

Final Vision and Strategic Objectives for Spelthorne

OUR VISION

Spelthorne is a high-quality place to live, work and do business, with significant natural environment assets and an excellent location on the edge of Surrey and next to London, providing access to a wide range of different centres and services.

We want our residents to be proud of Spelthorne.

We aim to maximise the potential of all that the Borough has to offer, meeting our changing development needs over time whilst ensuring that this is sustainable by taking every opportunity to reduce our carbon emissions and therefore our impact on the planet; improving the overall health and wellbeing of our communities and environment; and delivering high quality places and services.

To do this we will be:

- **Inclusive**, ensuring that our decisions and actions reflect the diverse needs of our communities and that all have the opportunity and the ability to engage with the Council on an ongoing basis.
- **Efficient**, prioritising our resources to focus on the things that will have the greatest benefit for all of our residents and exploring opportunities for joint working and sharing skills, expertise and experience with other local authorities.
- **Collaborative**, working more effectively with our residents and local stakeholders to achieve our shared objectives for improving Spelthorne as a place to live, work and do business, and for enhancing public services across the Borough.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To achieve our Vision and provide a framework for all our policies and priorities for the next five years, we will focus on six overarching Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Objective 1: Improving the quality of our places

We will improve the overall quality of Spelthorne as a place to live, work and do business by meeting our development needs as far as possible within the context of our Vision for sustainable growth, ensuring that new development is delivered in the right places, supported by the right infrastructure, reflects the character of our distinct communities and improves the overall quality of our built and natural environment.

Why is this important?

Planning is one of the most important roles the Council has, shaping how Spelthorne as a place looks, feels and functions. If we get this right and ensure that new development is in the right place, is properly supported by the right infrastructure and is high quality and well designed, it can significantly enhance what the Borough has to offer. If we get this wrong, it can have a disastrous impact on the lives of our residents and on our businesses, irreversibly damage our natural environment and significantly reduce our ability to address the immediate and increasing challenges arising from Climate Change.

It is vital therefore that we strive to deliver sustainable development across the Borough which meets the needs of our residents in a way that enhances the overall quality and function of our towns and villages, does not compromise our valuable open spaces and reduces our carbon emissions. It is also important that we build resilience into the way we plan for the future so that we can respond to, as yet unknown, external economic, technological and other changes which are often beyond our control, as has clearly been demonstrated through our recent experiences with the Covid Pandemic and flooding.

The spaces between buildings play an important role in how a place feels and functions and can actively help improve the wellbeing and safety of our communities. High quality 'public realm' can also have a direct impact on the viability of our town centres, encouraging people to visit because of the overall experience, not just the retail offer. It is therefore vital that we improve the quality of our public spaces across Spelthorne but especially in the more urban settings such as our town and neighbourhood centres.

How will we achieve this?

- We will ensure our new Local Plan and Staines Development Framework provide a robust basis for meeting the development needs of our residents by:
 - delivering high-quality, well-designed buildings that maximise the use of existing brownfield sites and reflect the character of the diverse communities across the Borough.
 - ensuring all new development contributes towards reducing our carbon emissions.
 - harnessing the wide-ranging benefits of our natural environment.
 - improving the overall quality and accessibility of our green and open spaces.
 - increasing opportunities for active travel and use of public transport options; and
 - supporting high quality, resilient and versatile high streets.
- Through our Development Management function, we will ensure that all proposed new development contributes towards meeting our Vision and Strategic Objectives, working

proactively with applicants to ensure that proposals are good enough to approve, not bad enough to refuse, challenging applicants on the quality of the proposals where necessary.

- We will work with applicants to maximise the potential from developer contributions, challenging the evidence presented where necessary (especially on viability), ensuring that all opportunities are taken to deliver the infrastructure and wider benefits that new development can offer.
- We will proactively engage with the development industry and other stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of what 'good and healthy' development looks like in Spelthorne and what is needed to deliver this and to manage the impact of the Permitted Development on the viability and character of our centres.
- We will ensure that the height and design of developments are sympathetic to the character of the local area including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, as set out in the NPPF and where necessary place a height restriction on buildings in certain locations to reflect the prevailing character of the local area. For example, within zoning in Staines it is unlikely that buildings higher than 10 storeys would be acceptable. However, we will implement a robust design-led approach to assess the justification for any deviation from this and ensure that any proposals support wider objectives.
- We will invest in new and innovative approaches to planning, especially where this leads to a clearer understanding for our residents around what is being proposed, what it would look like and how it would function (e.g. use of 3D images and other digital technology).
- Our approach to supporting sustainable development will be inclusive and fair to all our residents, ensuring that all places feel invested in with improvements for all our diverse and distinct communities.
- We will maximise the potential of our own land and assets to contribute to meeting our Strategic Objectives, helping to deliver the right type of housing to meet our needs (especially affordable housing) and improving our natural environment assets to increase access and maximise the wider benefits, particularly in relation to the health and wellbeing of our residents and reducing our impact on Climate Change.
- We will explore all opportunities to improve the public realm across Spelthorne, starting with an initial review of town centres, with a view to ensuring that all spaces are attractive, accessible, safe and contribute to improving health and wellbeing and reducing our impact on the planet (e.g. more open spaces and urban gardens, focal points, benches, less use of concrete, water fountains).

Further resources and information