

CHAPTER 1

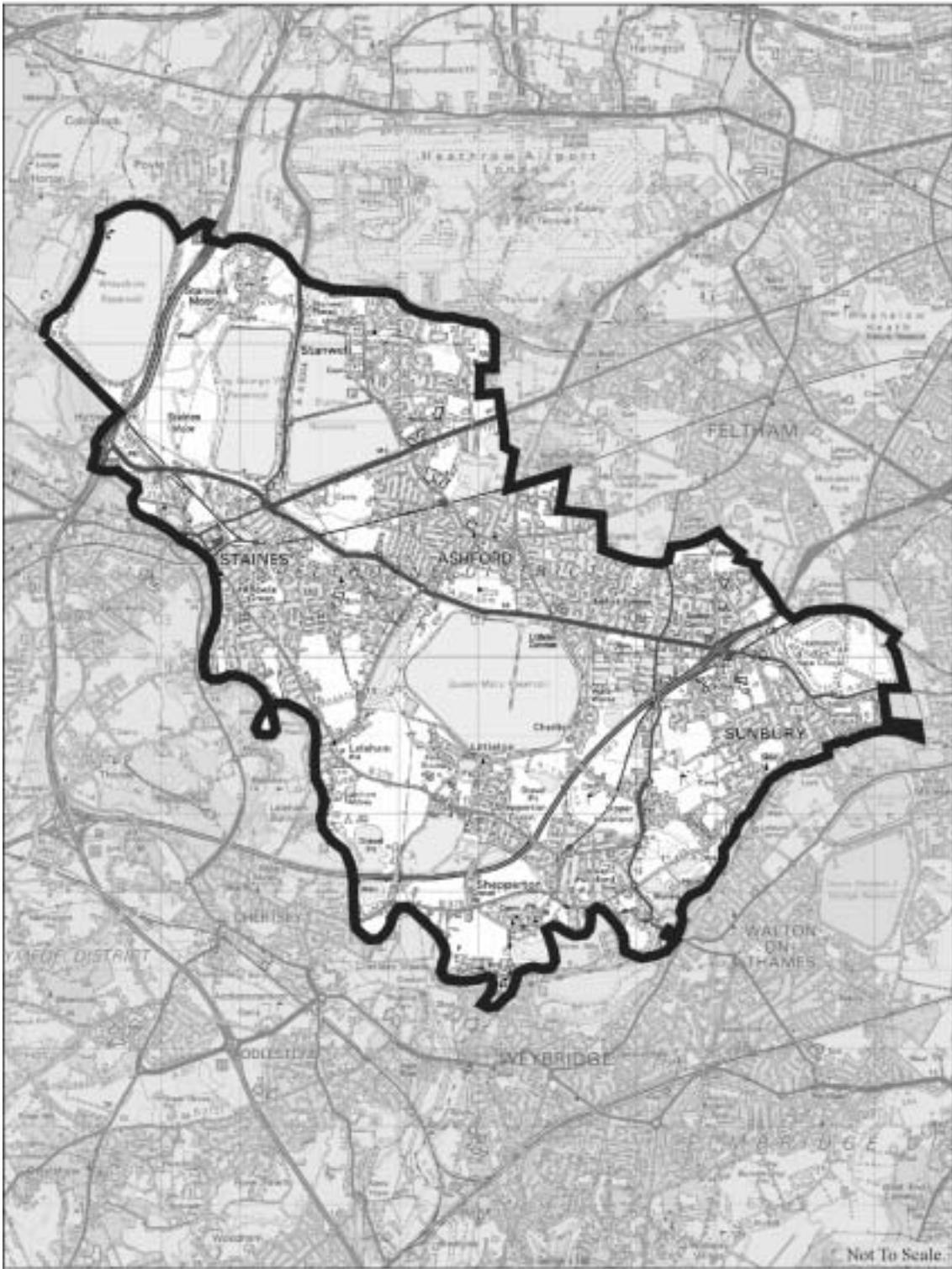
INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In May 1991 Spelthorne Borough Council adopted its first Borough wide Local Plan. That has now been replaced by this Plan which was adopted in April 2001. The purpose of the Borough Plan is to set out the policies that will be used to control future development in the Borough. This introductory chapter outlines the characteristics of the Borough, the process timetable and the aims of the Plan.

BACKGROUND TO THE BOROUGH

- 1.2. Spelthorne is located in the north west of Surrey and Staines is its principal town. The Borough extends to 5,128 hectares (12,671 acres) in size and is some 15 miles west of Central London. The location of the Borough is shown on Map 1. It has a common boundary with the London Boroughs of Hounslow, Hillingdon and Richmond, the Districts of Elmbridge and Runnymede, and the Unitary Authorities of Windsor and Maidenhead, and Slough.
- 1.3. Prior to the reorganisation of Local Government in London in 1965 the predecessors of Spelthorne Borough Council, the Urban District Councils of Staines and Sunbury, were part of the County of Middlesex. After that date the Districts became part of Surrey. With further local government reorganisation in 1974 the Districts were amalgamated to become one Authority with the name 'Spelthorne' which comes from the historical area of the 'Spelthorne Hundred'.
- 1.4. Between 1991 and 1994 a series of changes to the northern and western boundaries of the Borough were made. In 1991 changes to the western boundary with Windsor and Maidenhead resulted in all of the Wraysbury Reservoir coming within Spelthorne and other changes in the vicinity of the M25 Junction 13. In 1994 the Cargo Terminal of Heathrow and part of Terminal 4 were transferred from Spelthorne to the London Borough of Hillingdon and various changes were made along the boundary with the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond upon Thames. In 1995 Poyle and Colnbrook were transferred from Spelthorne to Slough.
- 1.5. Historically the pattern of development in the Borough dates from pre-Roman times and reflects the various crossing points of the River Thames and the routes which radiate from them. From this highway pattern and the subsequent settlements of Ashford, Laleham, Lower Sunbury, Shepperton, Staines and Stanwell, substantial residential development took place between the 1920's and 1950's. This arose largely from the outward expansion of London and the Borough's proximity to the capital rather than any locally generated factors. Since the 1950's Heathrow Airport has had an increasing influence on the Borough in terms of noise, traffic generation, and ancillary activities such as warehousing and demands for housing. The Airport is now

Location Map.



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an important part of the economy of the area although not without some adverse environmental impact.

- 1.6. Since 1956 the pattern of development has been strongly influenced by the Borough's inclusion in the Metropolitan Green Belt. The strict application of this policy by successive county and district councils has halted the rapid spread of development characteristic of the preceding three decades. Subsequent development activity has been mainly confined to the urban areas. The continued application of Green Belt policy is critical to maintaining the present balance between developed and undeveloped land.

PLAN MAKING PROCESS

- 1.7. Plan making in England and Wales is undertaken at four levels - national, regional, county and district. The Government provides advice on a wide range of planning matters, including the preparation and content of statutory plans, via Circulars and Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPG's) which are published by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)¹.
- 1.8. The second level is regional guidance. Regional planning has played an important role in ensuring a consistent and co-ordinated approach at the county and district council level. The first Strategic Plan for the South East (SPSE) was approved in 1970. Since then there have been regular reviews of regional policies in recent years in the form of Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9). The latest version of RPG9 was published in March 2001. Regional Planning Guidance is adopted by the Government but drafts are prepared by regional bodies. In the south east SERPLAN undertook this role until March 2001 when a new regional body was formed – the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) which covers the same geographical area as the Government Office for the South East.
- 1.9. The third level of planning guidance is in the form of Structure Plans produced by county councils. The Surrey Structure Plan was approved on 15th November 1994 and published in May 1995. A draft Replacement Plan was placed on deposit in January 2001. This Local Plan is based on the policies of the Surrey Structure Plan 1994.
- 1.10. The final level of Plan making is Local Plans. These are normally prepared by district councils although in the case of Minerals and Waste Plans these are prepared by county councils. Local Plans have the role of applying national, regional and Structure Plan policies at the local level and resolving any competing or conflicting pressures. They set out detailed policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land, and guide most day-to-day planning decisions.

¹ Since June 2001 the responsibility for planning comes within the new Government Department – Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR)

- 1.11. Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that where an adopted or approved development plan contains relevant policies, an application for planning permission or an appeal shall be determined in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning Policy Guidance Note No.1 "General Policy and Principles" makes clear that conversely, applications which are not in accordance with relevant policies in a plan should not be allowed unless material considerations justify granting planning permission. The Guidance note makes clear that those deciding such planning applications or appeals should take into account whether the proposed development would cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN SPELTHORNE

- 1.12. The first detailed Plan for what is now Spelthorne was the Staines and Sunbury Town Map approved in 1956. This was reviewed in 1965 and 1974. In September 1984 the Council adopted the Staines Town Centre Local Plan, this was revoked upon adoption of the Spelthorne Borough Local Plan in May 1991. The 1991 Plan was revoked upon adoption of this Local Plan.
- 1.13. In January 1985 the County Council adopted the North West Surrey Minerals Local Plan which covered the whole of Spelthorne. In February 1989 the Surrey Minerals Local Plan was adopted dealing with mineral issues for the remainder of the County but dealing with rail aggregate depots for the whole County. Both Plans were automatically revoked on 30th July 1993 on the adoption of Surrey Minerals Local Plan 1993. The Surrey Waste Local Plan 1997 was published in May 1999.

PREPARATION OF THIS LOCAL PLAN

- 1.14. A Consultation Draft of this Plan was published in November 1994 and was the subject of extensive public consultation. A Deposit Draft was approved by the Council in September 1995 and placed on 'deposit' in March/April 1996. Between September 1997 and April 1998 a Public Local Inquiry was held into objections and the Inspector presented his report to the Council in July 1998. The Report was published in October 1998. Following consideration of the Inspector's Report modifications to the Plan were published and the Council resolved in October 1999 to proceed to adopt the Plan as modified. The Plan was then subject to a 'direction' from the Secretary of State requiring modifications of the policy on affordable (Policy H6). As an interim measure the Council published the "Proposed to be Adopted Plan" pending the outcome of a High Court challenge to the direction. Following the hearing in the High Court the policy was modified and the Plan was adopted in April 2001.
- 1.15. This document contains no changes to policy from the Proposed to be Adopted Plan other than that on affordable housing (Policy H6). However for the benefit of the reader some factual information has been updated and relevant changes to Government planning policy guidance have been identified up to the date of adoption in April 2001.

AIMS OF THE PLAN

- 1.16. Since the first Development Plan for the Borough produced over 45 years ago, the key aims of the respective Councils have been to meet local needs and protect the environment. Green Belt policy has been a fundamental part of implementing the environmental aim in restraining development and the Council has consistently attached particular importance to its firm application.
- 1.17. In recent years there has been increasing public awareness of the need to protect and enhance the environment. The Government set out its general approach in the 1990 White Paper "This Common Inheritance" and has, since the 'Earth Summit' in Rio in 1992, reinforced its commitment to protecting the environment and to the principles of sustainable development with the publication in January 1994 of "Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy". A further "Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK" was published in 1999. The thrust of this approach is now embodied in all new and revised planning guidance. Specifically PPG1 explains in paragraph 4 that sustainable development seeks to deliver the objective of achieving now and in the future, economic development to secure higher living standards while protecting and enhancing the environment. This Plan has therefore been prepared in the light of current advice on sustainability and the need to ensure that its policies comply with this approach.
- 1.18. This Plan follows the requirement to set out explicitly its overall aims, reflecting national, regional and Structure Plan guidance. The aims provide the basis for the detailed policies and proposals contained in the Plan and which accord with the principles of sustainable development. The implications of sustainability for the Plan are far reaching and the concept implies that there is a limit on the ability of the environment to support human activity. However, the comprehensive approach required is not about calling a halt to new development but about how development and change may be dealt with in a way which considers the long term sustainability of the Borough's environment. The aims of the Plan are set out under seven headings and together express the Planning Strategy for the Borough.
 1. GENERAL - To meet the needs of those who live and work in the Borough to the extent which is consistent with protecting and enhancing the environment.
 2. ENVIRONMENT - To protect and enhance the environment by:
 - (a) protecting and enhancing the natural and built heritage
 - (b) meeting development needs in a way which preserves the extent and character of the urban areas
 - (c) resisting development that would adversely affect local communities in the Borough

- (d) wherever possible ensuring new development positively enhances the environment.
3. HOUSING - To provide additional housing to the extent consistent with Structure Plan requirements and protection of the character of urban areas, and to seek to encourage choice in terms of size, type and tenure by those needing housing in the Borough.
 4. EMPLOYMENT - To maintain a buoyant economy which meets the needs of the Borough whilst opposing additional employment growth of a scale which would place unacceptable pressure on the Green Belt, housing supply, transport infrastructure and the environment generally.
 5. SHOPPING - To provide and maintain accessible shopping facilities to meet the needs of the local population as a whole.
 6. MOVEMENT - To promote measures to enable safe and efficient means of travel and to secure a reduction in travel demand consistent with protecting and enhancing the environment.
 7. RECREATION, SOCIAL & COMMUNITY FACILITIES - To maintain and enable the provision of recreation, social and community facilities to meet the needs of the local community.

From these aims the specific policies and proposal of the Plan follow. Whereas aims set the general direction, policies and proposals explain how these directions will be achieved and are more detailed.

ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL OF THE PLAN

- 1.19. An important aspect of preparing a plan which seeks to follow the principles of sustainable development is to ensure that all the Plan's policies and proposals are compatible with this aim. In accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note No.12 "Development Plans" the Council has carried out an environmental appraisal of the Plan. This is a process which continues throughout the plan preparation stages to its adoption. The Council is satisfied that the policies and proposals in the Plan are as far as possible consistent with sustainable development objectives and that the assessment carried out has allowed the systematic and logical refinement of all the policy areas of the Plan. The methods and results from the environmental appraisal are set out in Appendix 1, but in order to avoid unnecessary duplication the environmental appraisal process has not been specifically referred to under the individual chapters of the Plan.

FORMAT OF THE DOCUMENT

- 1.20. This Plan is divided into chapters reflecting distinct subject areas, and is supported by a Proposals Map and Inset Maps. Each chapter provides background information and policy context and the reasoning for the policies and proposals. Policies are set out

within the chapters in lowercase bold text and proposals are summarised in each chapter, and also set out under subject order in schedule form in Chapter 12 - Implementation. The Proposals Map is contained in a wallet at the back of this document with appropriate Inset Maps bound in the back of this document. These maps together show the location of all proposals and specific areas to which policies may apply. As background to the Council's planning work generally it does publish wider information in the following documents which may be of assistance to those wishing to explore certain issues in greater depth:

- (a) Planning Monitoring Report - produced annually.
- (b) Guide to Available Commercial Premises - produced quarterly.
- (c) Report on the 1991 Census - Part 1 June 1993.

A list of other available publications can be supplied on request and is also published on the Council's web site.

- 1.21. Some issues in the Plan are dealt with in more than one place and cross references are given in the text. One such issue is improving access for those people with disabilities or movement difficulties. The Council's overall approach on this issue is set out in Chapter 10 - Social and Community Facilities. However, all aspects of the Plan seek to take this important issue into account.