



Committee Report Checklist

Please submit the completed checklists with your report. If final draft report does not include all the information/sign offs required, your item will be delayed until the next meeting cycle.

Stage 1

Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	Yes / No	Date
Councillor engagement / input from Chair prior to briefing	Yes	Ongoing from 2024
Commissioner engagement (if report focused on issues of concern to Commissioners such as Finance, Assets etc)		
Relevant Group Head review	DA	12/12/25
MAT+ review (to have been circulated at least 5 working days before Stage 2)		
This item is on the Forward Plan for the relevant committee	Yes	23/5/2025
	Reviewed by	
Finance comments		
Risk comments	LO	18/12/25
Legal comments	LH	11/03/26
HR comments (if applicable)		

For reports with material financial or legal implications the author should engage with the respective teams at the outset and receive input to their reports prior to asking for MO or s151 comments.

Do not forward to stage 2 unless all the above have been completed.

Stage 2

Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	Completed by	Date
Monitoring Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	L Heron	11/03/26
S151 Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	T.Collier	11/3/26
Confirm final report cleared by MAT		

Council

Tuesday 17 March 2026

Title	Spelthorne Design Code - Final Code for Adoption
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Laura Richardson, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	N/A
Corporate Priority	Community Environment
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Agree that the Spelthorne Design Code be adopted.2. Subject to recommendation 1, give delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in agreement with the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, to agree any non-material amendments to the Design Code.
Reason for Recommendation	<p>The Spelthorne Design Code (SDC) has been prepared through extensive collaboration with local residents, technical stakeholders, a cross- party Member Task Group, officers from the Strategic Planning Team, and consultants David Lock Associates and Feria Urbanism. Its purpose is to support the delivery of high- quality, well designed places across the Borough. The SDC establishes clear and locally distinctive design expectations to promote sustainable development across the Borough.</p> <p>A statutory public consultation on the draft Spelthorne Design Code was undertaken in accordance with Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 (b)(i) following approval by the Environment and Sustainability Committee on 17 June 2025. Feedback received from residents, technical bodies, officers, and Members has informed the finalised version now recommended for adoption by Council.</p> <p>At its meeting on 8 January 2026, the Environment and Sustainability Committee recommended the Spelthorne Design Code for adoption.</p>

1. Executive summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spelthorne Borough Council has been preparing a Borough-wide Design Code since mid-2024. The purpose of the Code is to provide clear, practical and locally specific design guidance for new development. It's preparation responds directly to the requirements of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, which places a duty on all local authorities to produce an area-wide Design Code to support the delivery of high-quality places. The Spelthorne Design Code also reflects concerns raised by residents and elected Members about the quality of design in development projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National policy expects all Local Planning Authorities to prepare Design Codes to improve the quality, character and sustainability of development. There has been strong political support for this project with Members keen for high quality design in the Borough. The Spelthorne Design Code will help ensure that new developments are well-designed, respond to local character, and deliver high-quality places that meet the needs and expectations of residents.
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the Spelthorne Design Code. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the Spelthorne Design Code so it can be formally issued as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and used for planning decision-making.

2. Key issues

Background

- 2.1 A design code is “A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area”. (National Planning Policy Framework, 2024)
- 2.2 Paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated in December 2024 states: “The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”

- 2.3 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) (LURA) places a legal requirement on Local Authorities (LAs) to prepare area wide Design Codes, enabling councils to set out what good design looks like for their local area and their vision for the future. Following the enactment of the LURA the updated NPPF (December 2024) sets out the national policy expectation for the development and delivery of Design Codes in Paragraphs 131 – 134.
- 2.4 As set out above, the national focus on the delivering high-quality places aligns with local concerns raised by both residents and elected Members regarding the design quality of new development in Spelthorne.

Bespoke Design Code for Spelthorne

- 2.5 The Spelthorne Design Code has been developed through a collaborative process involving the public, a Task Group consisting of Members on a cross-party basis and technical stakeholders supported by officers in the Strategic Planning Team and the consultant team.
- 2.6 The Spelthorne Design Code sets out the design requirements for new development in the Borough. It will ensure that proposals are locally supported, sustainable and function well for all users. The Spelthorne Design Code will be used in determining planning applications and will support the new Spelthorne Local Plan. It provides simple, concise and illustrated design requirements for streets, open spaces and buildings. It also sets out expectations for the process to be followed by applicants when proposals are designed.
- 2.7 From the outset, the Council has adopted a dynamic, community-focused approach to developing the Spelthorne Design Code. The Code has been created through an iterative five stage process: Listen, Translate, Test, Statutory Consultation and Final Code for Adoption. This project included multiple phases of community engagement, with each phase building on the findings of the previous one, incorporating feedback loops and continuous refinement. The emphasis on deep community engagement ensures that the final Design Code aligns with local values and needs.

Community Engagement and Development of the Code

- 2.8 The Spelthorne Design Code has been co-produced with the community through active and ongoing engagement both in-person and online.

Stage 1- Listen (Initial Engagement)

- 2.9 During the first stage of preparing the Code, the 'Listen' phase, public feedback was gathered to understand Spelthorne's places, strengths, challenges and opportunities. The Spelthorne Design Code Commonplace website, received thousands of visits and over four hundred subscribers keeping up to date with the latest project news.
- 2.10 One of the key features of the first stage of developing the Code was the Interactive Map on Commonplace, which enabled participants to virtually drop pins on specific locations within Spelthorne and share their thoughts and pictures about that place, area or a more specific design feature. This engagement opportunity was open to all local people for 14 weeks in autumn 2024 and received over 600 contributions.

- 2.11 In addition to online community engagement, the information gathered from local people has been enriched by in-person participation. In 6 locations across the Borough (Staines-upon-Thames Town Centre, Staines-upon-Thames Wider Area, Stanwell, Ashford, Sunbury-on-Thames and Shepperton), a series of 2-hour long Walking Tours were held, which were guided by local people to find out their opinions about local buildings, streets and spaces they liked and disliked and to gain an insight into design issues that matter to them. If local people were unable to attend, there was also a digital alternative offered and these Digital Walks, held virtually, allowed residents to share their views about different parts of the Borough that were of interest by guiding the team around an online map. This resulted in 4.5 hours of digital engagement.
- 2.12 To further ensure comprehensive community involvement, a public drop-in session with interactive activities was held in the Elmsleigh Shopping Centre in November 2024 and provided residents an opportunity to meet the Design Code Team, learn about Spelthorne in detail, engage in discussions, ask questions, and share their perspectives on what makes Spelthorne unique.
- 2.13 In order to ensure that the design of future development within Spelthorne reflects the diverse perspectives of residents, there has also been youth engagement opportunities. Sessions were held at 2 local schools and Ashford Youth Club. Residents from 13-years-old and up were also welcomed to apply to join, and consequently took part in, the Spelthorne Design Code Citizens' Panel.
- 2.14 During Stage 1, a Citizens' Panel was also established as a crucial element of the Council's community engagement in the development of the Spelthorne Design Code. This Citizens' Panel was created to promote inclusivity and reflect Spelthorne's diverse demographics including age, gender, ethnicity, housing situation and geographical location, according to Census data. Any interested resident in the Borough was invited to apply and over 40 Panel members were selected, following a 7.5-week recruitment period, through a blind selection process to be demographically representative of the Borough, with members therefore representing Spelthorne's diverse communities and providing input into the creation of the Spelthorne Design Code.
- 2.15 The Citizens' Panel were actively involved in the next two stages of the project. Two Citizens' Panel focus sessions with our appointed consultants David Lock Associates and Feria Urbanism were held on 16 November 2024 and 23 November 2024. During the first workshop, public feedback that had been gathered up until then was fed in, and Panel members explored what makes Spelthorne unique, envisioning a Borough that respects its character while embracing innovation. The second workshop focused on safety and accessibility, discussing how future development can cater to everyone's needs. Members also shared personal experiences and their vision for various edge conditions and building types, considering how development fits within its surroundings. These valuable insights were then taken to be implemented in the Code, so that design rules reflect the values and aspirations of our community.

Stage 2- Translate (First Draft Code Development)

- 2.16 During the second stage of the project, the 'Translate' phase, baseline data and community insights gathered from local communities and other key stakeholders, along with the Citizens' Panel, were translated to inform the first draft Code developed.

Stage 3- Test (First Draft Engagement)

- 2.17 As part of continued community involvement, the Citizens' Panel met for a third time during the next stage of the project, the 'Test' phase', on 1 March 2025 to test the draft Code. This session was designed to engage the Citizens' Panel in reviewing and applying the draft Design Code to real-world development scenarios. The project team explained the Design Code's purpose, development and role in planning, how public feedback has shaped it, and who will use it. Panel members also tested the draft Code by reviewing past developments and applying it to real-world scenarios and example sites.
- 2.18 Additionally, during Stage 3, with a draft Code having been developed and tested by the Citizens' Panel, the draft Code was further tested by technical stakeholders and also local people during a public engagement opportunity for the wider community that ran for 3 weeks on Commonplace. Local people could download and view the draft Code, , see how the draft Code responded to the community and provide feedback to help refine and develop the Code by answering a survey, which received 45 responses.
- 2.19 Overall, across the three engagement periods, there was 60+ hours of in-person engagement.
- 2.20 The draft Code was further amended following Citizens' Panel, technical stakeholder, public and Task Group member feedback, a Publication Version of the Spelthorne Design Code was developed. The Task Group met on 19 May 2025 for the final review of the publication draft of the Spelthorne Design Code and unanimously agreed that the Code should proceed to be considered by the Environment and Sustainability Committee.
- 2.21 The Publication Version of the Spelthorne Design Code was presented to the Environment and Sustainability Committee on 17 June 2025, who approved it for statutory consultation, subject to an amendment in the SDC to reference the recently published article by Dr J Paul in a footnote, with a caveat that the Council did not commission the report. The draft Spelthorne Design Code was updated to reflect the Committees' decision and published for consultation.

Stage 4- Statutory Consultation (Public Statutory Consultation)

- 2.22 The statutory public consultation on the Spelthorne Design Code - Final Draft for Consultation (May 2025) subsequently ran for 6 weeks from 24 June 2025 to 4 August 2025.
- 2.23 The consultation was mainly run via the Spelthorne Design Code Commonplace platform, which is the digital engagement hub. The updated draft Code was available to for the public to review by either viewing it or downloading it from the site. Physical copies of the draft Spelthorne Design Code were also available for the public to view in public libraries around the Borough and at the Council Offices during office hours.

- 2.24 To support and encourage responses from the public, a short survey was available on Commonplace, which contained general questions on the document overall, questions on the applicant self-assessment compliance checklists in the Code and the opportunity to provide further comments or upload document(s) to support a response. The public also had the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Code via email or by post. Overall, there were 81 responses received to the consultation.
- 2.25 Promotion of the statutory consultation and feedback analysis is further detailed in the appendices (to follow).
- 2.26 The Task Group met on 8 September 2025 to review findings from the public and technical consultees, following the statutory consultation. The Task Group also discussed proposed changes to the Code. The Task Group met for a final time on 10 November 2025 to agree that the final version of the Spelthorne Design Code which was put forward to Environment and Sustainability Committee on 8 January 2026 for a recommendation for adoption at Full Council.

Current Position

- 2.27 At a meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Committee on 8 January 2026 the Design Code was recommended for adoption by Full Council once the Local Plan was adopted.
- 2.28 Since the 8 January 2026 a clerical error was identified in one of the illustrative figures regarding residential extensions. This has been corrected.
- 2.29 The Spelthorne Design Code (SPD) is to be adopted as an SPD which is a planning policy document that builds upon, and provides more detailed guidance to, policies in the Local Plan.
- 2.30 The Design Code will be 'hooked' to the design policy within the new Spelthorne Local Plan, which is proposed for adoption on 17 March 2026. Once the Local Plan is adopted, the Spelthorne Design Code can be adopted immediately after and will be used as a material consideration when determining planning applications from the date of the adoption.
- 2.31 The Spelthorne Design Code includes an applicant checklist that must be submitted as part of a planning application. This checklist helps to clearly demonstrate compliance with required, recommended, and optional criteria in the Code. It is essential for the Design Code document to be accessible and easy to navigate for both technical and non-technical users.

Digital Design Code

- 2.32 The Council is committed to producing a digital interactive version of the Design Code, which will highlight only the relevant sections for each specific proposal. Funding for the digital element of the Spelthorne Design Code was secured as a one-off growth bid for 2025/26. The digital version will enhance usability, accessibility, and the overall effectiveness of the Code in guiding development. The dynamic content will facilitate a more intuitive understanding of design principles, allowing stakeholders to explore different development options and see their real-time impacts, thereby increasing engagement and comprehension.
- 2.33 Additionally, the digital format will allow for easier updates and version control, enabling prompt implementation of changes and immediate

dissemination of information. Version histories will be maintained and made public to ensure trust and accountability within the development process. It is anticipated that the digital version of the Spelthorne Design Code will be available upon adoption of the Code.

3. Options appraisal and proposal

3.1 Option 1 – Recommended: Adopt the Spelthorne Design Code

3.2 This option is recommended, as it will enable the planned timeline to be followed and allow for the Spelthorne Design Code and the Local Plan to be adopted simultaneously. This ensures the Design Code can take effect immediately after the Local Plan’s proposed adoption on 17 March 2026 and be used in decision-making without delay.

3.3 **Option 2 – Not Recommended:** The Council seek further amendments to the Spelthorne Design Code before adoption.

This option is not recommended, as the Design Code has been thoroughly developed and debated with input from councillors through a robust and iterative process. Any delay to seek additional amendments would have a knock-on effect, resulting in the adoption of the Spelthorne Design Code being pushed back for several months. Further amendments would require revision of the document, additional consultation, and a return to the Environment and Sustainability Committee before Council adoption, significantly delaying implementation.

3.4 **Option 3 – Not Recommended:** The Council reject the request for adoption of the Spelthorne Design Code.

This option is not recommended. For the Design Code to carry weight in decision making, and be treated as a material consideration, it must be formally adopted by Council. Rejecting adoption would prevent the Design Code from being used to guide or assess the design quality of new development.

4. Risk implications

4.1 A risk register is used within projects to identify, assess, and manage potential risks that could impact the project's success, ensuring proactive mitigation and response strategies. The risk register for the project is regularly monitored and updated by the Project Manager. The following risks have been considered:

4.2 Risk of reputational damage: Adopting the Spelthorne Design Code will enable the Council to maintain its reputation and demonstrate its commitment to responding to the community’s needs, transparency and proactive planning. Failure to adopt the Code could risk undermining public confidence in the Council’s commitment to high quality place making.

4.3 Without the Code, the Council would be less well equipped to take a proactive and consistent approach to managing design quality. Adoption of the Code will provide clear expectations for developers, support more consistent planning outcomes and help deliver high-quality, well-designed places across the Borough. Once the Spelthorne Design Code is adopted, developers can

proceed with proposals that align with the Council's strategic vision for high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive places. It will also support the Council's wider objectives for placemaking and community well-being.

- 4.4 Lack of alignment of Planning policies if adoption of the Design Code is delayed: The Spelthorne Design Code is intended to support the implementation of the new Local Plan, which is being recommended for adoption at the same Extraordinary Council meeting. Timely adoption of the Spelthorne Design Code will ensure alignment with the Local Plan, strengthening the overall planning framework and increasing its effectiveness in delivering cohesive development outcomes.
- 4.5 Risk of the Design Code not being implemented following LGR: In light of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), a new unitary authority may prioritise other work areas. Adopting the Spelthorne Design Code in line with the current programme ensures that it is in place and operational before any transition. This helps maintain policy coverage for the area while new planning policies for the unitary authority are developed, helping to ensure high quality design outcomes moving forward.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 Adopting the Spelthorne Design Code would be undertaken by resources covered by existing budgets.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 The Spelthorne Design Code has been developed in accordance with the National Model Design Code.
- 6.2 The public consultation was required under Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012.
- 6.3 Approval of supplementary planning documents is a matter for Council.

Corporate implications

7. S151 Officer comments

- 7.1 The S151 Officer confirms that all financial implications have been taken into account and that adopting the Code will be fully funded from within the 2026-27 budget.

8. Monitoring Officer comments

- 8.1 The Monitoring Officer confirms that the relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

9. Procurement comments

9.1 There are no procurement implications relating to the adoption of the code.

10. Equality and Diversity

10.1 This will be dealt with as an integral part of the Spelthorne Design Code.

11. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

11.1 This will be dealt with as an integral part of the Spelthorne Design Code.

12. Other considerations

12.1 There are none.

13. Timetable for implementation

13.1 The Spelthorne Design Code SPD cannot be formally adopted until the Local Plan is adopted. The Local Plan and the Spelthorne Design Code are being put forward for adoption at the same Council meeting.

13.2 Once adopted the Design Code will take effect immediately and be used in the determination of planning applications.

14. Contact

14.1 Cllr Burrell is the Design Code Task Group Chair. Other members are Cllrs Gibson, Williams and Clarke. Cllr Beecher attends the Project Board meeting as chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

14.2 Queries for Officers can be emailed to the Design Code Team:
designcode@spelthorne.gov.uk

14.3 Laura Richardson is the Project Lead: l.richardson@spelthorne.gov.uk

Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.

Background papers:

[Environment and Sustainability Committee Report 17 January 2026](#)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Spelthorne Design Code (2025)

Appendix 1A - Understanding Spelthorne Today

Appendix 1B - Design Code Community Engagement

Appendix 1C - Design of Residential Extensions

Appendix 2 - Consultation Statement: Spelthorne Design Code