of the Staines Masterplan has begun and is expected to be complete by the end of 2020, in time for the Regulation 19 consultation of the submission version of our Local Plan early next year. This will enable both to be considered together as the masterplan will be key to supporting our assumption on growth in the town”.

<https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/19902/Preferred-Options-Consultation-2019>

Expansion of Heathrow

As councillors will know Heathrow did have plans to expand the airport with a third runway. This was vigorously fought by this Council and the work was led by the Strategic Planning Team. <https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/heathrow>

There was a report which went to an extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny committee in September 2019 <https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/finalconsultation> April 2020 saw a further round of consultation by Heathrow to which the Council responded in detail. <https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/19044/Council-welcomes-further-Heathrow-consultation>

A very considerable amount of time and resource was put in by the Strategic Planning team (and others) throughout this period. It is for this reason that there was such a delay between the first reference to a Staines Masterplan and the appointment of the consultants in June 2020.

All of the above were a much higher priority for the organisation, residents and councillors. Limited resources within the strategic planning team had to be directed to those rather than to a peripheral document being pulled together by Surrey which simply represented a collation of existing known plans and strategies.

Surrey Futures Steering Board

Officers attended 9 meetings between 16 September 2019 and 7 December 2021 (the Chief Executive attended one, the Group Head for Regeneration and Growth attended six and the Strategic Planning Manager attended two).

One of these Board meetings (4 February 2021) focused on Implementing the Surrey 2050 Vision workshop. This was led by Catriona Riddell Associates (a Consultant who has been appointed by Surrey to help deliver this piece of work). It looked at the Surrey Infrastructure Plan, the Urban Strategy, priorities for delivering the Strategic Opportunity Areas over the next ten years, metrics to be used to measure 'good growth' and stakeholder engagement including a community forum later in the summer of 2021. This was attended by the Group Head for Regeneration and Growth. There was no push back against the Strategic Opportunity Area as no political steer had been given to do so.

There have been two meetings held at officer level to discuss and review the Strategic Opportunity Area for the Staines-Longcross-Heathrow Corridor. Officers from Spelthorne, Runnymede and Surrey attended these meetings including the Group Head for Regeneration and Growth and the Strategic Planning Manager. There was no push back against the Strategic Opportunity Area as no political steer had been given to do so.

There is no record of this draft version 2 having been to a Surrey CEX meeting for sign off before the Conference at the end of November or before the consultation went live. Nor is there any record that this draft version 2 document has been to a Surrey Leaders meeting.

Surrey Future and Surrey Development Forum Conference

An all day conference with Councils, developers, housebuilders and residents groups took place on 25 November 2021 to talk about "good growth" for Surrey. It was designed as a launchpad for the Surrey Place Ambition 2050.

This was attended by the Chair of E&S - Cllr Ian Beardsmore, Local cllr - Cllr M Beecher, Group Head Regeneration and Growth, Planning Development Manager, plus 2 Residents Association reps. The Leader Cllr Nichols was invited, but was not able to attend due to Covid.

<https://surreydev.co.uk/event/surrey-future-surrey-development-forum-inaugural-annual-conference/>

<https://surreydev.co.uk/inaugural-annual-conference/>

Surrey Cabinet

From speaking to Surrey officers, it is understood that neither the first nor second versions have been to Surrey's Cabinet for consideration. They have advised that there is an intention that the current consultation draft will go to Cabinet in order that their response can then be fed into the revised draft.

Consultation

As of mid-February, Spelthorne is only one of two councils across the whole of Surrey who have taken the matter to committee or cabinet for councillors consideration. The other Council was Woking and this consisted of a report, the place ambition and a proposed officer response to the document. We are certainly the only Council who gave a presentation, had a Surrey officer attend to answer questions and who enabled a full, frank and open debate by councillors to be held.

The Council has been actively promoting community engagement on this matter with a press release and social media. This briefing will be placed on the Council's website to ensure that residents can get a clearer understanding on the background. A new section has been added to the Shaping Staines page which has the new release and this is where this briefing note will be located, plus the response of the Environment and Sustainability Committee once that has been agreed by the chair and vice chair. In addition, the communications team have been asked to ensure that the top News Stories list is refreshed so that this re-appears at the top periodically. There will also be a final reminder 'push' release in the run up to the close of the consultation.

<https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/Shaping-Staines>

Next steps

A response will go to Surrey County Council on behalf of the Environment and Sustainability Committee setting out the comments and concerns raised at the meeting on 18 January 2021. This is as per the agreement of the Committee, and will be reviewed by the chair and vice chair of the committee before dispatch. These will no doubt be taken into consideration by the Surrey Futures Steering Board as the draft version is further revised.

The intention will be for Spelthorne Council to put the final draft version of the document to the Environment and Sustainability Committee, with a recommendation on whether or not to 'adopt' the Surrey Place Ambition version 2 on behalf of the Council. It is understood that all Councils (boroughs, districts and the county) will need to decide for themselves whether or not to formally adopt this non-statutory document.