

Boroughs need 1,250 new homes per year

By Matt Strudwick

SPELTHORNE and Runnymede may have to build more than 1,000 homes a year until 2033, according to a document seen by the *Surrey Advertiser*.

The figure has been formed from the boroughs' joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) - a document prepared by local authorities to assess their housing needs.

The document shows Spelthorne would have to build a base level of 543 homes a year, up to a maximum of 725, compared to the 511 which was suggested in a draft SHMA report in February, in order to provide enough affordable housing.

Runnymede has seen its suggested target of 434 homes a year increase to a base level of 459 with a maximum of 525 homes a year needed.

That means the boroughs' housing needs could see a combined 1,250 homes being built each year.

But Conservative councillor Vivienne Leighton,



Cllr Vivienne Leighton.

Spelthorne Borough Council's cabinet member for planning and corporate development, said people should not be

alarmed by the figures.

"The next stage after this will go until 2019 when we eventually get round to assessing land we have in the borough and what we could do feasibly to build on and that figure is not going to be anything like that level," she said.

"I have no idea what will be the figure, but eventually the inspectorate will look at Spelthorne, with a flood plain, reservoirs, green belt and urban bits, densely used. Then we will come out with an answer, whatever it is, of what will be our target plan for ensuing years.

"It's a process we have to go through. It's like me saying, I have a bucket list. And on that bucket list is 'I want to fly to the Moon'. Something ridiculous I couldn't afford it. I want to go to the Moon, but I go to Iceland as it is as far as I can afford to go."

The document, compiled by property consultants GL

Hearn, states some 'caveats' need to be recognised as it has not considered growth potential of both boroughs, or any expansion at Heathrow Airport.

According to the report, over the period to 2033, the population of people aged 55 and over is expected to increase by 42% in the area which will result in a further 1,850 specialist homes, including sheltered and care homes, needing to be built.

It reads: "It is expected that a growing older population may result in an increase in the number of people with dementia by over 1,700 between 2013-33, with growth in the number of persons with mobility problems of over 3,800."

A further 191 beds in care homes, 69 in Runnymede and 122 in Spelthorne, will also will need to be made available by 2033, although the draft report says this does not form part of the housing needs.

The two councils have been working together to formulate a joint SHMA since September last year as set out by the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Spelthorne had its Local Plan approved in 2009, but has since decided to update it due to a change in legislation.

"When this was all done, back when that plan was done under previous legislation, we had regions," said Cllr Leighton.

"Basically everybody said what could or couldn't be built and it was all ironed out within the regions of what was acceptable what each region could do. The purpose of the NPPF is we have to assess the need (for housing).

"In the south, the need determined them as being overwhelming. In the north nobody wants to live there and build, so the need isn't very high."

Liberal Democrat, and member of Spelthorne's Local Plan Working Party, Cllr Ian Beardsmore said he has never agreed with a joint SHMA with Runnymede.

"I don't think it is the right route for Spelthorne and there is a strong case to be made that Spelthorne should stand alone," he said.

"The numbers are four times what we are building now.

"It's a smoke screen so when it comes out and washed down to twice as much as what we are doing, everybody will be grateful."

The full report will be published on Spelthorne Borough Council's website from June 25 where it will be open for comments from residents and businesses.