

Spelthorne Local Plan 2024- 2039/40

The Spelthorne Local Plan 2024- 2039/ 40 was adopted by a unanimous vote at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on Tuesday 17 March 2026. The full adopted Plan may be viewed on the Council website: <https://spelthornelocalplan.info/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spelthorne-Local-Plan-2024-2039-40-March-2026.pdf>

The Local Plan is a statutory document that forms part of the Council's strategy to deliver sustainable development, tackle climate change and deliver new homes, jobs and infrastructure for current and future Spelthorne residents. The Local Plan sits within a wider framework of planning documents, including national guidance set out by the government in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), regional and county planning policies and guidance, strategic plans, supporting strategies and background studies. The Local Plan will form the basis on which planning applications will be determined in Spelthorne.

The adopted Spelthorne Local Plan 2024- 2039/40 contains the overall vision and framework for future development in the area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure, as well as providing a basis for conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment, mitigating and adapting to climate change and achieving well designed places. The Local Plan also sets out how the local area will develop over at least the next 15 years and replaces the previous 2009 Development Plan.

The Plan was submitted for examination in November 2022 and underwent extensive public consultations and scrutiny, including hearings from May 2023 to February 2025. The Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate to review the draft Plan reported on 4th March 2026 that the Plan was sound and legally compliant subject to a number of recommended "main modifications", which may be viewed on the Council website: <https://spelthornelocalplan.info/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Main-Modifications-Schedule-Spelthorne.pdf>

Why is it important we have a Local Plan?

All Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are required by the Government, to provide a long-term plan setting out how we will meet our future needs. In Spelthorne, as in much of Surrey and the South East, successfully and sustainably accommodating this growth and new development presents a real challenge. This challenge is all the greater in Spelthorne as a result of our extensive Green Belt, much of which comprises waterbodies and the amount of the Borough at risk of flooding, which limits our supply of land suitable and available for the level of development required to meet our housing need. An up to date, evidence based Local Plan allows us as a Borough to take a proactive approach to planning for and managing growth in a way that most benefits our present and future residents, while protecting what is most important. If we do not have a Local Plan development will still take place, however we will not be able to use our own policies to determine the type and location of development, which may result in increased risk to, for example, our strategically important Green Belt, attractive open spaces and heritage assets. We will also be less able to require the improvements to our infrastructure, such as highways and green and blue infrastructure, which are essential to support additional development and deliver a wide range of benefits for residents.

Spelthorne Design Code

The Spelthorne Design Code, a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which provides further guidance on design policies with the Local Plan, was also adopted at the same meeting on 17 March. The Spelthorne Design Code has been produced to provide a framework to support high quality design in the borough, that is reflective of local character and design preferences. It sets out the design requirements for proposed new development to ensure that it is locally supported, sustainable and functions well for all. It has been drafted to accord with national planning policies and guidance, including the National Model Design Code. It is underpinned by an overarching Vision and Principles and more detailed Visions for each place within the Borough. The Design Code covers a range of Area Types that share similar design characteristics and issues. It places a particular focus on Areas of Change, identified by the Local Plan, which are subject to more detailed Design Requirements. The Design Code is based on wide-ranging inputs including that from the Spelthorne community, other stakeholders and a wider understanding of the places within the borough, to ensure it is locally-supported, robust and can be used in practice. The process has prioritised and been based around local engagement at every stage, including the use of an innovative Citizens Panel (a demographically representative group of Spelthorne residents), to ensure that the Code reflects and responds to community views and visions for the Borough.

What happens next?

Local Plans cover a 15-year period, and are usually divided into 5-year progress monitoring periods. Due to the time elapsed since the original Plan was submitted, the Inspector required that the first review should be commenced immediately. This effectively measures whether the planned housing targets are being achieved, and whether the Plan continues to be sound. Whilst Spelthorne continues as an 'independent' Borough, this will be the responsibility of their Strategic Planning Department, but once the new West Surrey Unitary Authority comes into being in 2027 this, and all the other Borough Local Plans, will become their responsibility.