

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	23/04/2026
Relevant Group Head review	Yes	21/04/2026
MAT+ review (to have been circulated at least 5 working days before Stage 2)	Yes	22/04/2026
This item is on the Forward Plan for the relevant committee	Yes	18/03/2026
	Reviewed by	
Finance comments (circulate to Finance)	AB	27/4/26
Risk comments (circulate to Lee O’Neil)	LO	11/05/26
Legal comments (circulate to Legal team)	JC	29/05/26
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 rec’d
Monitoring Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	JC	29/05/2026
S151 Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	T.Collier	30/04/2026
Commissioner engagement	J. Kingston	30/04/2026
	Delete as applicable:	No issues Comments in S. 7
Confirm final report cleared by MAT		

Environment and Sustainability Committee

18 June 2026

Title	<i>Commencement of the Immediate Review of the Spelthorne Local Plan (Policy ST3) under the New Plan-Making System</i>
Purpose of the report	<i>To make a decision</i>
Report Author	Laura Waters – Principal Planning Officer (Policy) Jane Robinson – Local Plans and Infrastructure Manager
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Corporate Priority	Community Addressing Housing Need Environment
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the commencement of the Immediate Review of the Spelthorne Local Plan, in accordance with Policy ST3 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.2. Approve publication of the Local Plan Immediate Review Timetable (Appendix A), in accordance with the requirements of the new plan-making system.3. Approve publication of the statutory Notice of Intention to Commence Plan-Making (Appendix B) to formally commence plan-making and meet the Government's Local Plan Implementation Funding requirements.4. Approve the undertaking of a statutory Scoping Consultation (Appendix C) in accordance with Regulation 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.5. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, to make any necessary updates to the Local Plan timetable as required by the new regulations (monthly review), any minor amendments to the Scoping Consultation and as required by the new regulations to self-publish the required Gateway 1 documentation.6. Note that decisions 1-4 fulfil the requirement of the Inspector's Report (Appendix D) which requires a review of the Local Plan immediately and an updated or replacement plan to be submitted for examination no later than two years from the date of adoption of the Local Plan.

	<p>Also Note that decisions 1-4 fulfil the requirement of the letter from MHCLG dated 15 January 2026 (Appendix E).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Note the implications of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the importance of progressing the Immediate Review at pace to ensure continuity through the transition to the West Surrey Authority. 8. Agree to reconvene a Local Plan Task Group and agree the composition of the Local Plan Task Group, Membership and Terms of Reference and (Appendix F). 9. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee to agree the names of those ward members on the Local Plan Task Group.
<p>Reason for Recommendation</p>	<p>The Inspector’s Report (March 2026) requires Spelthorne Borough Council to undertake an Immediate Review of the Local Plan and submit this within two years of its adoption, as secured through Policy ST3. Commencing the Review promptly ensures continued plan soundness, enables a reassessment of long-term housing needs and key evidence, and demonstrates compliance with national planning requirements.</p> <p>A letter from MHCLG to the Chief Executive on 15 January 2026 stated, “<i>You will, therefore, be required to start a local plan early in the new plan-making system by publishing your notice to commence plan preparation by 30 June 2026 and publishing your Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31 October 2026</i>”.</p> <p>A new plan-making system came into force on 25 March 2026 and introduces a mandatory sequence of actions, including publication of a Notice of Intention to Commence, a Scoping Consultation and completion of Gateway 1. Government Local Plan Implementation Funding is contingent on meeting prescribed milestones, including publication of the Notice by June 2026 and Gateway 1 by October 2026.</p> <p>Commencing the Immediate Review now also ensures that the process is sufficiently advanced ahead of Local Government Reorganisation, maintaining continuity and minimising disruption during the transition to the West Surrey Shadow Authority.</p>

1. Executive summary of the report *(expand detail in Key Issues section below)*

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Spelthorne Local Plan was adopted with Main Modifications in March 2026. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National reforms to the plan-making system came into force on 25 March 2026,

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Inspector’s Report requires an Immediate Review of the plan via Policy ST3 because of long-term housing supply shortfalls and the need to reassess key evidence. This review has to be completed and submitted to Planning Inspectorate within two years. • A letter from MHCLG was received on 15 January 2026 stated, “You will, therefore, be required to start a local plan early in the new plan-making system by publishing your notice to commence plan preparation by 30 June 2026 and publishing your Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31 October 2026”. • LGR will see Spelthorne become part of the West Surrey Council from 1 April 2027, making it essential that the Review progresses ahead of this transition. 	<p>requiring LPAs to follow a new legal framework including scoping consultation, Gateway assessments, and a strict timetable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government funding is contingent on meeting specific deadlines: Notice by June 2026 and Gateway 1 by 31 October 2026.
<p>This is what we want to do about it</p>	<p>These are the next steps</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence the Immediate Review now, publish the Notice to Commence, undertake Scoping Consultation, and publish Gateway 1 self-assessment by October 2026. Formally commencing plan-making under the 2026 Regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will publish the updated Local Plan timetable, as required under the 2026 Regulations, followed by issuing the statutory Notice of Intention to Commence Plan-Making by June 2026. • A six-week Scoping Consultation will then be carried out in line with Regulation 20, ensuring early engagement on the scope and key issues. • The Council will complete and publish its Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31 October 2026. • Progress the Immediate Review to Gateway 1 by October 2026 to secure funding and establish a clear programme ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 The Inspector’s Report (4 March 2026) of the Spelthorne Local Plan 2024-2039/40 concluded the Plan is sound only with the inclusion of Policy ST3, which requires the Council to undertake an Immediate Review of the Plan following adoption. The Inspector notes that while the Local Plan provides a robust and positive framework, several strategic issues necessitate early

reassessment to ensure continued soundness over the full plan period. These include: the identified long term housing supply shortfall, the need to update the employment land evidence, the need to review flood risk and emerging groundwater evidence, the need to reassess Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs, and the requirement to review conformity with future updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

- 2.2 The Inspector’s reasoning aligns with his approach to other main modifications: emphasising responsiveness to changing evidence, the importance of long-term delivery monitoring, and the need to reassess certain strategic matters early in the plan period. The recommendation is clear the Local Plan must be reviewed and submitted for examination within two years of adoption, ensuring that future policy remains justified, effective, and reflective of the most up-to-date evidence base.
- 2.3 To demonstrate a proactive and compliant response to the Inspector’s requirement for an early Review, the Council has already taken steps to commission a comprehensive suite of updated evidence to support the Immediate Review. This includes updated Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), Open Space Assessment (OSA), Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), a refreshed Green Belt Assessment (GBA), a borough-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS), a new Retail and Leisure Study (RLS), and an updated Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). These commissions reflect the Inspector’s explicit expectation that the Review must reassess long-term development needs using the latest evidence and ensure that the emerging replacement Plan is positively prepared, justified, and effective. This early commissioning also aligns with the need to progress the Review before the formation of the West Surrey Shadow Authority in 2027, ensuring continuity during structural governance change. Procurement of remaining evidence required to produce a compliant Local Plan will be delivered within existing available funding.
- 2.4 On 15 January 2026 a letter was received from MHCLG to the Chief Executive (Appendix E). It stated
- “I am writing as your local authority submitted a plan for examination on, or before, 12 March 2025 and the housing requirement in the plan as submitted for examination was meeting less than 80% of local housing need, calculated using the standard method in national planning practice guidance 2024 link. You will, therefore, be required to start a local plan early in the new plan-making system by publishing your notice to commence plan preparation by 30 June 2026 and publishing your Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31 October 2026”.*
- 2.5 To implement Policy ST3, the Council must commence the Immediate Review through the new 2026 plan making system, Further details are available on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gateway-1-what-you-need-to-do>. This requires the publication of:
- Local Plan Timetable,
 - Notice of Intention to Commence,
 - Scoping Consultation, and
 - Publication of the [Gateway 1 self-assessment](#) (covering six areas: Legal requirements, timetable, project management & governance,

consultation & engagement, scoping content and progressing Strategic Environmental Assessment)

These steps constitute the statutory actions required to commence plan-making and demonstrate readiness to pass Gateway 1 under the 2026 Regulations.

2.6 Timetable for the Immediate Review Gateway 1 (For complete timetable see Appendix A)

Stage	Requirement	Deadline
Publish Local Plan Timetable	Must be published before or with Notice to Commence	June 2026
Publish Notice of Intention to Commence	Must be minimum of 4 months before Gateway 1; required for funding	June 2026
Conduct Scoping Consultation	Statutory requirement (Reg. 20)	Summer 2026
Complete Gateway 1	Publish self-assessment	October 2026

This timetable ensures compliance with the Inspector's requirement for an Immediate Review, alignment with national regulations, and safeguarding eligibility for Government Local Plan Implementation Funding.

- 2.7 The Immediate Review will be progressed through a clear and proportionate governance structure. This includes fortnightly Strategic Planning briefings with the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee to provide oversight of progress, emerging issues and key evidence. Decisions will be taken at the appropriate level, with formal reports and decision-making brought to Committee where required in accordance with the Council's constitution. Member engagement will be embedded throughout the Local Plan review process, ensuring transparency, informed decision-making and ongoing involvement in shaping the emerging plan.
- 2.8 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, which came into force on 25 March 2026, replace the 2012 Regulations and establish a fundamentally new approach to Local Plan preparation. All new plans including Immediate Reviews must now follow this updated legal process. The Regulations prescribe in detail how LPAs must commence plan-making, undertake community engagement, and progress through the new digital-first system.
- 2.9 The new system is designed to reduce delays and provide greater clarity, with Gateways ensuring early scrutiny of soundness issues. Gateway 1 provides the first formal checkpoint.
- 2.10 These regulatory changes reinforce the need for the Council to commence the Immediate Review now, ensuring the process remains legally compliant and progressing in step with national reforms.

- 2.11 In January 2026 the Government confirmed that Local Plan Implementation Funding will be made available only to authorities that publish a Notice to Commence by June 2026 and complete Gateway 1 by 31 October 2026. Failure to meet either deadline would mean Spelthorne becomes ineligible for funding, requiring the full cost of the Immediate Review to be borne by the Council. Early commencement therefore enables the Council to secure external financial support, reducing the burden on local budgets and supporting delivery of the new plan within the required period.
- 2.12 Not progressing the Immediate Review would risk creating a policy vacuum, particularly given the Inspector's finding of a long-term housing shortfall. Without an up-to-date trajectory and strengthened housing policies emerging from the Review, the Council would face increased vulnerability to speculative development, weakened appeal positions, and potential Government scrutiny. The absence of a timely review could also undermine public confidence in the plan-making process and compromise the ability to deliver infrastructure and sustainable growth.
- 2.13 Following approval of the Surrey Structural Changes Order, Spelthorne will join the new West Surrey Council alongside Guildford, Runnymede, Surrey Heath, Waverley and Woking. Elections for the new authority took place in May 2026, with the West Surrey Council vesting day being 1 April 2027. The Immediate Review must therefore progress at pace to ensure the Local Plan Review is sufficiently advanced before the transfer of governance, avoiding disruption to statutory processes, decision-making and programme delivery.

Local Plan Task Group

- 2.14 Local Plan Task Group (LPTG)- It is recommended that the composition of the LPTG remains almost exactly the same as those agreed by E&S committee on 30 June 2021 and 27 June 2023. The Terms of Reference (ToR) are set out in Appendix F. The chair and vice chair of Environment and Sustainability Committee would be the chair and vice chair of the LPTG. The only proposed change is the Chair of planning committee would no longer automatically sit on the group, as with 13 members it is a large task group. In order to ensure appropriate representation across the borough, a member from each ward will be appointed, which may include the Chair of the Planning Committee.

3. Options appraisal and proposal

- 3.1 **Preferred Option (Recommended) - Commence Immediate Review** and demonstrate formal commencement of plan-making under the new plan-making system.

Fulfils the Inspector's legal requirement through Policy ST3, ensuring the Council remains compliant with the new 2026 plan-making regulations and secures eligibility for Government Local Plan Implementation Funding by meeting the June and October deadlines. Early commencement also enables the updated plan to be prepared within two-year time frame, strengthening the Council's planning framework and reducing vulnerability to speculative applications. The Council's early commissioning of updated evidence demonstrates readiness to progress efficiently through this accelerated timetable. This option also ensures continuity through the 2027–2028 LGR transition, avoiding uncertainty that could arise if responsibility transfers mid-Review.

3.2 Alternative option (not recommended) - Delay commencement

This would breach Policy ST3 and disregard the Inspector's clear requirement for an Immediate Review following adoption, resulting in the loss of Government Local Plan Implementation Funding and placing the full financial burden of the review on the Council, while also weakening the authority's position at appeal as the weight of existing policies diminishes over time.

4. Risk implications

4.1 Progressing the Immediate Review now ensures full compliance with Policy ST3 of the adopted Local Plan and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. By acting promptly, the Council strengthens its legal position, demonstrates responsiveness to the Inspector's recommendations, and reduces risk of challenge, scrutiny or intervention associated with delay.

4.2 Progressing the Immediate Review now ensures the expectations set out in the letter from MHCLG dated 15 January 2026 are met and the funding awarded to the Council of £108,474.57 of New System Plan Funding was given on the basis of meeting the two milestones:

- Publishing a Notice of Intention to commence Local Plan preparation by 30 June 2026; and
- Publishing your Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31 October 2026.

4.3 Early commencement of the Review supports a robust and evolving planning framework that can respond to long-term housing needs and updated evidence. This approach enhances policy weight over time, supports consistent decision-making, and improves the Council's position in managing appeals and speculative development pressures.

4.4 Advancing the Immediate Review now ensures that the process is well-established prior to the formation of the West Surrey Shadow Authority. This reduces the risk of disruption during governance transition, maintains programme momentum, and avoids unnecessary duplication of work or uncertainty over accountability during structural change.

4.5 Demonstrating a proactive response to both national reforms and the Inspector's requirements will reinforce the Council's reputation as a plan-led authority. The preferred approach strengthens confidence among residents, developers, statutory bodies and neighbouring authorities by showing clear leadership, transparency and commitment to effective plan-making.

5. Financial implications

5.1 Commencing the Immediate Review now ensures the Council remains eligible for Government Local Plan Implementation Funding (£108,474.57), which is only available if the Notice to Commence is published by June 2026 and Gateway 1 is completed by October 2026. Early action also avoids the significantly higher costs associated with delay, including loss of funding, increased appeal exposure, and extended reliance on consultants. The approved timetable provides cost certainty and improves financial planning through the Review period. The Council has set aside budget provision to cover the review work.

- 5.2 To support an efficient and compliant Review, the Council has already commissioned key evidence updates including the HEDNA, GBA, OSA, PPS, GTAA, RLS and GIS which distributes expenditure early and reduces future financial pressure. The remaining evidence required to produce a compliant plan has been identified and will be delivered through existing available funding.
- 5.3 Early progression also avoids potential additional costs arising during LGR transition, ensuring the Review is resourced and controlled before responsibilities transfer to the new West Surrey authority.
- 6. Legal comments**
- 6.1 The March 2026 report produced by the Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State, requires the Council to undertake an Immediate Review of the Spelthorne Local Plan 2024-2039/40 and submit this within 2 years of adoption.
- 6.2 All new Local Plans must follow the updated legal process within the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

Corporate implications

7. Commissioners' comments

- 7.1 There are none.

8. S151 Officer comments

- 8.1 The S151 Officer confirms that all financial implications have been taken into account and that the recommendations are fully funded from within the 2026-27 budget.

9. Monitoring Officer comments

- 9.1 The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirms the relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

10. Procurement comments

- 10.1 The Council's Contract Standing Orders have been complied with. A compliant tender exercise has been undertaken to procure consultants to carry out the assessments referred to in this report and any remaining assessments will follow this process.

11. Equality and Diversity

- 11.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared during the Review.

12. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 12.1 The Immediate Review of the Spelthorne Local Plan is important for meeting the Council's climate and sustainability commitments.

- 12.2 The Review allows the Council to re-examine how the Local Plan supports climate change mitigation and adaptation to align with the updated NPPF requirements. This includes how new development is located, designed, and supported by infrastructure. It also provides an opportunity to strengthen policies on flood risk, energy efficiency, sustainable transport, green infrastructure, and biodiversity.
- 12.3 Delaying the Review would limit the Council's ability to respond to climate risks and could result in policies remaining in place for longer than required. This would increase long-term environmental and financial risks.
- 12.4 Advancing the Review ahead of Local Government Reorganisation will also help ensure that Spelthorne's climate priorities are clearly set out before they are carried forward into the West Surrey Unitary Authority's planning framework.
- 12.5 Overall, the Immediate Review supports sustainable growth, strengthens the Council's response to climate change, and helps ensure future development aligns with long-term environmental objectives.

13. Other considerations

- 13.1 There are none

14. Timetable for implementation

- 14.1 Gateway 1 timetable for the Immediate review of the Local plan can be found at 2.5 and the timetable covering the whole 24-month Local Plan process through to submission can be found at Appendix A.

15. Contact

- 15.1 Laura Waters – Principal Planning Officer (Policy)
l.waters@spelthorne.gov.uk
- 15.2 Jane Robinson – Local Plans and Infrastructure Manager
j.robinson@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:

[Spelthorne Local Plan 2024-2039-40 \(March 2026\) 0.pdf](#)
[Plan-making regulations explainer - GOV.UK](#)
[Getting ready to prepare a new plan - GOV.UK](#)

Appendices:

Appendix A - Local Plan Immediate Review Timetable
Appendix B - Statutory Notice of Intention to Commence Plan-Making

Appendix C - Local Plan Immediate Review Cross Boundary Scoping Consultation
Appendix D - Spelthorne Local Plan 2024-2039/40 Inspectors Report
Appendix E - MHCLG Letter 15 January 2026 - Implementation of reforms to the
plan-making system – support for early starters
Appendix F - Local Plan Task Group Terms of Reference – June 2026