

Appendix 5 – Executive Summary

Spelthorne Design Code

Executive summary

What is the issue

Local residents have expressed dissatisfaction with poor quality design of some developments in the Borough.

There is sensitivity about the type and form of proposed development in built up areas such as Staines town centre given the scale and impact this may have.

How the issue can be addressed

The national planning policy framework includes a requirement to deliver well designed places and buildings.

It includes guidance to enable local authorities to set local standards of design that developers are required to meet and that address the concerns of local communities. The National Model Design Code and National Design Guide set out the process and approach for local authorities to produce a design code.

A design code is ‘A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area.’ It sets the standards for development that developers will be required to meet for new development.

What we have done

Appointed consultants that have the expertise to write a design code and who have previous experience of advising Spelthorne.

Set up a Task Group and Project Board, including Councillors, external advisors, consultants, and officials.

Appointed an [communications digital platform](#), Commonplace, that enables and supports community engagement and issuing regular updates.

Set up a Borough wide engagement strategy including workshops, 121 meetings, exhibitions and digital engagement so that all residents had the opportunity to communicate their views about positive and negative aspects of their environment.

This included workshops with young people and schools.

A Citizens’ Panel was set up with more than 40 local residents from each settlement and representative of age, ethnic background and disability who volunteered to work with consultants to help shape the Design Code content.

The consultants, directed by the officials and Task Group and informed by the consultation process, produced a comprehensive suite of information that covers all aspects of design quality and sets out what a well-designed places should address.

The Citizens' Panel has reviewed the Draft Design Code and confirmed that it reflects their views.

Other stakeholders, including local civic societies, statutory consultees, developers and experts have been given the opportunity to express their views during the preparation of the Design Code.

About the Spelthorne Design Code

The format and process for developing the Spelthorne Design Code has been informed by the National Model Design Code guidance document and latest guidance from the MHCLG, the Government Department that sets out planning policies.

It includes an appreciation of Spelthorne and its key places, an outline vision for its future, identifies the primary areas of change that aligns with the Local Plan and sets out design requirements for new development.

These include proposals for the form of buildings, their height, scale and massing, landscape and natural environment, movement and transport principles and quality of spaces between buildings.

It reflects the key issues raised in the community engagement process.

A feature of the document is the focus on specific areas where change is necessary and anticipated including Staines Town centre and Sunbury Cross. It provides guidelines on future residential sites that might arise, and for infill and domestic extensions.

The Spelthorne Design Code can be found in Appendix 1.

What supporting information is provided

The report in the E&S pack provide further detail to support this summary report. These include appendices to cover:

Approval to Conduct Statutory Consultation on Spelthorne Design Code – Committee Report;

A Draft Copy of the Spelthorne Design Code (Appendix 1) – this is the document that is proposed for approval;

Approach to Statutory Consultation Strategy (Appendix 2) – this sets out the process for statutory consultation of the document;

The Engagement Process (Stage 1 to Stage 2) Draft (Appendix 3) – this sets out the approach that has been taken to engage with stakeholders;

Draft Code Public Engagement Report (Stage 3) (Appendix 4) – this sets out the approach that has been taken to engage with stakeholders

How will the Design Code be implemented

Subject to the decision by E&S Committee, there will be further consultation for a 6-week period and subject to the outcome the Draft will be further revised and represented to E&S prior to submission for full Council approval.

This provides further time for the views to be expressed including those of other agencies such as developers and landowners if they have not done so to date.

Following the public consultation and any final changes that are required, the Spelthorne Design Code will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document that supports the Local Plan.

Why this is important

The adoption of a Spelthorne Design Code would be a first most important step towards ensuring new development is high quality and reflects the communities priorities. Other steps will need to follow.

Options for the E&S Committee

Option 1 - Recommended option: The Committee approve the commencement of the public consultation.

Option 2 – Not Recommended: The Committee resolve to seek further amendments to the SDC before commencement of public consultation.

This option is not recommended as any delay in the start of the statutory consultation, outside the window set out at para 2.25 [of the committee report] would mean that it would not be advisable to begin the consultation until September, as consulting during summer typically results in lower levels of engagement. The knock-on effect of this would mean the adoption of the Spelthorne Design Code would be delayed, likely to late 2025/early 2026.

Option 3 – Not Recommended: The Committee resolve to reject the request for publication of the SDC.

This option is not recommended as in order to adopt the Spelthorne Design Code, so that it can be considered as a material consideration in decision making a statutory consultation is required by legislation as set out above. If a public consultation is not held the project cannot move forward and the Spelthorne Design Code cannot be adopted.