



# **Sustainable Development Strategy 2009 – 2013**

Spelthorne Borough Council  
Environment Services  
01784 451499

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## **Executive Summary**

**This document is Spelthorne Borough Council's Sustainable Development Strategy. This Strategy builds on the actions and objectives of the Environment Strategy that came to an end in 2009.**

**The aim of this strategy is to enable all people living and working within the borough to enjoy the best quality of life without compromising the needs of future generations.**

**This strategy uses the 4 priorities and principles outlined by the National Strategy:**

- 1. Sustainable consumption and production**
- 2. Climate change and energy**
- 3. Natural resource protection**
- 4. Sustainable communities**

**These national priorities are fed down to the borough level through regional, county and local partnerships.**

**The actions and objectives outlined within this document and in the associated Sustainable Development Action Plans support the vision**

**“Think globally, act locally”**

**This Strategy is designed to deliver an approach that will enable, encourage and engage with others, whilst the Council sets an excellent example in all its activities.**

**The actions within this document are further developed in appendix 1, the Sustainable Development Action Plan. The SDAP tackle the challenges of Sustainable Development in four organisational areas:**

- 1. Policy**
- 2. Operations**
- 3. Procurement**
- 4. People**

## **1 Aim**

The sustainable development (SD) strategy for Spelthorne Borough Council details the main areas for improving the sustainability performance for the Borough and its residents. The SD strategy explains how sustainability has evolved over time and highlights the need for an integrated and holistic approach to tackle the key elements which form the backbone of sustainability; the economy, environment and society. The strategy stresses the urgency and importance of ensuring ambitions set at national, regional, county and local level are realised here at Spelthorne Borough Council and sets out the Council's targets over the next five years.

## **2 Introduction**

Increased prosperity has enabled many of Spelthorne's residents to enjoy improved lifestyles with new technology, cheap imported goods and more choice in products and services. However, the negative environmental impact of this increased opportunity continues to rise and drain natural resources all over the world.

Sustainable development involves enabling local people to take decisions affecting their communities to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life for present and future generations by integrating environmental, social and economic wellbeing. The Council's SD Strategy is part of a framework of strategies, (which are under constant review and development), to deliver significant change across our borough over the next five years.

## **3 What is sustainable development?**

The concept of sustainable development was launched in a global context in 1992 when the Rio Summit encouraged governments around the world to be committed to the principles known as Local Agenda 21. The United Kingdom has been at the forefront in embracing these principles by firstly developing a national strategy in 1994, followed by a report in 1999 (*A Better Quality of Life*), which outlined how the government would deliver sustainable development and set a vision for economic, social and environmental outcomes.

In 2005, the national strategy was reviewed and identified a key participative role for the public sector, particularly regional and local government. This was to be achieved through consideration and review of their own practices and policies and as facilitators, enablers and educators over matters where they may be able to influence, even though these may not be within their direct control.

The national strategy addressed the key objectives that the European Union's sustainable development strategy had set out to tackle such as climate change, natural resource protection, sustainable transport, ageing population, public health and the global dimension of sustainable development.

This SD Strategy builds upon our previous work, outlined in the Environment Strategy 2005 - 2010, and the work that is on-going across the other

departments such as the finance service and planning departments. The SD Strategy will strengthen, enhance and help steer the Council's policies (such as the new draft Procurement Strategy, the Local Development Framework and improving the Sustainability of the Borough through the Community Plan) and decisions by embracing the national and regional frameworks and applying these to local issues and actions.

It sets out the Council's responsibilities for matters that it can directly implement. In addition, the SD Strategy covers areas that, although they may not be our direct responsibility, we can have a role in influencing and enabling others within the wider community (including voluntary groups, the commercial sector and individual's actions and behaviour).

#### 4 The national, regional and local vision

##### National Vision

The UK's guiding principles on sustainable development which are outlined in the Government's strategy *Securing the Future – Delivering the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005)*, form the basis of sustainable policy in the UK. In order for policies to be sustainable they must respect all five of these principles (figure 1).

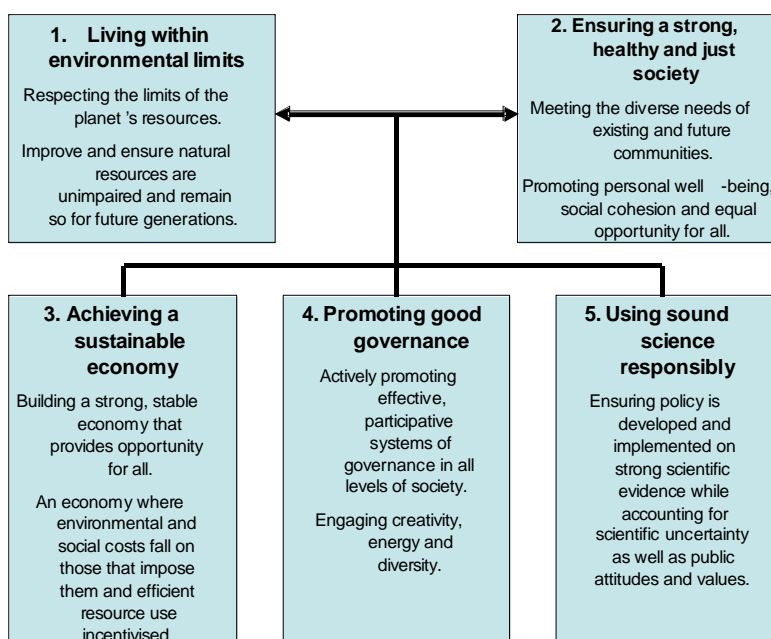


Figure 1: UK's guiding principles underpinning sustainable policy

Based on these principles four national priority areas for action have been identified (Figure 2).

Four national priorities			
Sustainable development			Sustainable communities
1. Sustainable Consumption and Production	2. Climate Change	3. Natural Resource Protection	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Water</li> <li>- Sustainable procurement</li> <li>- Sustainable construction</li> <li>- Transport</li> <li>- Housing</li> <li>- Waste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction</li> <li>- Adapting to climate change</li> <li>- Energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Biodiversity</li> <li>- Local Development Framework</li> <li>- Air quality</li> <li>- Regeneration</li> <li>- Conservation and green space strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health Strategy</li> <li>- Community Safety</li> <li>- Built Heritage</li> <li>- Consultation and Community Involvement</li> </ul>

Figure 2: The four national priorities (these will be discussed in Section 6)

- **Sustainable Consumption and Production**

Increasing prosperity has allowed many people to enjoy the benefits of goods and services which were once available to only a few. However, the environmental impacts from our consumption and production patterns remain severe. We need a major shift to deliver new products and services with lower environmental impacts across their life-cycle, while at the same time boosting their competitiveness.

- **Climate Change and Energy**

The effect on the climate (global warming) from greenhouse gas emissions from human activity is well documented in the media and is high on the public agenda. Major changes in the generation and use of energy will be sought and preparations for already unavoidable climate change made. Energy conservation, the use of renewable energy and adaptation to climate change are key issues to be addressed.

- **Natural Resource Protection**

Natural resources are vital to our existence and the development of communities. The issues we face are the needs for better understanding of environmental limits, the need for environmental enhancement where the environment is most degraded and the need to ensure a decent environment for everyone. Preserving our green spaces, biodiversity, planning and regeneration are key to this priority.

- **Sustainable Communities**

Working in partnership with local communities to create sustainable societies that embrace and progress the principles of sustainable development at local level.

## Regional Vision

The Regional Sustainability Framework (RSF) represents the first step in ensuring the necessary level of co-operation required across the south-east to deliver

sustainability. To reflect this, the RSF has been produced by a working group of key regional partners guided by the newly formed Sustainable Futures Group (SFG). The SFG, a high level influential and impartial group, has committed to using the RSF to appraise the south-east's sustainable development performance and to determine a sharper set of regional priorities which are:

- Achieving sustainable levels of resource use;
- Reducing the region's carbon footprint;
- Ensuring that the South East is prepared for the inevitable impacts of climate change;
- Ensuring that everyone, including the most deprived people, has an equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to the region's sustainable prosperity.

### **County Vision**

The Government is helping to strengthen local leadership by embedding sustainable development into community planning through the Surrey County Local Area Agreement (LAA). In order to measure progress Surrey has agreed to have its performance assessed against a specific sub-set of 198 LAA national indicators established by the Government. The 'Linkages' in section 8 show the National Indicators connected to the Council's sustainable development performance targets.

### **Spelthorne Vision**

At a more local level, the Local Strategic Partnership 'Spelthorne Together' has published a Community Strategy for the period 2005–2015 (currently being revised), which sets out objectives and priorities for the partnership to embrace with its member organisations. The Council is also producing a Local Development Framework which is a spatial strategy incorporating sustainable development to complement this.

Many of these overlap with areas which form part of the SD Strategy aims to contribute, enhance and strengthen existing and new policies by applying Sustainability across all elements of the council's work. As a result this SD Strategy will be a further vehicle to help in the delivery of these objectives through the holistic approach and action plans.

## **The Golden Thread**

A summary of national, regional, county and local visions, strategies and legislation on sustainability is as follows (figure 3).

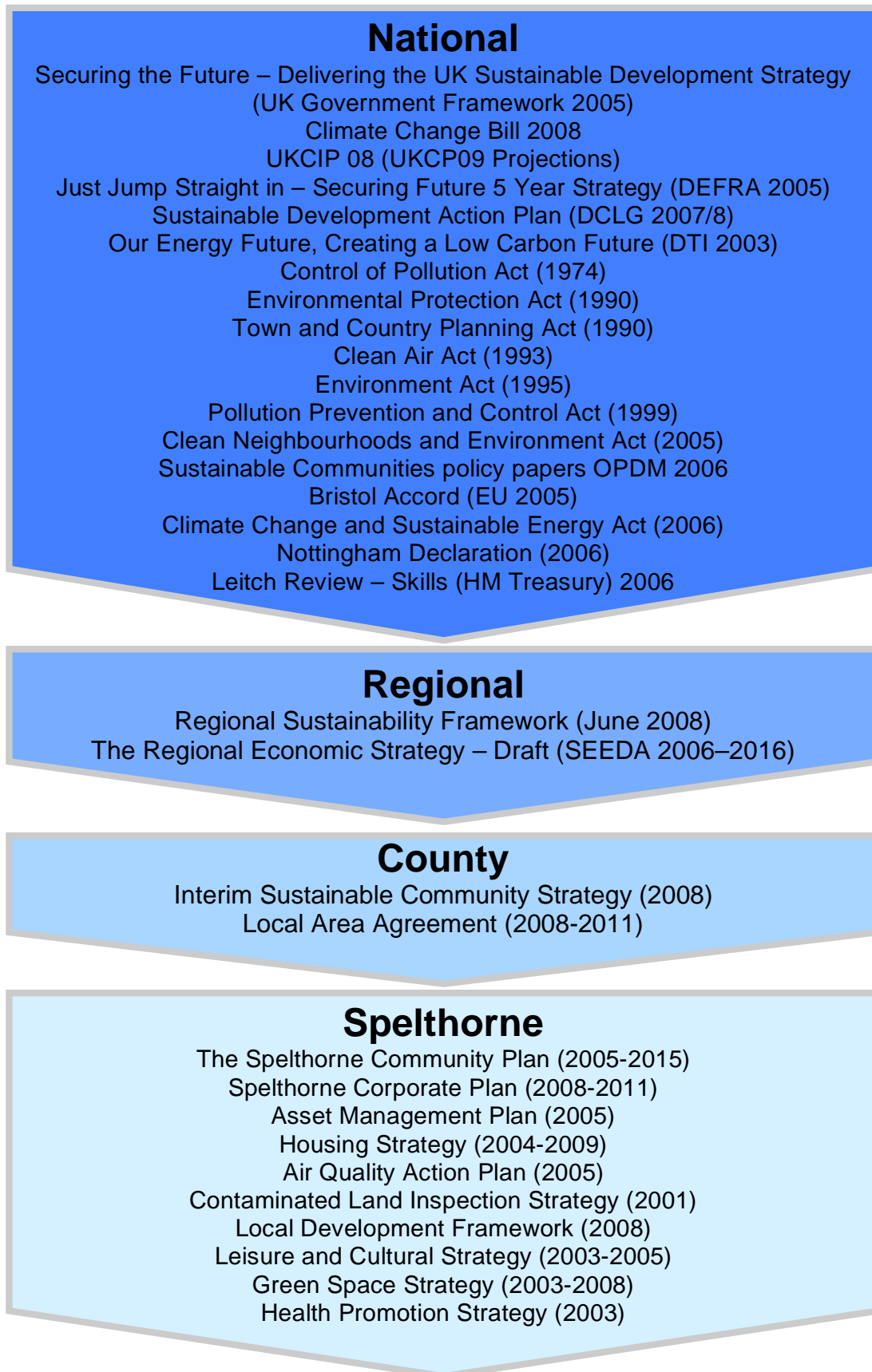


Figure 3: The Golden Thread

## 5 Challenges

### External Challenges

Key external challenges that must be met over the next five years to deliver the SD Strategy include:

- Engaging with and influencing partners, the voluntary sector, communities and individuals, using existing mechanisms and innovative channels of communication wherever possible.
- Providing inspiration and enthusiasm by educating and facilitating.
- Keeping pace with what is a rapidly evolving and developing sector.
- Current volatile economic climate may affect council priorities, the ethos of SD should improve efficiency, longevity and flexibility.
- Legislative changes.
- Keeping pace with technological improvement and advancement.
- Being able to adapt to the increasing expectations and aspirations of the public and partners as the major shift in public opinion in support of sustainable development accelerates.
- To be champions of sustainability and lead by example.

### Internal Challenges

A number of internal challenges must be met over the next five years.

- Continuing to communicate the principles of sustainable development to staff and elected Members at all levels to bring about a change in both knowledge and behaviour, so that sustainability underpins every decision taken within the Council from the Executive to all levels within the organisation.
- Identifying and providing training, awareness raising and the development of necessary skills to individuals within the Council who are in a position to implement and influence change.
- Develop an effective marketing and communication plan to ensure all the good work that we do is well publicised
- Establishing an inter-departmental working group of senior/relevant officers to ensure progress in sustainable development is being made within the Council and to monitor the implementation of this strategy
- Developing sustainable development champions at Member and Officer level within the Authority.
- For Members and Officers to recognise opportunities to bring about or influence beneficial changes regarding the environmental, economic and social impact of the Council's activities at all levels within the organisation.
- The availability of resources (financial) and capacity (people and time) to implement the SD Strategy.
- Set a small number of high priorities to avoid settling for easy wins and "cherry picking".
- Taking a long-term view to avoid short-termism.
- Integrating the principles of sustainable development across all service areas through champions, internal promotion and training.
- Make adaptations to the Council's buildings to meet sustainability criteria and reduce carbon emissions.

## 6 Vision and objectives

‘Enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations’<sup>1</sup>

### **Spelthorne’s Vision**

The Council supports this vision through the embedded principle of:

**“Think globally, act locally”**

by considering ecological, economic, and cultural differences of our local surroundings<sup>2</sup>.

### **Objectives**

Due to the cross-cutting nature of Sustainable Development and the different facets that need to be included, the Council’s SD Strategy focuses on the sustainable development of the borough’s economic, environmental and social aspects. This is done under the same priority areas as in the Government’s national framework on sustainable development (see section 4) to ensure compatibility and consistency. Each of the four priority areas has environmental, economic and social implications and it is therefore important to be aware that these cross-cutting issues are relevant to many areas and departments and need to be approached from a multi-departmental standpoint.

#### **1. Sustainable Consumption and Production in Spelthorne Borough Council (mainly an Economic Theme)**

The Council is striving to lead the way in areas such as sustainable waste management, sustainable procurement, sustainable transport and development of buildings to high environmental standards.

We have made strong performance gains in raising the Borough’s recycling rate. The Finance department in coordination with Environment Service have recently drafted a sustainable procurement strategy which advocates the purchase and consumption of sustainable products and use of local suppliers. Through the planning and building control systems, especially the Local Development Framework (LDF) and national requirements, a number of sustainability matters are contained these include encouraging developers and architects to specify new buildings and refurbishment with high environmental standards, including energy and water saving measures, waste reduction and the use of reclaimed materials, and the provision of renewable energy sources and the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions.

In the current economic climate SD is crucial to diversify our economy into emerging technologies and markets. Through improved links with local businesses we hope to improve the adaptability of their services to the impacts of fluctuating economic conditions, climate change, and changing environmental legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> (Securing the Future – Delivering the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (UK Government Framework 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Rene Dubos advisor to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972

Leading by example we endeavour to catalyse change in key areas such as business, voluntary, resident and community group sectors.

## **2. Climate Change and Energy in Spelthorne Borough Council (an Environmental, Economic and Social issue)**

The Council is currently implementing a comprehensive programme of activity designed to help combat climate change. Through match funding from Salix, a not-for-profit company, approximately £250,000 is being invested on projects in the Council Offices such as cavity wall and loft insulation, switch-off timer controls for photocopiers and printers and energy efficient lighting.

Fuel poverty in vulnerable households is another key area being addressed and each year the Council commits £20,000 to help residents install loft and cavity wall insulation at a discounted rate.

For long-term energy efficiency measures a project is underway to investigate good quality CHP (Combined Heat and Power) for the Council Offices and Leisure Centre.

Flood risk abatement is included in the developing LDF and in response to the flood threat a Flood response plan is currently being developed.

## **3. Natural Resource Protection in Spelthorne Borough Council**

The Spelthorne Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) seeks to conserve and enhance Spelthorne's existing wildlife and to redress past losses through habitat conservation, restoration, recreation and targeted action for priority species. The Council is also developing a green space strategy to guide conservation and sustainable development work. In addition to these specific and targeted plans the LDF Core Strategy also refers to the provision and protection of green space and biodiversity.

Air quality is closely monitored in the Borough and the Council works with the Highways Authorities to bring about improvements through implementation of our Action Plan.

One of the greatest influences the Council can exert in terms of natural resource protection is through the planning process by the determination of individual applications under the Town and Country Planning Acts (by refusing unacceptable development and imposing conditions and legal agreements where appropriate) and the Local Development Framework. It is vital that regeneration and economic development are sustainable and do not harm the environment.

## **4. Sustainable Communities**

Spelthorne Borough Council's Community Plan, which was reviewed in 2008, aims to "to enhance the quality of life of local communities and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development through action to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area and its inhabitants." The SD Strategy will liaise with Spelthorne Together (Local Strategic Partnership) to enable the Sustainable Development of our local

communities, businesses and voluntary groups. This will incorporate sustainable provision of housing, health and well being and environmental health matters. The work of the Environmental Health and Leisure services directly relates to improving and maintaining human health and the protection of the environment and ensuring sustainable development financially and socially, is integral to human health.

## 7 Delivering the objectives

The SD Strategy objectives will be delivered through a range of initiatives focused on changing behaviour, attitudes and actions of Council staff, Members, businesses, partners, the voluntary sector, communities and residents to champion greater environmental and social awareness. The action plans in section 9 are designed to deliver an approach that will enable, encourage and engage others, whilst the Council sets an excellent example in all its activities (figure 4).

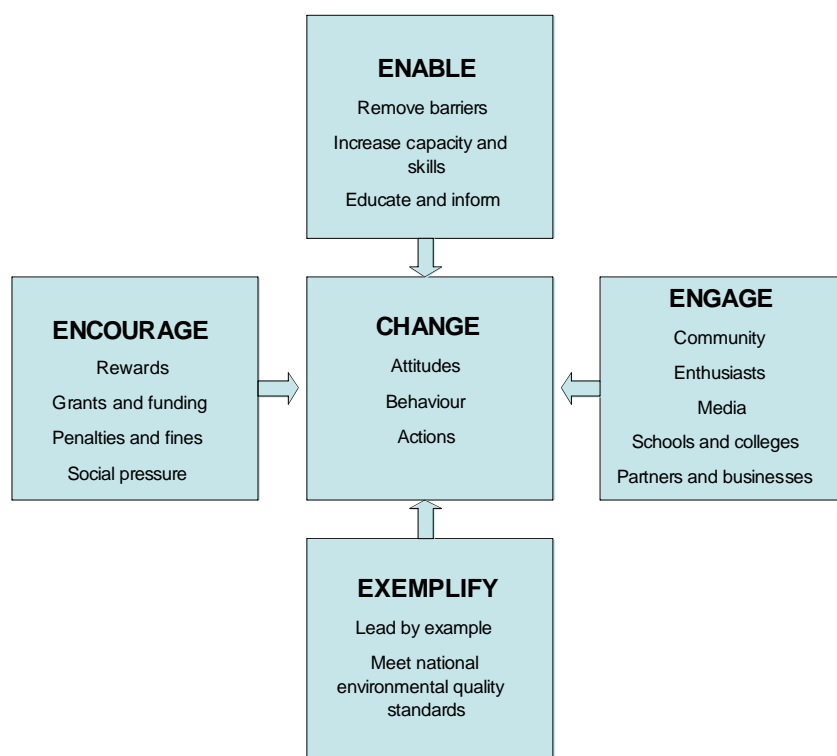


Figure 4: Elements necessary to catalyse change (adapted from: *Securing the Future – Delivering the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, 2005*)

Successful delivery is only likely to be achieved by having a high level of commitment throughout the whole of the Council - from Executive down to managers and staff at all levels. There will also be a need for co-operation between all services across the Council and a willingness to change attitudes, behaviour and actions.

**Spelthorne Borough Council will therefore commit to:**

- Engage with relevant partners to ensure that the interests of the Borough's stakeholders are included in sustainable development;
- Encourage and enable individuals to change;
- Lead by example, through its policies and practice and support staff and elected Members in changing lifestyles and volunteering to participate in community action;
- Enable, encourage and engage communities, businesses, families and schools to take action and deliver projects to improve sustainability in their area.