

## Local Plan - Consultation on Issues & Options

### Briefing Note

#### Introduction

It is perfectly natural that any individual's response to each Option will inevitably be coloured by how they perceive it may affect them personally. For example, for anyone living in Staines, Option 3 might be the least attractive, whereas anyone living in Sunbury might think it the most preferable. Realistically, some degree of compromise or trade-off is almost certainly going to be necessary. Such compromise may ultimately result in the potential loss of weakly performing Green Belt.

Before completing the questionnaire it is advisable to read the whole document, in particular, page 2 (**"Where will all this new development go?"** and **"What about the Green Belt?"**) The significant statement in this section reads: "We don't have enough brownfield land to meet our needs, especially for housing". The draft of the recently revised National Planning Policy Framework states: *"Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic plan-making authority should have examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. This will be assessed through the examination of the plan..."* (para. 136).

The government requirement for 590 dwellings per year for Spelthorne is not negotiable and the Local Plan must demonstrate that enough development land for housing has been included to meet this need. However, Spelthorne's current estimate of available housing land falls short and currently stands at a mere 428 if development of Green Belt is to be excluded.

#### The Options

Option 1 – (*Aim to meet all our need for housing, including affordable housing and Gypsy and Traveller pitches, employment and other development in the urban area without amending Green Belt boundaries*) has its attractions and will depend on how much weight respondents attach to 'employment need'. It should be noted that there will still be a projected need for 8,100 sq m additional B-class floorspace to be accommodated (quite apart from the probable Heathrow expansion). This will provide space for the projected 890 new B-class jobs. Commercial property needs land as well as houses so if all the brownfield sites are converted for housing, releasing Green Belt may be the only solution.

Option 2 – (*Release large areas of Green Belt for housing and other development*). The Association, in keeping with one of its primary aims will not be supporting this option. We would not support an option that released large areas of GB, most especially if its objective were to meet neighbouring authorities' housing shortfalls. In any event it is unlikely that the Planning Inspector would be satisfied that every effort had been made to avoid releasing Green Belt. It also fails to acknowledge the considerable infrastructure requirements necessary to support it.

Option 3 – (*Focus new development opportunities in Staines-upon-Thames*). If LHR expansion goes ahead, this option is likely to happen anyway to a greater or lesser extent. The Master Plan approach for Staines would necessarily involve its own consultation of MP options. It is nevertheless doubtful that sufficient changes in density would be achieved to meet the required housing need/ availability shortfall for all of Spelthorne; and concentration of infrastructure provision will be a major issue.

Option 4 – (*A combination of the other three options*). The Association will be paying close attention to this, the least worst option. It maintains the focus on making best use of brownfield sites and allows sufficient land to accommodate infrastructure and facilities; and, critically, does not tie the Council to meeting the housing needs of neighbouring boroughs. However, the infrastructure argument invites a degree of scepticism. Infrastructure is already fragmented with elements already overloaded (Health Centre, Schools, Roads) and there has been little evidence that Surrey County Council has the means to address even existing deficiencies. Indeed, the Fire Service cover has already been reduced. A significant increase in housing demand must be met by a commensurate increase in supply of infrastructure without which things will grind to a halt. The historical lack of infrastructure capacity does not augur well for the future. This point is worthy of mentioning in any response to this option. This said, the adoption of this option is more likely to protect the main areas of Green Belt including Kempton Park. In some small areas of weakly performing GB we may have to 'roll with the occasional punch' if they are eventually designated as potential housing development sites.

### Conclusion

Once completed, the Planning Office will read and analyse all the responses received, known as 'representations'. They will then produce a schedule of representations which will be published on their website. Our views will be used to help develop the new Local Plan to the next stage of Preferred Options where the Council will set out what it thinks is the best strategy to meet its needs.

The Council will then carry out a further public consultation on those options which will include specific sites for possible allocation for certain types of development in the new Plan. The Council expects this to take place at the end of 2018. By responding to this consultation and agreeing to have your contact details stored on their database, you will automatically be notified of future consultations.