

# 1 Introduction

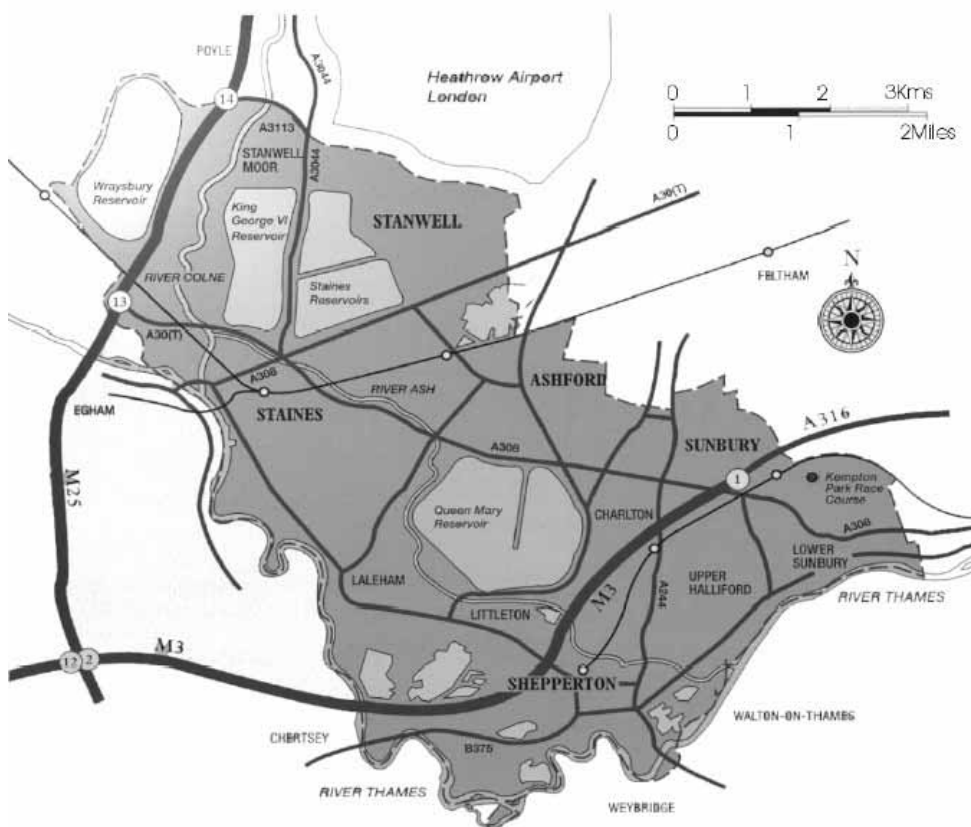
- 1.1 This document sets out the Council's Core Strategy and includes detailed policies. It is part of the Local Development Framework.
- 1.2 It is a spatial plan which sets out the needs in the Borough and how they will be met. The needs have been identified from public consultation, the Council's research, and other plans and programmes of the Council and organisations with responsibilities in Spelthorne. In particular the plan seeks to assist in the implementation of the Spelthorne Community Plan.
- 1.3 It deals with the period to 2026 to cover the same timescale as the South East Plan. The document gives a spatial description of the Borough and identifies the key issues it faces, sets out a vision, identifies objectives which need to be met in order to achieve the vision, sets out policies to deliver those objectives and concludes by describing the spatial implications of the policies.
- 1.4 These policies comprise seven core strategic policies and under these a total of 39 detailed policies. There are also six Local Plan policies which have been 'saved' and are set out within this document for information, with supporting text in italics, but are not formally a part of this DPD. The policies provide a comprehensive approach to the key issues facing the Borough and rely for their implementation not only on the Council's actions, including granting planning permissions, but also the actions of other organisations through their plans and programmes.
- 1.5 The plan's preparation has been subject to sustainability appraisal to ensure it is consistent with the principles of sustainable development. Separate reports explain that process and record its findings.
- 1.6 A comprehensive list of the relevant background documents and sustainability appraisal reports which support this submission plan is available on the Council's website.
- 1.7 The document includes a number of technical terms and these are explained in the glossary at Appendix 5.
- 1.8 The Council has produced a separate Allocations DPD which sets out proposals for the allocation of specific sites.



## 2 Spatial Description of Spelthorne

- 2.1 This chapter describes the main characteristics of the Borough and then identifies the key issues which it faces and need to be addressed in this DPD.
- 2.2 Spelthorne lies approximately 15 miles south west of Central London. It is a relatively small Borough which is some six miles long and two and a half miles wide and an area of 5,116 hectares. It is relatively densely populated with a population of approximately 92,135 in 2006. It is bounded by Heathrow Airport to the north, the River Thames to the south and London Boroughs to the east, while the M25 runs close to its western boundary. Its main urban areas are Ashford, Shepperton, Staines, Stanwell and Sunbury (see Map 1).

**Map 1 Borough of Spelthorne**

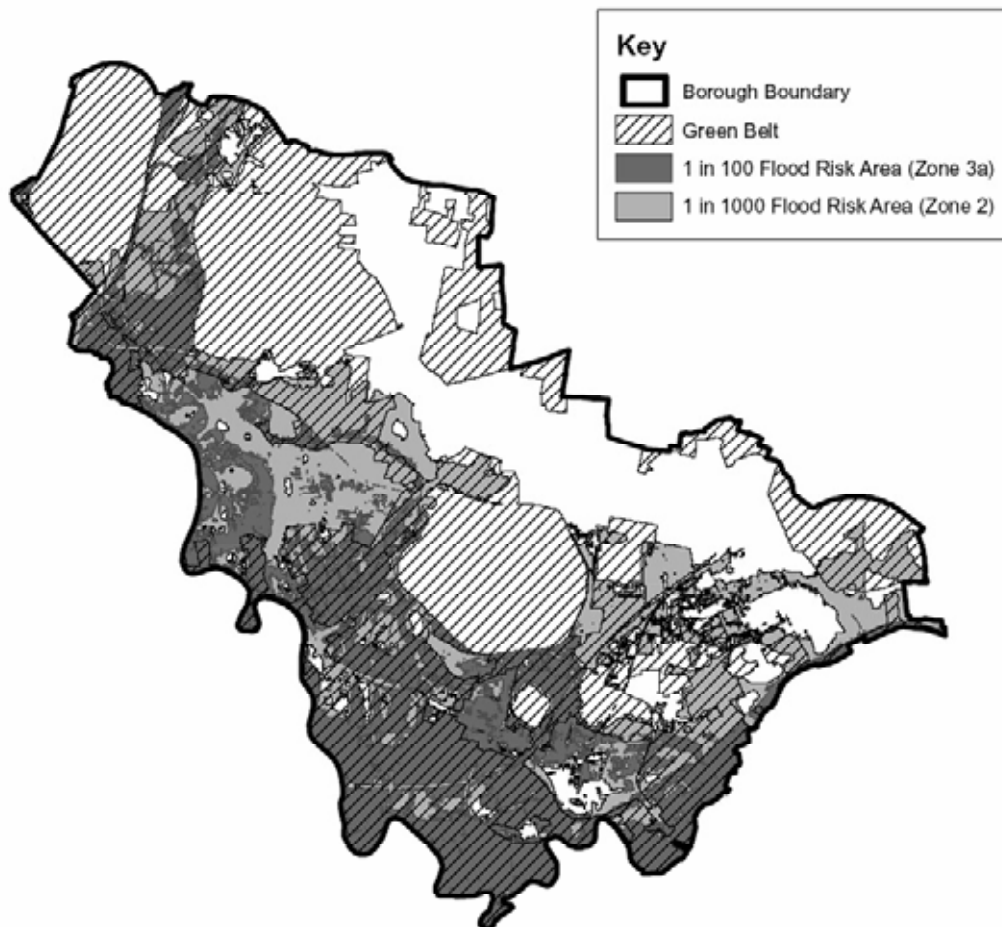


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- 2.3 Spelthorne is located where the continuous built up area of London gives way to a more dispersed pattern of urban areas and villages. The urban area of the Borough occupies about 35% of the total area. The larger part of the urban area of the Spelthorne lies across the middle of the Borough from east to west. Stanwell, Ashford and Sunbury comprise a continuous urban area with no separation by open land and there is only a small gap between Staines and Ashford. The settlements of Stanwell Moor, Laleham, Shepperton, Upper Halliford and Charlton are separate urban areas albeit by only small distances. There is a clear belt of open land separating the urban areas of Spelthorne from outer London.

- 2.4 Land outside the urban area covers about 65% of the Borough and is designated as Green Belt. It is part of the Metropolitan Green Belt surrounding London and has an important strategic role in containing the outward spread of the capital and providing a belt of open land for air and exercise. Locally the Green Belt serves not only to contribute to the wider strategic function but also separates existing settlements within the Green Belt and maintaining their distinct physical identity and character. Within the Green Belt in Spelthorne are five major water supply reservoirs and a water treatment works at Ashford Common. Some areas of the Green Belt need some environmental improvement.
- 2.5 Spelthorne adjoins the River Thames and is crossed by two tributaries, the Ash and the Colne. The Borough is flat and low lying and consequently liable to flood. About 20% of the urban area is liable to flood in a 1 in 100 year flood event or surrounded by flood water and over 49% of the urban area would be flooded in a 1 in 1000 year event. Flood risk is a very serious threat with some 5,600 homes within the 1 in 100 flood risk area. The flood risk area affects the south and west side of the Borough, including large parts of Staines and Shepperton and limits the scope for further development. The Environment Agency is currently developing proposals to reduce flood risk in Spelthorne and adjoining Boroughs.
- 2.6 Map 2 shows the area of Green Belt and flood plain in the Borough and the extent to which together they act as a constraint on development.

**Map 2 Green Belt and Flood Risk areas in Spelthorne**



- 2.7 The whole of the Borough is designated as an Air Quality Management Area because of poor air quality. The primary pollutants are nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulates (PM<sub>10</sub>). Both result from traffic. There are particular concentrations of pollution from NO<sub>2</sub> in parts of Staines and around the Sunbury Cross junction at Sunbury and other parts of the A308. The level of particulates is a concern adjoining the M25 and Heathrow Airport. The Council's Air Quality Management Action Plan, Community Plan and the County Council's Local Transport Plan already have policies and actions to encourage non car use to help combat the air pollution problem and the LDF will need to contribute to these where it can.
- 2.8 In the north of the Borough there are areas suffering high levels of noise from Heathrow Airport; in particular at Stanwell Moor and the northern part of Stanwell. Housing development in the most affected areas is restricted to one for one replacement only. The northern part of Stanwell Moor also has part of the public safety zone for the west end of the southern runway affecting it.
- 2.9 Spelthorne has about 39,500 dwellings and a relatively high level of owner occupation with only a 11.8% social housing stock. It has a higher proportion of semi-detached and terraced properties and flats than the rest of Surrey. The mix of dwellings results in a higher prevailing density of housing than found in the rest of Surrey and more akin to that found in adjoining London Boroughs. Housing sites that come forward are all by way of redevelopment, infill or conversion in the urban area. The sites that come forward generally tend to be small. House prices in Spelthorne are relatively high. There are in excess of 3,000 people on the Spelthorne Housing Register and an on-going need for affordable housing.
- 2.10 Spelthorne's population is slightly older and its average household size slightly smaller than the national average. It has a relatively small ethnic minority population (5.7%), of which the largest group is Indian (2%). There are in general no particular needs arising from this group which do not arise from the population as a whole. Over the next 20 years the total population is projected to fall slightly and its composition will alter. The 0-14 age group will continue to fall as will the 24-44 age group. All age groups over 50 will rise with a particularly significant percentage rise in the 85+ age group. Average household sizes will continue to fall requiring further housing. Almost 30% of households in Spelthorne are single person households yet 63% of the housing stock is three bedrooms or larger. The North Surrey Extra Care Housing Strategy 2005 identifies a need for 200 units of extra care accommodation in Spelthorne by 2016. Projecting this forward to 2026 would require 400 in total. Future provision will need to meet the growth in small households including supported accommodation suitable for the elderly.
- 2.11 A relatively high proportion of the population is "economically active" (either in work or seeking work). The unemployment rate is 1.3% (January 2007). This is above the Surrey average of 0.9% but below the South East average of 1.6%. It is also below the national average and the figures for other authorities adjoining Heathrow (Hillingdon, Hounslow and Slough). Job vacancies exceed unemployment levels. The Borough's workforce has more middle ranking intermediate and supervisory roles compared to the national average and less in both professional/managerial and unskilled workers. This is reflected in the educational qualifications of the workforce which show lower levels of educational attainment.

- 2.12 There is a substantial flow of commuting both into and out of the Borough, with a net outflow of about 8,000 workers. Most of the outflow is to major centres of employment just outside the Borough, including Heathrow Airport, which alone employs over 4,800 Spelthorne residents (10% of the workforce) (BAA Heathrow employment survey, 2004), Bedfont Lakes in Hounslow and the Poyle Trading Estate in Slough.
- 2.13 Spelthorne is an attractive location for business due to the close proximity of Central London, Heathrow and the motorway network. Its own economy includes a significant legacy of industrial estates scattered throughout the Borough. The decline of manufacturing has seen some of these change to residential, while, in more accessible locations, redevelopment has taken place for offices or high tech industry. In comparison with other Surrey Districts Spelthorne still has a relatively large amount of industrial floor space. The Borough is also a significant centre for warehouse floor space, particularly for airport-related warehousing close to Heathrow. Heathrow has a major economic impact on the area around it including Spelthorne. It employs around 75,000 people on-site and has extensive secondary employment in support services including hotels. Office employment has grown particularly in Staines town centre though floor space is still below average for the Surrey Districts in the Borough as a whole. There is a significant stock of permitted employment floor space including at Terminal 5, Shepperton Studios and in Staines town centre. There is no need to provide additional employment land to meet the Borough's needs.
- 2.14 The Spelthorne Retail Study 2004 and the 2007 update show there is scope for further significant growth in shopping provision in the period to 2026 in Staines, particularly in non food retailing. Staines is seen as the best location in both market demand and in accessibility terms. There is physical scope for further major expansion adjoining the Elmsleigh Centre. Without growth Staines is likely to lose an increasing proportion of retail expenditure to centres outside the Borough.
- 2.15 The Retail Studies showed Ashford, Shepperton and Sunbury Cross were well-used by their local communities and the need to maintain their role. There is no scope for significant expansion but opportunities for improvement need to seek to maintain their role. Local parades provide convenient shopping facilities for local communities and are important.
- 2.16 There are some relatively small areas of deprivation based in parts of Stanwell, Staines, Ashford and Sunbury Common. This information comes from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) which uses a bundle of issues to create a score. For these small pockets of deprivation the main issues are low income, lack of or poor employment, poor education and skills and crime and disorder. Income, education and employment are inextricably linked. Training and crime and disorder are issues receiving particular attention in the Spelthorne Community Plan. Generally access to housing and living environment is good in these relatively deprived areas and scores relatively well in the IMD.
- 2.17 Whilst the South East Plan housing requirement for Spelthorne over the period from 2006 to 2026 is 3020 dwellings, as described earlier, projections show that the population as a whole will be little changed and the need for additional services and infrastructure will be limited. Service providers have been asked about future requirements. There are no additional infrastructure needs in terms of water gas electricity and sewerage disposal. Certain developments may require very localised

improvements to the sewer network. Council services for the elderly have already been reviewed and projected growth in the number of elderly taken account off.

- 2.18 There is overall a good provision for open space sport and recreation in the Borough as a whole although there are areas of more limited provision in parts of Ashford and Staines and steps are required to improve provision. A study of open space, sport and recreation in 2005, and a separate study of allotments in the same year, has shown there are no sites surplus to requirements.
- 2.19 Hospital services are split between Ashford and St. Peters Chertsey and provision is determined by the Hospital Trust. They have no need for additional land for provision in the Borough. There are five health centres of which four need improving. The need for improvements is not related to new development but the condition and lack of flexibility of the existing buildings. Plans are already being developed for Stanwell and Shepperton and in-situ solutions are currently contemplated for Staines and Sunbury.
- 2.20 With a falling 0-14 population no additional school capacity is required. There is a need to improve the education of 16-19 year olds and reorganisation of provision is underway with Ashford College and Brooklands College, Weybridge having recently combined. Redevelopment of the Ashford site to improve capacity and facilities is being actively considered.
- 2.21 Spelthorne contains areas of national and international significance for nature conservation. Most of its major reservoirs form part of the South West London Waterbodies Special Protection Area, in recognition of their international significance as a habitat for two particular birds. Additionally the Staines Commons form a substantial Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which means they are of national importance for nature conservation as well as an important historic landscape. There are also smaller SSSIs and other areas of local nature conservation importance in the Borough.
- 2.22 Spelthorne sits on river gravels, which are an important mineral resource. The open areas of the Borough contain a mixture of past workings that have been restored to varying standards including some schemes that have created new habitats and landscapes. Most mineral extraction sites are filled with inert material. Minerals and Waste disposal planning is the responsibility of the County Council and subject to a separate Local Development Framework.
- 2.23 Recreation is a significant land use in the Borough, including formal sporting sites such as Kempton Park racecourse, sailing on reservoirs and lakes, three golf courses and various parks and sports grounds as well as informal recreation including common land. The River Thames and its towpath define about 50% of the Borough boundary and attract people from a wider area as well as being an important environmental amenity.
- 2.24 The following sections describe different parts of the Borough.
- 2.25 **Staines** is Spelthorne's major shopping centre with a catchment area covering the whole Borough and adjoining areas to the west and south. It is also the main commercial centre in the Borough. It has seen major development in recent years, including the Two Rivers shopping centre and refurbishment of the Elmsleigh Centre, which has greatly improved the range and quality of shopping available. The town

centre has also seen major environmental improvements including High Street pedestrianisation and improvements to the riverside. The main residential area of Staines are to the east and south of the town centre.

- 2.26 Staines has problems of traffic congestion and some related air quality issues and it is important that further development does not simply add to this. Significant parts of Staines town centre are liable to flood and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has evaluated the economic and social case for continued retail growth and the scope to mitigate any flood risk. There are a few significant sites which can make a contribution to future housing needs.
- 2.27 A distinctive feature of the area north and east of Staines is the extensive areas of Common Land, notably Staines Moor and Shortwood Common. These are of historic as well as amenity and nature conservation value.
- 2.28 **Ashford** lies in the centre of the Borough and forms its largest residential area. Its town centre is linear in character and is surrounded by adjoining residential areas. It primarily serves local needs. Ashford has a number of commercial areas some in close proximity to housing and accessed through residential areas; the largest is at Littleton Lane and contains a mix of industrial and office floor space. Ashford Hospital provides hospital services and is also a major employer. Ashford has a shortage of open space in some locations.
- 2.29 **Stanwell** runs north from Ashford to the boundary with Heathrow. While it has an historic village centre in the north of the Stanwell area it was mostly developed down to the A30 in the immediate post war years with a high proportion of social housing. Much of that housing has now been sold to former tenants. In comparison with the rest of Spelthorne, parts of Stanwell suffer from relatively high levels of social deprivation. Heathrow has a substantial impact on the northern part of Stanwell due to noise disturbance and the impact of airport related development, although stretches of open land between parts of Stanwell and the airport help to maintain a separate identity for the community.
- 2.30 **Stanwell Moor** is a separate village to the west of Stanwell. It is surrounded by open land and maintains a distinct identity, it lies partly under the flight path from the airport's southern runway and is severely affected by aircraft noise.
- 2.31 **Sunbury** lies at the eastern end of the Borough. It is split in two by the M3. Junction 1 of the motorway is at Sunbury Cross, which was developed in the 1970s to include several high rise commercial and residential buildings and a shopping centre adjacent to which a large Tesco superstore was added in the early 1990s. The Sunbury Common area north of the M3 includes the Borough's largest industrial estate at Windmill Road and another significant commercial area at Hanworth Road, both of which contain a mixture of traditional and modern premises. It also contains a major BP office and research facility. Lower Sunbury is a large residential area to the south of the M3. Parts of Sunbury have relatively higher levels of deprivation compared to the rest of the Borough. There is a particular concentration of poorer air quality around the Sunbury Cross Junction at Sunbury
- 2.32 **Shepperton** is a distinct settlement in the southern part of the Borough. It is primarily residential with a significant local shopping centre and a business park. Its major commercial site is Shepperton Studios, which lies in the north western part of the built up area.

2.33 Other smaller communities include Charlton, Laleham and Upper and Lower Halliford.

### **Summary of Issues**

2.34 Many of the issues faced by the Borough are also common to authorities in the wider area such as high house prices, strong economy, traffic congestion, a strong desire to protect and enhance the environment and maintaining the role of town and local centres. There are also issues facing all authorities including matters relating to climate change.

2.35 There are however in addition particular issues facing Spelthorne. These are –

- a) Meeting future development requirements within a limited urban area which is constrained by significant flood risks.
- b) Reducing the extent of flood risk.
- c) Improving air quality.
- d) Meeting the particular need for affordable housing.
- e) Noise from Heathrow.

2.36 In addition to these major local issues there are other matters of local significance and include; housing for a growing elderly population, growth in need for smaller dwellings, supporting initiatives to increase the skills of the work force, risks within the public safety zone, the environmental and visitor issues relating to the River Thames and balancing the demands for housing with other uses of land.

2.37 The above issues need to be dealt with by this DPD and in particular those identified in paragraph 2.35 of this summary.

2.38 Some issues apply to the Borough as a whole such as affordable housing and others to particular areas e.g. flooding, air quality, focussing development on urban areas and the role of existing centres. These issues will be reflected in the vision, objectives and policies of this document.



## 3 Vision and Objectives

### Introduction

- 3.1 The spatial description of Spelthorne in the previous chapter has set out the nature of the Borough and the issues it faces. From this the following ‘vision’ statement has been prepared to identify in a succinct way the key things the Council wants to achieve by 2026 to deal with the most important of the issues identified.
- 3.2 The statement seeks to give particular emphasis to three particular issues which Spelthorne faces – these are flood risk, poor air quality and the need for affordable housing. It also identifies that new development must be within the existing urban areas.

### Vision

**“By 2026 Spelthorne will have become a more sustainable place to live and work, the economic and social needs of all residents will be met and the environment will have been successfully protected and where possible enhanced.**

**There will be an appropriate mix of housing to meet need including more affordable housing and more accommodation for an increasingly ageing population.**

**The significant flood risks affecting people and property will have been reduced.**

**Further development will have been confined to the urban area and contributed to its improvement and be sustainable. As a consequence the Green Belt will have been maintained.**

**Uses with the potential to generate large amounts of traffic will have been located in town and other centres and locations accessible by non-car based travel. Use of non-car based travel will have increased and contributed to reducing congestion and resulted in improved air quality – which in Spelthorne is primarily traffic related.**

**The economy will be strong with the overall amount of business space maintained and renewed as required to meet business needs. Businesses will be more accessibly located and the Borough’s residents will be better trained.**

**Staines will have continued to develop its role as a major shopping centre and location for related services meeting the needs of North Surrey. The other centres of Ashford, Shepperton and Sunbury and other local centres and larger parades will have maintained their role in providing local shopping and other services.**

**Recycling and renewable energy generation will have significantly increased and contributed to a reduction in the generation of CO<sub>2</sub> and account taken of the implications of climate change.**

**The historic and natural environment of the Borough will be in as good a condition as now or better.”**

## **Objectives**

3.3 The following objectives set out how the vision will be achieved. Some apply to Spelthorne as a whole while others apply to specific parts of the Borough. They are not in priority order. Objectives are followed by a brief justification.

- 1. To protect and improve the quality of the environment, including improving the landscape, promoting biodiversity and safeguarding the Borough’s cultural heritage.**

This expands on the environmental aspects of the overall vision in relation to landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage.

- 2. To ensure the Borough develops in a way that minimises harmful CO<sub>2</sub> emissions contributing to climate change and that caters for potential future climate change.**

Minimising climate change impact and catering for the potential consequences of climate change is a key aspect of sustainable development.

- 3. To secure an improvement in the Borough’s air quality.**

Parts of Spelthorne suffer from poor air quality. This DPD can make a contribution to its improvement along with other plans and strategies.

- 4. To minimise the impact of noise on local communities and the environment**

Noise is a significant factor affecting the quality of the environment in the north of the Borough, particularly due to aircraft noise from Heathrow and traffic generally on major roads.

- 5. To safeguard valuable urban open space and provide for open recreational uses.**

Quality open space has an important role in defining the character of areas and meeting recreational needs.

- 6. To meet the Borough’s housing requirement in the South East Plan.**

The draft South East Plan requires 3,020 dwellings or 151 dwellings per annum (2006-2026).

**7. To ensure provision for housing incorporates a mix of tenure, size and type to meet local needs, including affordable housing.**

The type of housing provided must seek to meet the needs of households. A substantial proportion of newly forming households cannot afford to buy on the open market, so an element of “affordable” housing is needed. More smaller units are needed.

**8. To ensure provision is made for the needs of all sections of the community.**

Different groups in the community have different needs and provision needs to ensure that no groups with legitimate requirements are excluded.

**9. To ensure necessary infrastructure and services are provided.**

It is important that provision of infrastructure services keeps pace with the changing requirements of the Borough and any deficiencies in provision are met.

**10. To ensure effective use is made of urban land in meeting development needs.**

This reflects strategic planning guidance and is particularly relevant to Spelthorne because of the necessary constraints that limit where development can take place.

**11. To ensure new development is designed to a high standard appropriate to its setting and contributes to an improvement in the appearance of the environment.**

High quality design is an important element in achieving sustainable development solutions that meet development needs and also improve the environment.

**12. To contribute to tackling the specific problems faced by areas of relative deprivation in the Borough.**

The DPD should seek to contribute, along with other initiatives, in addressing the issues faced by these areas.

**13. To seek ways to reduce flooding and its associated risks to people and property including ensuring development does not increase the risk**

Significant parts of the Borough are liable to flood and this objective aims to reduce flooding and ensure that there is no increase in the number of people at risk from flooding, no development is permitted that would make flooding worse, and the needs of those already at risk from flooding are considered.

**14. To contribute to making Spelthorne a safer place.**

Fear of crime and anti social behaviour is an issue reflected both in the Community Plan and in the Council's corporate priority to make Spelthorne safer.

**15. To ensure development contributes to sustainable transport choices and reduces the need to travel.**

Reducing reliance on the car offers congestion and air quality benefits. Locating and designing developments so that they are less car-dependent can assist in this process and contribute to a more sustainable pattern of development.

**16. To prevent further urbanisation.**

This objective aims to focus development in the existing urban area and prevent them from spreading.

**17. To support the retention of sufficient well located employment land to enable the maintenance of the local economy and to support redevelopment of well located land to meet business needs.**

**18. To encourage redevelopment of poorly located employment land for housing or to meet other development needs.**

Objectives 17 and 18 aim to encourage the effective use of existing well located employment land to maximise the benefit to the local economy. Subject to the retention of sufficient well located land, the use of poorer sites to meet other needs is encouraged, consistent with the principle of making effective use of urban land.

**19. To provide for the continued development of Staines as a focus for a mix of town centre uses including retail, leisure and employment and to improve access to the town centre.**

This objective aims to continue to develop Staines multi purpose role as the Borough's main town centre and the most accessible location by public transport. It also recognises the need to tackle congestion problems on access points to the centre.

**20. To maintain the role of the centres of Ashford, Shepperton and Sunbury Cross in providing local services.**

These centres play an important local role.

**21. To encourage development of a sustainable transport system that supports the spatial strategy and provides for the needs of all sections of the community in an environmentally acceptable way and further improve Staines' role as a public transport interchange.**

This objective recognises the importance of transport and its relationship to development and supports a sustainable approach allowing for economic, social and environmental considerations. It also recognises the role of Staines as a regionally important transport interchange.



## 4 Core Strategy and Policies

### Introduction

- 4.1 The Council's Core Strategy and Policies DPD comprises seven strategic policies and 39 detailed policies. They all form part of the Core Strategy for the Council's LDF. In addition there are six Local Plan policies which are 'saved', and are also part of the Local Development Framework and shown for information only in this DPD to assist users of this document. The major locational issues in the Borough are shown in the Key Diagram at the end of this section.
- 4.2 The seven strategic policies set the overall direction of the plan. They show how the vision and objectives will be implemented and they also establish a spatial framework within which detailed policies and other Development Plan Documents (e.g. Allocations) can be developed.

### Core Strategic Policies

- 4.3 The seven strategic policies cover the following issues:

- a) General location of development
- b) Housing provision
- c) Economy and employment provision
- d) Town centres and retail development
- e) Community needs
- f) Maintaining and improving the environment
- g) Climate change and Transport

- 4.4 The remainder of this DPD has seven sections dealing with each strategic policy (referenced by the letters SP) with the relevant detailed policies set out after them. For each section there is a brief summary of the strategic policy with a link to the relevant plan objectives. While only the most relevant objectives are listed the policy may also contribute to achieving other objectives. The structure of the strategic policies, their relationship to the vision and objectives and the key issues covered by them and the subject matter covered by the detailed policies are summarised in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 The Core Strategy and Policies in Summary**



## Detailed Policies

- 4.5 The detailed policies in each section provide more detail on how the relevant strategic policy is to be delivered. This DPD as a whole is a spatial plan in both a geographic sense, in applying to specific areas, but also in its reliance on a wide range of implementation actions including the plans and programmes of both the Council and other organisations. The policies do not, therefore, solely rely on planning applications and operation of the development control process as a means of implementation.
- 4.6 Some policies are therefore quite wide ranging in their approach to specific issues. With any document structure some detailed policies will inevitably be more 'cross cutting' in that they may be relevant to more than one single strategic policy. For example flooding has a locational dimension as well as being relevant to climate change and building design.
- 4.7 It is important that the policies are applied as a whole and the general absence of detailed cross referencing should not be taken to imply otherwise.

