

## Questions from members of the public

### Question 1 – Peter Bower

#### Preamble:

*At the Environment and Sustainability Committee meeting on 8 November, Cllr Beecher produced data that one might have expected to give the Council pause for thought. Seventeen Councils have delayed submission of their Local Plan and a further four have withdrawn their Local Plan from Investigation pending clarity on the government's new policy relating to baseline data used to determine a borough's housing target. Indeed, one Council has been told by the Planning Inspector to use 2018 data which will reduce its housing target by close to 20%. If Spelthorne used 2018 data the borough's housing target would drop from 618 p.a. to 489 p.a. – a reduction of 1,935 over the Plan period. Eliminating use of all the Local Plan's allocated green belt sites would consume 740 of this number, leaving 1,195 to reduce the allocations elsewhere in the borough, including in Staines which is currently required to absorb 55% of the borough's entire housing target.*

**Question:** Given 21 Councils have delayed or withdrawn their Local Plans pending clarity on Government policy; that one Council was told by the Inspector to use 2018 data to lower their housing target; and that those responsible for Spelthorne's Plan have made a powerful case in the Foreword to it *against* the current housing target of 618 p.a. (asserting that it "will damage our environment and ruin the character of our small and highly constrained borough"), why has the Council refused to follow other boroughs either in producing a Plan using 2018 data, or awaiting clarity on the government's housing policy?

### Question 2 – Alan Doyle

#### Preamble:

The recent LGA Peer Review made a number of positive remarks about the Council. However - rather pointedly – it also made a number of recommendations for improvement. Amongst other issues, the Peer Review Panel noted:

- There is poor behaviour by some Councillors which is widely recognised as damaging your reputation and is affecting morale and the ability to retain and recruit staff.
- Councillors appear focused upon the internal political rather than the bigger external picture.
- There needs to be recognition that the intense political dance is affecting your reputation, is costing you money and could ultimately affect the delivery of council services for your residents and businesses.
- Members need to fully appreciate the financial implications of their decision making - or not making decisions.
- Accept the need for higher density in urban areas if you wish to continue to protect the green belt, as set out in the Local Plan that you have agreed to and are about to submit.
- You need to understand the necessary and vital relationship between density and viability.

**Question:**

**By the time the Review Panel returns next year, will the Council be able to show that it has ended:**

- **the repeated submission of questions to Council, which has taken up so much officer time, and which the Information Commissioner would describe as vexatious, and;**
- **the continued filibustering attempts to prevent the submission of the Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate, which officers have more than once pointed out would be at huge cost to us all?**