SPELTHORNE DESIGN CODE

SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL
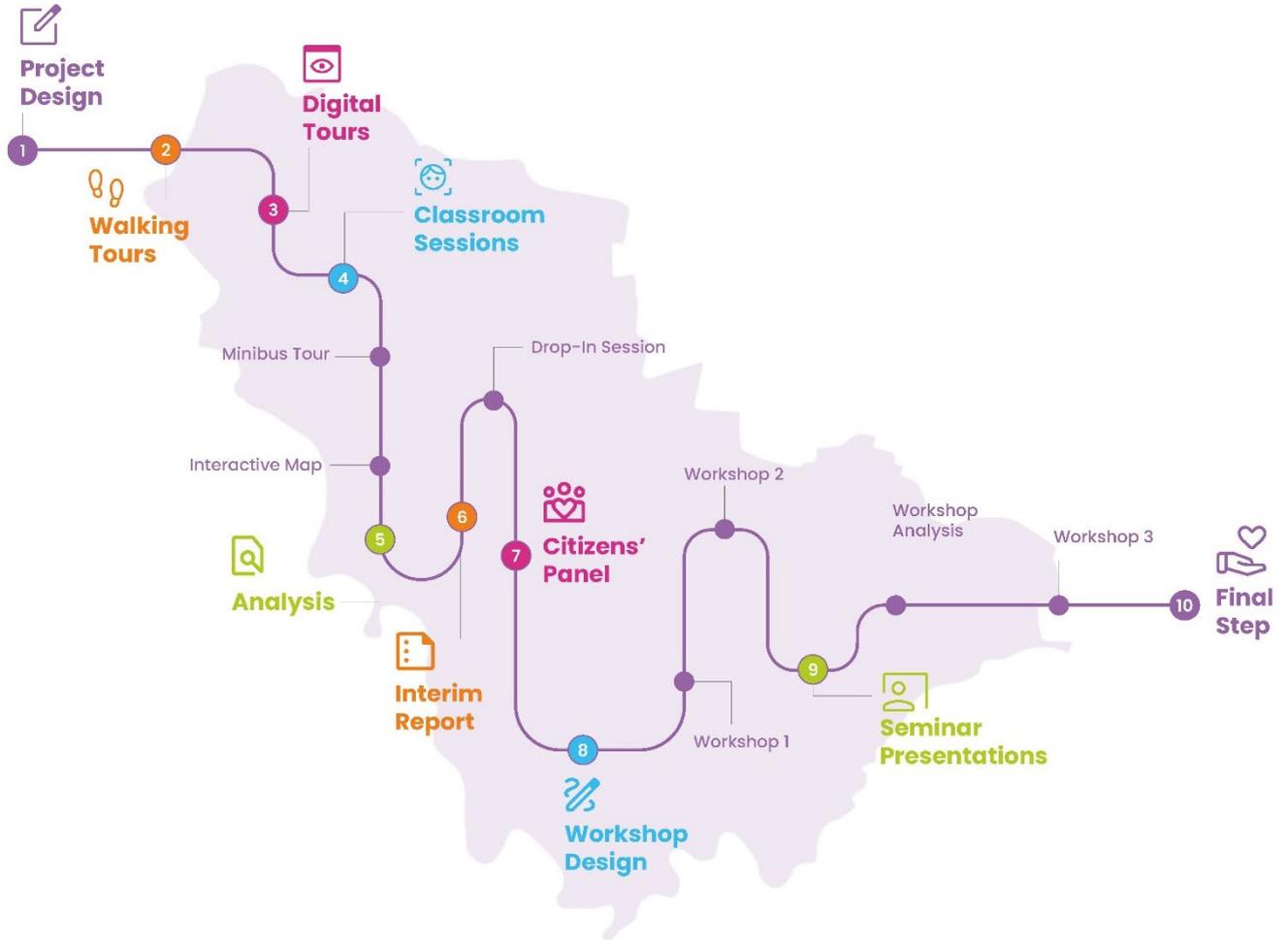
NOVEMBER 2025

Appendix B
Community Engagement Process

This appendix summarises the community engagement process undertaken as part of the Design Code project.

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APPENDIX

The Engagement Process

Infographic – The Spelthorne Engagement Process

Context

Design codes are a critical mechanism for guiding urban development and ensuring the visual and functional integrity of places where people live, work and play. The preparation of design codes requires the involvement of local people to ensure that the resultant design code is what is referred to as "provably popular".

The concept of "provably popular" design codes is embedded in several key national policies and guidance documents and the project team in Spelthorne were mindful of these documents when designing the engagement process. The main sections that address this requirement are:

- **National Model Design Code (NMDC):** The NMDC emphasises the importance of community engagement in the creation of design codes. It outlines that design codes should be developed in collaboration with local communities to ensure they reflect local preferences and needs. The NMDC states that design codes must be "provably popular," meaning they should have demonstrable support from the community. This is to be achieved through extensive public consultation and engagement processes, ensuring that the design codes are not only technically sound but also resonate with the local population.

- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** The NPPF highlights the significance of involving local communities in the planning process. It encourages local authorities to produce design codes that are informed by public opinion and have broad community support. The NPPF underscores the need for design codes to be "provably popular" by demonstrating that they have been shaped by the views and preferences of local residents. This approach aims to create a sense of ownership and acceptance among the community, leading to more successful and sustainable developments.

- **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC):** The DLUHC has commissioned research to define "provably popular" design and provide guidance on how local authorities can measure and demonstrate popular design in their areas. This research is part of the government's broader efforts to improve design quality across England and ensure that new developments are well-received by the community. The findings from this research will inform future policy and guidance, helping local authorities create design codes that are both effective and widely supported.

By incorporating these principles into national policy and guidance, the UK government aims to ensure that design codes are not only technically robust but also aligned with the preferences and aspirations of local communities. This approach fosters greater community involvement, enhances the quality of new developments, and promotes a more inclusive and democratic planning process. The project team has endorsed this approach and designed a locally responsive version for Spelthorne.

To achieve a "provably popular" outcome for Spelthorne, it has been essential to integrate the views and inputs of local people into the process of code preparation. Local community involvement has been vital in capturing the unique preferences, needs, and aspirations of residents of the borough, which in turn ensures that the resultant Spelthorne Design Code resonate with the majority of the population. By engaging local stakeholders through walking tours, conversations, and participatory workshops, the project team has gathered valuable insights and feedback, enabling the creation of a code that will be widely accepted and

supported. This inclusive approach not only enhances the legitimacy and acceptance of the Spelthorne Design Code but also advances a sense of ownership and pride among residents, contributing to the overall success and sustainability of future development projects.

1. Project Design

The success of any project lies in thorough planning and execution. For the preparation of the Spelthorne Design Code, the project team embarked on an extensive mapping of a series of interlinked and coordinated tasks. This systematic approach was essential to gather the best possible evidence to support the design code's development. This preparation phase took place in May and early June 2024.

Our strategic task mapping began with a thorough analysis of the project's objectives, aligning them with the community's unique characteristics and needs. We ensured that each task was designed to contribute valuable insights and data, ultimately supporting a cohesive and comprehensive design code.

Once the project design was finalised, the project team sought approval from the client (Spelthorne Borough Council) to ensure all stakeholders were on the same page. This approval marked the transition from planning to the logistics, planning, and delivery phase. The project team took charge of coordinating the various tasks, ensuring that each activity was executed efficiently and effectively. This included scheduling community engagement sessions, arranging resources, and managing timelines.

Throughout the project's duration, our team maintained close communication with the Council, providing regular updates and addressing any emerging challenges. This collaborative and structured approach laid a solid foundation for creating Design Codes that genuinely reflect the aspirations and needs of the local community.

2. Walking Tours

Walking Tours were a cornerstone of the community engagement strategy, designed to gather firsthand insights from local residents about the areas they cherished and those they felt needed improvement. These self-guided tours were conducted during both daytime and evening hours, each lasting approximately two hours. Three walks were held across each of the agreed days at 10am, 2pm and 6pm. Offering different timeslots across each day was designed to attract different demographic groups e.g. retired, working age etc. In total, there were 18 in-person walks arranged from late June through until mid-July 2024.

Local residents played a crucial role in shaping these tours, as they led members of the project team to locations that held significant meaning to them, both positive and negative.

The essence of these tours lay in their informal and conversational nature. As we walked through the neighbourhoods, residents freely shared their thoughts, experiences, and concerns. This open dialogue allowed us to gain a deep understanding of the community's perspectives on various urban elements, such as public spaces, infrastructure, and aesthetics. The routes for these tours were not predetermined; instead, they were decided by the local residents on the day of the tour. Our team followed their lead, taking notes and listening attentively to their stories and feedback.

To ensure that residents could speak candidly, local politicians were politely barred from participating in these tours. This decision was made to create a safe and open environment for genuine conversations. To balance this exclusion, we introduced a minibus tour for local politicians (see later) where they could learn about the issues highlighted by residents during the Walking Tours. Through this approach, we ensured that the voices of local people were heard and respected, forming the basis for a design code that truly reflects the community's desires and needs.

The following quotes are taken from the project team's written notes and provide an insight into the key messages received during this research phase:

→ *"Staines, Shepperton, Ashford, Stanwell, and Sunbury all have different personalities, and we have to keep that"*
→ *"It's been fascinating to explore the different neighbourhoods in this way"*
→ *"This is a welcome process, fantastic to be listened to like this"*
→ *"Ashford has a village feel in certain areas, an arts and crafts approach to its design. We want to keep this theme today, if we can"*
→ *"We want a design code that doesn't compromise the needs of residents or businesses"*
→ *"We need to design for now and for the future"*
→ *"This process has left us optimistic about the architecture that we have, and have been able to build in the past and this design code will help us create good places in future too"*
→ *"I'm really proud of our area, I want to show it off more"*

→ *"I love the trees because it means you can hear bird song"* (youth group)
→ *"I love walking along the moor every day, this is the best part about this borough"*
→ *"We can easily get to London and enjoy lots of green space at the same time"*
→ *"Unfortunately we ignore our river"*
→ *"I love how Debenhams building curves round, like the flow of the river"*
→ *"Let's rejuvenate, not redo!"*
→ *"Two worlds of river and land are not connecting"*
→ *"The river front is the most beautiful part of what we have left"*
→ *"It's so green here, let's keep it that way"*

Comments from those that took part in the Walking Tours

3. Digital Tours

In addition to the conventional Walking Tours, we recognised the need to engage with community members who might be unable to participate in person due to various constraints, such as limited mobility or scheduling conflicts. To address this, we introduced Digital Tours, leveraging modern technology to extend our reach and inclusivity. These Digital Tours were essentially virtual versions of the physical Walking Tours, conducted through the Zoom platform and using Google Maps.

Local residents were invited to sign up for these Digital Tours, which typically took place in the evenings and lasted approximately 90 minutes. These events all took place in July 2024. The format allowed participants to explore their neighbourhoods virtually, sharing their thoughts and opinions just as they would during an in-person tour. The digital format offered several advantages, including the ability to cover a much larger area within the given time frame, as we could quickly navigate across different locations on the map.

Participants in the Digital Tours provided valuable insights into the areas they liked and disliked, discussing various urban elements and their impact on the community. The flexibility of the digital format made it accessible to a broader audience, ensuring that even those with limited mobility or tight schedules could contribute their perspectives. By combining technology with community engagement, we were able to gather comprehensive input from a diverse range of residents, enriching the evidence base for the design code.

For both digital and in-person walks, 68 people signed up in advance via the Eventbrite system and a total of 58 people took part across all events,

4. Classroom Sessions

In July 2024, the project team engaged with Ashford Youth Club, Sunbury Manor School and Matthew Arnold School. In total, around 80+ young people between the ages of 12 and 17 have been involved in the project, sharing with us their ideas and aspirations. The project team worked closely with students aged 12-16 in school classrooms, engaging them through thoughtfully designed workshops sessions, including bespoke worksheets. These worksheets consisted of a series of specific questions, which served as prompts to delve into their memories, recent experiences, and aspirations for the future. The goal was to create an environment where students could freely express themselves, reflecting on their personal journeys and envisioning their future goals. Additionally, to cater to different modes of expression, we invited students to draw their ideas, providing a visual representation of their thoughts. This approach allowed us to gather both written and drawn outputs, capturing a holistic view of their perspectives. Through these sessions, students were not only able to articulate their thoughts but also to see their ideas take form, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in the process.

Key outcomes were:

- Leisure, food and drink activities make an area attractive, more so than a retail offer
- They often seek out quieter, more peaceful areas, away from busy high streets. This was especially true of teenage girls that like to find a "hangout" of their own
- As a demographic that cannot drive, access to safe, convenient walking and cycling routes gives them independence and autonomy over the way they live and move across the borough
- They often use different neighbourhoods in different ways e.g. visit Staines on a Saturday for food and browse the shops but go to Ashford on the bus during the week for five-a-side football and a haircut
- Drawings from young people included reference to having enough space to play and decoration, colour and design details on walls and shopfronts

Minibus Tour

To bridge the gap between local residents and policymakers, the project team organised a minibus tour for local politicians around the borough. This tour took place on Friday 19th July 2024 and included stops at locations that had been highlighted by local people during our Walking Tours and through our Digital Tours. The objective was to provide politicians with a firsthand experience of the areas and issues that were important to the community. Along the way, insights and ideas that students from the classroom sessions had contributed were shared. This direct interaction helped to convey the community's concerns and aspirations in a tangible manner, facilitating a more informed and empathetic dialogue between policymakers and residents. The minibus tour not only raised awareness but also fostered a collaborative spirit, encouraging politicians to take proactive steps towards addressing local issues.

Interactive Map

To further engage the community, an interactive map was established using the Commonplace Platform. This map allowed local people to place a pin on a map to identify buildings, streets, or spaces that they liked or disliked. Green pins indicated places they liked, while red pins marked areas they disliked. Accompanying each pin, individuals could provide explanations for their preferences, offering valuable insights into the factors influencing their opinions. This interactive map served as a powerful tool for visualising community sentiments, highlighting areas of concern, and identifying potential opportunities for improvement. By enabling residents to share their thoughts in this way, the project team were able to gather a wealth of information that reflected the diverse perspectives within the community.

By the time the interactive map was closed to contributions in December 2024, 346 comments, and a further 278 reactions to these comments.

5. Analysis

We now began a process of analysing and interpreting the results from all the events and activities conducted up until this point. This comprehensive analysis allowed a synthesis of the data collected from the Walking Tours, the Digital Tours, the classroom sessions, the minibus tour, and interactive map, transforming it into actionable insights. By identifying common themes, patterns, and unique viewpoints, we gained a deeper understanding of the community's needs, aspirations, and challenges. This analysis not only informed the recommendations for future development of the code but also provided a robust foundation for ongoing community engagement and development efforts.

6. Interim Report

Based on the data gathered up until this report from the various techniques, and its analysis, an Interim Report was issued in early August 2024. This captured the main themes and emerging concepts. This report was a crucial milestone in the project, serving as a foundation for the development of the design code. The Interim Report's primary aim was to ensure that the public opinion that was likely to inform the design code was communicated to the project board at the Council. The report highlighted the common themes, and notable insights drawn from the diverse range of inputs collected during the initial phase of the project. The data included examples of the students' written and drawn outputs from the classroom sessions, and

feedback from the Walking Tours and the interactive map. Each of these sources provided a unique perspective on the community's needs, preferences, and aspirations. By collating and analysing this information, we were able to identify the main priorities and concerns of the residents. There were 5 x key areas of consensus across all age groups:

1. Details, decoration and attention to the eye-level experience makes a big difference with the public. Plain buildings are seen as boring or unattractive. We have found it to be less of a "modern vs. old" debate, more a "visual interest vs. plain" debate

2. Everyone loves nature, and wants access to green space and areas of tranquillity

3. Colour matters, and younger people in particular want to see more of this

4. The uniqueness of places is important, as represented in the buildings e.g. one house being different to its neighbours, but also between neighbourhoods e.g. Ashford is different to Staines. The design code should encourage and enhance this positive differentiation

5. The public are keen to see the reuse and refurbishment of empty properties. They are annoyed when they see a good building left empty and neglected

The Spelthorne Design Code was always going to be covering a series of "core topics" that will be common to all borough-wide design codes across the country. However, to ensure a responsiveness to local public opinion as expressed in Spelthorne, the following 5 x priority topics are deserving of specific attention to address local on-the-ground issues, as identified through the research:

Neighbourhood Vision

- To maintain and enhance the distinctiveness between different parts of the borough

- Code to provide a contextual overview of each area to set the scene

Green Space

- A popular public issue

- Code to encourage integration of green space in all developments

- To provide examples at all scales e.g. micro spaces, such as window boxes and roof gardens through to neighbourhood greens

Connections & Layout

- Ensure safe connections within the area and to nearby areas

- Design for age and gender differences

- Layouts that offer choice are preferred

<u>Reuse & Refurb</u>

- More a policy issue than a code issue but vital for public support

- Code to provide good example of refurb and reuse and to encourage conversions before new builds

<u>Decoration & Detail</u>

- Code to identify architectural elements that lend themselves best to such decorative treatment

- To avoid superficial treatment but to integrate into the whole

Each of these 5 x priority topics can be tracked back to the first phase engagement results. The Interim Report's findings have been instrumental in shaping the design code by ensuring it was grounded in real community sentiment. The outcomes of the design code needed to be provably popular, emphasising the importance of public buy-in and support for the project.

Drop-In Session

A drop-in session was held in early November 2024, to allow residents of Staines-upon-Thames (and any other residents of the borough) an opportunity to comment on the future of the town. While the design code will be a borough-wide code, addressing issues across all settlements, this event was arranged because Staines is the principal town in the borough, and the one most likely to undergo the greatest change.

Held in the indoor Elmsleigh Shopping centre in Staines-upon-Thames, this location was chosen due to its high foot traffic and all-weather accessibility, ensuring maximum engagement from the community. The afternoon session was designed to be informal and open, allowing residents to drop by at their convenience, making it easy for a diverse range of individuals to participate. A series of informational displays and interactive stations were set up, including a large-scale map of the town, as well early ideas from the emerging code. These displays included historic maps and diagrams offering a visual representation of areas of character.

Residents were encouraged to provide feedback through various means, including written comments and one-on-one discussions with project team members. To facilitate meaningful conversations, several facilitators were present (both from the project team and the council) equipped with knowledge about the project and ready to answer questions, address concerns, and gather suggestions. This face-to-face interaction was invaluable in understanding the community's sentiments and priorities.

Overall, the Drop-In Session fostered a sense of community involvement and ownership, ensuring that the public's voice was central to the planning process.

7. Citizens' Panel

In October and November 2024, a Citizens' Panel was established, consisting of fifty residents who were representative of the community's diverse demographics, including age, gender, and geographic location within the borough. The selection process was inclusive, inviting all participants from previous events to apply, as well as issuing a public advertisement to reach a broader audience. This approach ensured that the panel was truly reflective of the community it aimed to represent. Once finalised, the panel was invited to participate in three interactive workshops designed to gather deeper insights and foster active engagement. The first two of these workshops were held in November 2024.

These workshops provided a platform for residents to get involved in the detail of design coding, share their experiences, and contribute to the ongoing development of the project. The diverse composition of the panel ensured that a wide range of perspectives were considered, enriching the discussions and outcomes. The commitment by the Council to establishing a panel underscored its promise to a participatory and democratic process. The insights gained from the Citizens' Panel were invaluable in informing the next stages of the project, ensuring that the community's voice remained central to the decision-making process. This initiative not only empowered residents but also strengthened the relationship between the community and the Council.

8. Workshop Design

Using the findings from the Interim Report, the project team designed two half-day workshops that aimed to address the fundamental issues identified during the early research phase. Each workshop was structured to include three tasks, carefully crafted to respond to the key themes and concerns highlighted by the community. The tasks were diverse in nature, ensuring that various aspects of the project were covered comprehensively. They included activities such as group discussions, and hands-on exercises, all designed to encourage active participation and collaboration among the panel members.

The interactive format of the workshops allowed participants to engage deeply with the topics, share their ideas, and co-create solutions. By directly responding to the issues raised in the initial research phase, the workshops ensured that the community's input was not only heard but actively incorporated into the project.

This iterative process of feedback and refinement was crucial in developing a design code that was both relevant and responsive to the community's needs. The workshops also provided an

opportunity to test and validate the emerging concepts, gathering real-time feedback from the panel members. This dynamic approach ensured that the project remained adaptive and aligned with the evolving priorities of the community. The outcomes of the workshops were documented and integrated into the final stages of the project, ensuring a cohesive and well-informed approach to the design code development.

Workshop One – Saturday 16th November 2024

1. The first task in this workshop was to develop a written vision statement for the entire borough. Participants were encouraged to think broadly about the future of their community, considering aspects such as quality of life, infrastructure, and cultural identity. This vision statement would serve as a guiding framework for future development and planning, in respect of the code.

2. The second task was an interactive activity inspired by the results from the interactive map. Participants were presented with a series of 50 photographs, divided into two categories: 25 'red' photographs representing areas or features that needed change, and 25 'green' photographs showcasing elements that should be conserved or enhanced. This visual exercise helped participants identify specific design features and prioritise actions.

3. Finally, the workshop focused on creating written vision statements for each of the five neighbourhoods that comprise the borough. These neighbourhood-specific statements allowed for a more localised approach, addressing unique characteristics and needs while contributing to the overall vision for the borough.

Throughout the workshop, participants engaged in group discussions, shared personal experiences, and collaborated on crafting the vision statements. This inclusive and participatory process ensured that diverse perspectives were considered.

Workshop Two – Saturday 23rd November 2024

The following Saturday afternoon, the panel reconvened for Workshop Two, which built upon the foundation laid in the first session. This workshop delved into three critical topics: gender-inclusive design, neighbourhood expansion, and high-quality tall building design.

4. The first task at the second event explored gender-inclusive design, aiming to create spaces that were welcoming and accessible to everyone, regardless of gender or age. Participants discussed strategies to ensure public spaces were safe, comfortable, and accommodating for all community members.

5. The next task focused on expanding existing neighbourhoods into currently undeveloped areas. This exercise required participants to consider factors such as edge conditions, the local context while considering sustainable and cohesive expansion plans.

6. The final task tackled the design of high-quality tall buildings, encouraging participants to think creatively about aesthetics, functionality, and integration with the surrounding environment.

Throughout this second workshop, participants engaged in lively discussions and collaborative problem-solving activities. The interactive nature of the workshop fostered a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose, as participants worked together to address complex urban planning challenges.

→ *"We have worked with photographs, we have worked with discussions, we've done written stuff. I think it's good because it just sort of creates a focus for the way that different brains work as well actually. We are not just sitting and talking or sitting and watching, it's been a good mix, I think."*

Diane Ludlow, Citizens' Panel Member

→ *"This, from what I hear, is very innovative. Only a handful of councils in the country are doing this kind of thing where they're engaging with residents to understand what design should look like. I think the country would benefit from more discussion like this. Spelthorne is pioneering something really good here."*

Alex Balkan, Citizens' Panel Member

9. Seminar Presentations

During both half-day events, the professional team delivered several short slideshow presentations on key topics related to urban planning and design. These presentations covered a range of subjects, including street design, green spaces, sustainability, and inclusive design.

The purpose of these presentations was to provide participants with background information and context, helping them better understand the issues at hand and informing their contributions to the workshop tasks. The presentations were strategically scheduled throughout the afternoon to structure and break up the agenda, ensuring that participants remained engaged and focused.

Each presentation was followed by a brief Q&A session, allowing participants to ask questions, seek clarification, and share their perspectives. This interactive format encouraged active learning and dialogue, encouraging a deeper understanding of the topics discussed. The professional team's expertise and insights were instrumental in guiding the workshop discussions and ensuring that participants had the knowledge and tools needed to contribute effectively. By blending informative presentations with hands-on activities, the workshops created a dynamic and enriching experience for all involved.

Workshop Analysis

Following the completion of both half-day workshops, the results were processed, analysed, and interpreted to extract valuable insights and inform the next steps of the project. This comprehensive analysis involved synthesising the data collected from various activities, including vision statements, photograph evaluations, and design exercises.

By identifying common themes, patterns, and unique perspectives, the analysis provided a holistic understanding of the community's priorities, concerns, and aspirations. The findings from the analysis were used to refine and validate the initial code concepts, ensuring that they aligned with the community's needs and preferences.

The analysis also highlighted areas of consensus and divergence, offering a nuanced view of the diverse viewpoints within the community. This in-depth understanding was crucial in shaping the final design code and ensuring that it was grounded in real community sentiment. The results of the analysis were shared with stakeholders, including local policymakers, educators, and community leaders, fostering transparency and collaboration.

This rigorous and participatory approach ensured that the project remained adaptive and responsive to the evolving priorities of the community.

Workshop Three – Saturday 1ˢᵗ March 2025

The third workshop represented a crucial opportunity for the Citizens' Panel to test the draft design code to ensure it best responded to local opinion. As before, held on a Saturday afternoon, this workshop was planned to build on the previous two workshops, incorporating the insights and feedback gathered thus far. The main focus of this session was to critically examine the draft design code. Participants were provided with detailed copies of the draft code, along with explanatory notes and contextual information to guide their review.

The workshop was structured around a series of interactive tasks and discussions. Participants worked in small groups, each focusing on a specific aspect of the design code, such as public spaces, building aesthetics, sustainability, and accessibility. These groups were tasked with identifying strengths and weaknesses, proposing modifications, and prioritising key elements. This collaborative approach ensured that diverse perspectives were considered.

Throughout the session, facilitators and project team members circulated among the groups, providing support, answering questions, and recording feedback. This dynamic interaction helped to clarify misunderstandings, address concerns, and refine ideas. Additionally, there were plenary sessions where groups presented their findings and recommendations to the entire panel, encouraging cross-group dialogue and consensus-building.

The workshop concluded with a synthesis of the feedback, highlighting the key themes and actionable suggestions.

10. Spelthorne Design Code

The results of the analysis directly informed the final Spelthorne Design Code, ensuring that it was rooted in the community's needs, preferences, and aspirations. The final code used the insights and recommendations derived from this engagement process creating a comprehensive and actionable document.

The final design code includes this community engagement appendix, detailing the participatory processes and methods used throughout the project. This appendix provided a transparent account of the community's involvement, highlighting the importance of inclusive and collaborative approaches in urban planning.

By capturing the collective vision and priorities of the community, the final report laid the groundwork for a sustainable and inclusive future for the borough.

Citizens' Panel Workshop Results

Task 1: Borough-Wide Vision

The Citizens' Panel explored multiple vision drafts for Spelthorne in 2035. The proposed statements emphasised themes of heritage, sustainability, and cohesive urban design, while addressing the borough's unique challenges. Feedback from the group shaped the following priorities:

<u>Key Vision Highlights</u>

→ **Sustainable Urban Design:** Spelthorne aspires to blend modern infrastructure with heritage through sustainable, high-quality architecture that supports vibrant, interconnected communities.

→ **Commitment to Green Spaces:** Maintaining and rejuvenating green spaces was a major theme. Participants highlighted the importance of integrating natural areas into urban environments for residents' well-being.

→ **Social and Physical Connectivity:** Better public transport, accessible infrastructure, and enhanced pedestrian and cycling pathways were frequently mentioned to improve overall connectivity and accessibility.

→ **Community-Centric Development:** Incorporating community hubs, affordable housing, and outdoor recreational spaces to meet the diverse needs of Spelthorne's residents.

→ **Flood Resilience:** Mitigating flood risks through thoughtful planning was a clear priority.

<u>Key Themes the Panel Wanted to Include</u>

→ **Heritage:** Celebrate and preserve the borough's historical identity while adapting it for modern use.

→ **Green:** Protect green spaces, promote biodiversity, and ensure natural landscapes are accessible.

→ **Connectivity:** Enhance transport links, particularly to major hubs like Heathrow, and improve pathways for pedestrians and cyclists.

→ **Community:** Foster inclusivity by designing spaces that cater to all ages, cultures, and abilities.

→ **Timeless Design:** Focus on cohesive, durable architectural styles that avoid dated aesthetics.

→ **Mismatch:** Participants were critical of inconsistent architectural styles that clash rather than complement each other.
→ **Concrete:** Avoid overly industrial or bland designs that lack character and greenery.
→ **Overdevelopment:** The group expressed concern about overly dense developments, especially those that fail to include sufficient social and physical infrastructure.

Task 2: Summary of Areas to Conserve and Change

The Citizens' Panel identified specific areas, themes, and features that should be either preserved or improved to align with the vision for Spelthorne in 2035. Feedback focused on heritage, green spaces, community facilities, and the borough's riverside and urban character.

<u>Areas to Conserve</u>

Green Spaces: Participants consistently emphasised the importance of preserving well-maintained green spaces for recreation and biodiversity.

→ Staines Moor: Valued for its beauty and role as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI)
→ Riverside Parks: Iconic and essential for community wellbeing.
→ Walled Garden in Sunbury: An award-winning example of successful land repurposing.

Heritage and Landmarks: Protect and enhance historic buildings and conservation areas, ensuring they remain visually attractive and accessible e.g. historic villages like Stanwell Moor and Sunbury's period houses.

Riverside Character: Maintain and improve the aesthetic and recreational use of riverside areas, including the River Thames and Colne. Encourage walking and cycling along the riverside while keeping architectural additions sympathetic to the environment.

Community Spaces: Retain local hangout spots and green areas used by families and young people. Plus calls for better maintenance to sustain their appeal.

<u>Key Words for Conservation</u>

→ Heritage
→ Green Spaces
→ Riverside
→ Community Facilities

<u>Areas to Change</u>

Neglected and Poorly Maintained Spaces: Participants flagged neglected buildings and infrastructure that detract from the borough's aesthetic e.g. derelict sites like car parks near Bridge Close (Staines) and abandoned buildings on Church Road (Ashford). Public spaces with limited upkeep, such as parts of the riverside and poorly maintained pathways.

Accessibility and Infrastructure: Improve pathways, lighting, and overall safety in key areas e.g. riverside pathways in Staines: Often unsafe or poorly lit.

- → Linear Park in Sunbury: Needs better lighting and access.
- → Shepperton High Street: Requires better crossings and improved pedestrian infrastructure.

Modernising Outdated Architecture: Participants criticised bland, mismatched, and concrete-heavy structures that fail to integrate with the borough's character e.g. brutalist developments, particularly in Sunbury and Roman Court in Staines was highlighted as a poorly executed example of greenery integration.

Underutilised Spaces: Suggestions to repurpose derelict or functional-only spaces into vibrant community hubs or recreational areas e.g. Shepperton Library: Proposed as a site for market stalls and public events and The Swan Sanctuary: Calls for improved public access.

Green Space Integration: Encourage better placement of greenery in urban developments to create inviting environments e.g. Riverside spaces: Emphasise biodiversity and community use.

Key Words for Change

- → Neglect
- → Lighting
- → Accessibility
- → Repurposing
- → Mismatch

Task 3: Neighbourhood Visions

This task focused on the panel's vision for the future of each neighbourhood in Spelthorne, exploring key aspirations for development, connectivity, and community integration by 2035.

Staines

By 2035, Staines aims to be a vibrant, well-connected urban centre with improved riverside access, better design, and flood mitigation. Key priorities include balancing heritage, enhancing connectivity, and transforming the area into a modern, safe town with green spaces and a public riverfront.

Key Words: Gentrification, Riverfront, Connectivity

Sunbury

By 2035, Sunbury aims to maintain its low-rise character, with no developments exceeding eight floors and ensuring that higher-density projects meet design standards for safety. Key priorities include improving accessibility for all, particularly those with reduced mobility, and enhancing vehicle access. The community seeks a comfortable, well-designed environment with ample

common areas and parking spaces, reducing congestion and creating a welcoming, less pressured atmosphere. Improvements to pedestrian crossings and road access are also essential, with a preference for manageable, human-scale development.

Key Words: Accessibility, Low-Rise, Parking, Mobility

Ashford

By 2035, Ashford envisions a safe, community-focused area with plenty of green spaces. Key features include a revitalised town square, local parks, cafes, restaurants, and minimal high-rise development. Priorities are supporting local shops, providing green spaces, and creating a hub for youth activities. Community feedback emphasises keeping Ashford family-friendly with a focus on youth and vibrant public spaces.

Key Words: Community, Green Spaces, Youth Activities

Shepperton

By 2035, Shepperton aims to preserve its village charm while embracing thoughtful development. Key features include sympathetic developments (max 2 storeys), a new town square, better cycling infrastructure along the Thames, and a semi-pedestrianised High Street. Priorities focus on balancing growth with Shepperton's character, preserving the high street and green spaces, and improving access for cyclists and pedestrians. Community feedback highlights the desire to keep independent shops while supporting sustainable growth and transport.

Key Words: High Street, Conservation, Cycling

Stanwell

No direct feedback was provided from Stanwell, but general comments highlight a need for stronger identity and cohesion. Key features include developing a clearer identity, cohesive planning, and better integration with the rest of Spelthorne. Priorities focus on addressing infrastructure gaps and creating more connected spaces to foster community. Community feedback expresses concerns about Stanwell being too sprawled, rundown, and disconnected from the rest of the borough.

Key Words: Identity, Cohesion, Infrastructure

Task 4: Safety and Accessibility & Mobility Across the Borough

Most Pinch and Pain Points Identified: Unsurprisingly, Staines had the highest number of issues, particularly around connectivity, lighting, and accessibility. The second place with the most issues, following Staines, was Stanwell.

Commonalities Across Borough (in order of number of mentions):

1. **Poor Lighting:** The most frequently mentioned issue, affecting safety in residential areas, parks, pathways, and underpasses.
2. **Narrow/Uneven Pavements:** Widespread concerns about walkability and accessibility, particularly for vulnerable users like wheelchair or pram users.
3. **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB):** Recurring issue in neglected or poorly maintained public spaces, including parks and car parks.
4. **Unsafe Crossings:** Significant safety risks highlighted, particularly near schools and high-traffic areas.
5. **Traffic and Parking Issues:** Speeding and poorly managed parking were raised frequently but slightly less than other issues.

Commonalities per Area:

Stanwell

→ **Pinch Points (Orange Stickers):** Narrow roads, uneven walkways (e.g., Clare Road, Oaks Road), poor lighting on streets like Hadrian Way and Cordella Road, and inadequate frequency of bus routes.
→ **Pain Points (Red Stickers):** Anti-social behaviour (ASB) near derelict buildings and public spaces, drug dealing, intimidating youth gatherings, dark or unsafe streets (e.g., Riverside Road), and poor road conditions hindering parking or walking.

Staines

→ **Pinch Points (Orange Stickers):** Lack of connectivity between areas like the bus station and Riverside, inadequate cycle paths, poor lighting (e.g., South Street, Coopers Lane), and obstructed pavements affecting accessibility for wheelchairs or buggies.
→ **Pain Points (Red Stickers):** Unsafe car parks and walkways (e.g., Bridge Close, Staines Park), ASB (e.g., Thames Street), poorly lit areas, narrow and uneven pavements (e.g., Kingston Road, A308), and a lack of public toilet signage.

Sunbury

→ **Pinch Points (Orange Stickers):** Poorly maintained roads (e.g., Green Street), lack of wheelchair-friendly park gates, and limited pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.
→ **Pain Points (Red Stickers):** High-speed traffic on Thames Street and narrow pavements, drug-related activities in public car parks, poor lighting, dangerous pedestrian crossings, and conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.

Ashford

→ **Pinch Points (Orange Stickers):** Poor road conditions (e.g., Knapp Road), insufficient lighting, and limited social hubs or community activities.
→ **Pain Points (Red Stickers):** Dangerous crossings near schools (e.g., School Road), ASB near fast-food outlets, narrow pavements, and dimly lit or unsafe walkways like the Elephant Path.

Shepperton

→ **Pinch Points (Orange Stickers):** Narrow, uneven pavements (e.g., Govett Avenue), poor crossing design (e.g., Green Lane), and lack of traffic calming measures on busy roads.
→ **Pain Points (Red Stickers):** Dangerous pedestrian areas due to fast-moving traffic (e.g., Russell Road, B375), poor lighting, unsafe crossings near schools, and ASB in poorly lit public spaces.

Task 5: Edge Conditions

In this task, the Citizen's Panel looked at how new developments will fit with their surroundings, focusing on making spaces safer, more accessible, visually appealing, and better for the environment, with attention to reducing noise, adding greenery, and improving connections for the community.

Type 1 – Trees and Hedgerows

Challenges

- Promised tree planting often fails, e.g., Watersplash Farm and Charlton Village Incinerator, with dead saplings and poorly enforced plans.
- Removal of hedgerows (e.g., Shepperton Studios) and lack of replacements reduce biodiversity.
- Biodiversity net gains (BNG) and Local Nature Recovery Networks (LNRNs) are ineffective, with nature still being depleted.

Community Values

- Hedgerows and trees enhance privacy, seclusion, and aesthetics (e.g., Wraysbury's Garden, Rosefield in Staines).
- Residents appreciate well-maintained greenery as habitats and buffers for noise and pollution.

Recommendations for Design Code

- **Protect:** Preserve existing hedgerows and enforce Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).
- **Sustain:** Promote native and diverse planting, avoid non-native species, and use rainwater for maintenance.
- **Enhance:** Use hedgerows as natural barriers instead of walls or fences and integrate greenery into development designs.

- **Maintain:** Ensure regular upkeep, including clearing debris and replacing removed trees.

Key Words: Preservation, Biodiversity, Buffers, Sustainability.

Type 2 – Open Spaces

Challenges

- Poor maintenance and safety issues (e.g., Riverside at Staines, Ashford Park).
- Limited connectivity between developments and open spaces (e.g., Bungle Nursery Proposal, Moormead Estate).
- Lack of smooth integration with residential areas.

Community Values

- **Accessibility:** Clear pathways and safe links for pedestrians and cyclists (e.g., Linear Park in Sunbury).
- **Privacy:** Green spaces backing onto homes for quiet and pleasant views.
- Biodiversity: Diverse planting and wildlife support (e.g., Sunbury Tree Wardens' wildflowers).
- **Community Use:** Spaces enhanced with amenities like gardens or small cafes.

Recommendations for Design Code

- **Ensure Connectivity:** Link open spaces to residential areas with walkways and cycle paths.
- **Focus on Safety:** Improve lighting and reduce ASB.
- **Enhance Biodiversity:** Use native trees and wildlife-friendly features.
- **Integrate with Communities:** Design transitions that blend developments with green spaces.

Key Words: Connectivity, Privacy, Biodiversity, Safety.

Type 3 – Watercourses, Ponds, and Rivers Summary

Challenges

- Poor maintenance (e.g., rubbish, unadvertised spaces like River Colne).
- Limited public access (e.g., missing walkways near Staines Church Street).
- Flood risks and inadequate infrastructure (e.g., Shepperton flood zone 3).

Community Values

- **Access:** Walkways, leisure spaces, and safe edges for activities.
- **Aesthetics:** Low-rise, well-designed riverfront properties.
- **Flood Resilience:** Raised properties, waterproof paths, and sustainable drainage.
- **Biodiversity:** Natural water features supporting wildlife.

Recommendations for Design Code

- Ensure continuous public access to riverfronts with amenities.
- Promote biodiversity through natural landscaping and drainage systems.
- Preserve low-rise, proportional developments.
- Plan for flooding with raised structures and proper drainage.
- Improve maintenance via regular cleaning and dredging.

Key Words: Access, Flood Resilience, Biodiversity, Maintenance, Aesthetics.

Type 4 – Streets and Roads

Challenges

- **Narrow pavements:** Insufficient for safe pedestrian use (e.g., Halliford Road).
- **Speeding and HGV traffic:** Problematic in residential areas (e.g., Halliford Road, A Roads).
- **Cycling infrastructure:** Often an afterthought, with unsafe or poorly designed cycle lanes.
- **Aesthetic issues:** Developments like Eden Grove feel too close to roads and lack visual appeal.

Community Values

- **Safety:** Wider pavements (minimum 2m), speed control measures, and proper crossings (e.g. pedestrian or Pegasus).
- **Green Buffers:** Trees and hedges to reduce noise, enhance biodiversity, and improve aesthetics.
- **Accessibility:** Properly designed pavements, bike lanes, and off-road parking for better flow and usability.

Recommendations for Design Code

- Widen pavements to 2m minimum where possible; enforce this standard.
- Integrate green barriers like trees and hedges between roads and developments.
- Add safe cycling lanes, separated from street parking, and improve crossings.
- Design buildings set back from roads with varied facades to avoid blocky appearances.
- Implement traffic calming and enforce HGV bans on non-A roads.

Key Words: Safety, Accessibility, Green Buffers, Cycling Infrastructure, Aesthetic Design.

Type 5 – Dual Carriageway and/or Motorway

Challenges

- **Noise and Pollution:** Dual carriageways like Halliford Bypass and Staines Bypass create noise pollution and unsafe environments for pedestrians.
- **Unsightly Areas:** Roads like Sunbury to Staines dual carriageway and A316/M3 have neglected areas, poor habitats, and safety issues.

- **Safety Concerns:** HGV parking, debris, and dangerous pedestrian crossings (e.g., Crooked Billet roundabout, Sunbury Cross Roundabout).

Community Values

- **Noise Mitigation:** Residents value natural sound barriers, such as noise bunds and trees, to reduce traffic noise.
- **Connectivity:** Safe pedestrian and cycling routes are essential for accessibility across busy roads.
- **Aesthetic Improvements:** Green buffers and well-designed bridges are preferred over underpasses for better integration with the environment.

Recommendations for Design Code

- **Noise Barriers:** Use natural materials (e.g., trees, vegetation) for noise bunds to absorb traffic sound.
- **Safety:** Improve pedestrian and cycling access with designated routes and crossings, including wildlife corridors (e.g., hedgehog paths).
- **Aesthetic Integration:** Incorporate green buffers and well-designed bridges to enhance the visual appeal and connectivity between roads and residential areas.
- **Maintenance and Management:** Keep verges and green spaces well-maintained for safety and visibility, particularly on key roads like Halliford Bypass.

Key Words: Noise Mitigation, Connectivity, Safety, Aesthetic Integration, Maintenance.

Type 6 – Railway

Challenges

- **Noise & Aesthetics:** Residents near railways (e.g., Staines to Reading) face noise and unattractive views.
- **Safety:** Walkways like Staines Station to High Street are dark, neglected, and unsafe.
- **Proximity to Homes:** Areas like Sunbury Station are impacted by noise from both railways and nearby roads.

Community Values

- **Noise Barriers:** Trees and embankments are valued for reducing noise and blocking views.
- **Safety:** Well-lit, active routes around stations enhance safety.
- **Separation:** Prefer railways to be setback from residential areas with noise-reducing barriers.

Recommendations for Design Code

- Use natural barriers (trees, embankments) to reduce railway noise.
- Improve lighting and activity along pathways to reduce ASB.
- Buffer residential areas from railways with barriers or light industry.
- Collaborate with Network Rail to enhance aesthetics and safety.

- Ensure easy, safe access to stations while reducing noise impact.

Key Words: Noise Barriers, Safety, Separation, Aesthetics, Access.

Type 7 – Residential

Challenges

- **Privacy:** Lack of privacy in dense terraced streets despite trees (e.g., Sunbury Avenue).
- **Overcrowding:** New housing is often too cramped (e.g., London Road in Staines, Ashford Town Centre).
- **Access:** Poor connections between new and existing developments.

Community Values

- **Privacy:** Trees and gardens are essential for privacy and community feel.
- **Community:** Easy access to amenities and green spaces fosters engagement.
- **Design:** Developments should blend with existing homes and nature.

Recommendations for Design Code

- **Privacy:** Use trees and buffers for privacy without blocking sunlight.
- **Access:** Ensure pedestrian and cycling routes between developments and amenities.
- **Density:** Avoid overcrowded developments; ensure design harmony with existing homes.
- **Green Spaces:** Retain and create communal green areas.
- **Infrastructure:** Provide adequate parking and consider the impact on local amenities.

Key Words: Privacy, Access, Density, Green Spaces, Parking.

Type 8 – Local Centres and Facilities

Challenges

- **Lack of Amenities:** Staines Bus Station lacks public toilets.
- **Access Issues:** Facilities like Ashford Hospital and Fordbridge Centre are hard to access, with insufficient parking.
- **Underutilised Spaces:** Some centres, like Hythe Centre, don't fully use outdoor spaces for activities.
- **Limited Cultural Venues:** Few cultural spaces and limited access to some facilities.

Community Values

- **Easy Access:** Pedestrian and cycling routes to facilities are key (e.g., Eden Grove, Staines).
- **Community Engagement:** Facilities should foster community use, like gardens and activity hubs.
- **Health & Wellbeing:** Centres should support physical activity and sustainability (e.g., Sunbury Gymnastics, Hythe Centre).

Recommendations for Design Code

- Ensure easy pedestrian and cycling access to all facilities.
- Design spaces for community engagement and multi-use.
- Integrate sustainability, like green spaces and solar panels.
- Ensure facilities blend with their surroundings and support local needs.

Key Words: Accessibility, Community, Sustainability, Health & Well-being, Multi-use.

Type 9 – Industry and Commercial Uses

Challenges

- **Lack of Greenery:** Many industrial sites are grey and lack landscaping (e.g., Lower Sunbury, A30 near Enterprise Rent-a-Car).
- **Noise and Pollution:** Proximity of industrial sites to residential areas causes disturbances.
- **Parking:** Insufficient parking at commercial sites leads to residential driveway blockages (e.g., New Street, Staines).
- **Underuse:** Some industrial areas are empty or lack amenities.

Community Values

- **Green Buffers:** Trees and hedges improve the appearance and reduce noise.
- **Vibrancy:** Adding open spaces and facilities can make industrial areas more engaging.
- **Access:** Multi-use paths are needed for pedestrians and cyclists.

Recommendations for Design Code

- Add trees and landscaping to buffer industrial sites.
- Use noise barriers and tree buffers to reduce disturbance.
- Provide adequate parking to prevent overflow into residential areas.
- Create open spaces and facilities for community use.
- Ensure proper separation between industrial and residential zones.

Key Words: Landscaping, Noise Control, Parking, Vibrancy, Buffer Zones.

Task 6: High Quality Taller Buildings

Participants were invited to evaluate four distinct higher density development types:

1. Back-to-Back Mews
2. Garden Villas
3. Maisonettes
4. Podium & Towers

The panel was tasked with providing feedback on the suitability of these development types for different areas of Spelthorne. They explored aspects such as design considerations, materials, height, sustainability, amenities, and how each type could complement specific locations within the borough.

Through discussions, the panel shared insights into what works well for these developments, identified key design features and considerations, and suggested areas where each type might be most appropriate. Their feedback is summarised below and forms the basis for guiding future design codes in Spelthorne.

Type 1 – Back-to-Back Mews

The panel suggested that the Back-to-Back Mews concept could be well-suited to specific locations within Spelthorne, such as Shepperton or riverside areas. They provided the following feedback:

- **Height & Parking:** Developments should be limited in height and include underground parking where possible to maximise space. Ground-level parking may be considered if practical.
- **Design Considerations:** The panel recommended incorporating roof gardens and individual gardens where feasible, ensuring spaces feel open and are not overly shaded. Balconies should allow light and outdoor access.
- **Accessibility:** It was highlighted that wheelchair accessibility to upper floors is essential to promote inclusivity for all residents.
- **Aesthetic & Functionality:** To avoid a sense of overcrowding, the panel advised against overly long corridors, suggesting varied, regular patterns such as inset balconies and terraces. Materials and styles should harmonise with surrounding developments.
- **Amenities & Sustainability:** The inclusion of secure bike storage, solar panels, rainwater collection systems, planting, and shared play areas was proposed to enhance community and environmental benefits.
- **Location Suitability:** The panel felt these developments would be appropriate for green spaces or riverside locations but less suitable for town centres due to their scale and parking requirements.

<u>Type 2 – Garden Villas</u>

The panel identified Garden Villas as being best suited to green-edge locations in Staines, Stanwell, or areas near parks. Key points raised include:

- **Green Space:** The panel emphasised the importance of central green spaces open to the public, featuring a variety of greenery, including trees and bushes, to create usable and welcoming areas.
- **Family Focus:** Larger homes (3-4 bedrooms) designed for families were considered important, with a focus on natural light and outdoor access.
- **Parking & Sustainability:** Underground parking was recommended in areas not prone to flooding, along with sustainability measures such as solar panels, water recycling systems, and bike storage.
- **Community Features:** Family-friendly spaces such as playgrounds, splash parks, outdoor gym equipment, seating, and water features were suggested to create a vibrant environment.
- **Mixed Use:** Ground floors could house public amenities like cafes, libraries, or small retail units to foster community engagement.
- **Height & Materials:** The panel suggested developments could be up to 8 stories tall, with additional height justified by added amenities. Materials should complement local architectural styles.

<u>Type 3 – Maisonettes</u>

The panel saw Maisonettes as an urban development option that could emphasise community and design innovation. Their feedback included:

- **Green Space:** Open internal green areas to public view, creating inviting shared gardens designed for functionality and safety.
- **Design Features:** The panel suggested including varied roof styles (e.g., pitched or green) and light wells for ventilation. Balconies and dual-aspect windows should maximise natural light and outdoor access.
- **Height & Layout:** They felt heights could increase to include more facilities but should remain sympathetic to local surroundings. Ground floors could include public amenities such as gyms or cafes.
- **Parking & Security:** Underground parking was considered essential, along with secure bike storage. The panel also noted that ground-floor flats should address security and privacy concerns.
- **Amenities:** Suggestions included play areas, allotments, rainwater collection systems, and solar panels. Ground-floor retail units should prioritise independent businesses.

<u>Type 4 – Podium & Towers</u>

The panel indicated that Podium and Tower developments are most suitable for urban areas like Staines Town Centre or Sunbury Cross. Key considerations from their feedback include:

- **Location & Height:** Developments should not exceed 15 stories and must be located near transport hubs. Towers should taper in height when transitioning to suburban or rural areas.
- **Design & Materials:** The panel prioritised elegant, non-brutal designs with curved structures, recessed balconies, and high-quality materials like brick and green walls. They recommended avoiding flat frontages and including communal gardens between towers.
- **Sustainability:** Solar panels, rainwater collection systems, and green roofs were seen as important features. Public rooftop spaces could include gardens or recreational facilities.
- **Community Focus:** Ground floors should host shops, cafes, or community spaces, with designs reflecting local character. Public gardens and accessible amenities were considered essential for inclusivity.
- **Transport & Parking:** The panel stressed the need for excellent public transport links and reduced reliance on cars. Underground parking should prioritise residents, with secure bike storage provided.

Staines-Specific Feedback from the Citizens' Panel

The panel shared several ideas and preferences for developments in Staines, reflecting a desire for thoughtful design that enhances liveability and community wellbeing. Key points included:

- **Rethinking Transport and Roads:** The panel proposed removing cars from the streets in Staines, relying instead on taxi or ride-sharing services such as Uber to reduce congestion and improve air quality.
- **Design and Aesthetics:** Larger windows were highlighted as essential for allowing natural light to promote health and wellbeing. The panel expressed a strong preference for moving away from building square blocks, suggesting stepped-back floors at higher levels to create a less imposing visual impact.
- **Architectural Style:** Regency-style designs, as exemplified in one of the images presented, were favoured for their elegance and timelessness. The panel noted that shorter or staggered buildings, if designed with sophistication, would mitigate concerns about height.
- **Creating Harmony:** Overall, the panel emphasised that well-considered, elegant architecture, combined with functional design, could transform Staines into a more appealing and harmonious urban environment.

Conclusion

The Citizens Panel provided valuable feedback that will inform Spelthorne's Design Code, ensuring future developments align with the community's vision. They emphasised preserving green spaces, integrating sustainable practices, and fostering inclusivity across all neighbourhoods.

Specific priorities included protecting heritage sites, improving public transport links, and addressing challenges like poor lighting and underutilised spaces. For new developments, the panel encouraged thoughtful designs that blend functionality with aesthetic appeal, such as incorporating natural light, accessible green spaces, and community facilities.

These guiding principles reflect the feedback and suggestions provided by the panel, aiming to create vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive developments that serve Spelthorne's diverse communities.

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