Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Statement for the Spelthorne Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Executive Summary

This Screening Statement confirms whether the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ("SEA Regulations"). The SPD provides guidance to support the implementation of Local Plan policies relating to the delivery, mix, tenure, and quality of affordable housing. It does not allocate land, introduce new policy, or change the quantum or spatial distribution of development established by the Local Plan.

Conclusion: Having regard to the criteria in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations and the responses received from the statutory environmental bodies, the Council has determined that the Affordable Housing SPD is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore does not require SEA.

Statutory consultation under Regulation 9 has been completed, with the following outcomes:

- The Environment Agency responded with "no comments", indicating no concerns or objections to the screening outcome.
- Historic England confirmed agreement with the conclusion that SEA is not required.
- Natural England did not respond within the consultation period.

Next steps:

- Publish this SEA Screening Determination alongside the draft Affordable Housing SPD at Regulation 12 consultation.
- Ensure the Determination remains publicly available in accordance with the SEA Regulations.
- Adopt the SPD, with this Determination published as part of the supporting documentation.

Introduction

This Screening Statement has been prepared to determine whether the Affordable Housing SPD should be subject to SEA and/or SA. It explains the legislative context, summarises the scope of the SPD, sets out the screening methodology, presents the assessment against Schedule 1 criteria, and provides the Council's final Screening Determination following consultation with the statutory environmental bodies.

Legislative and Policy Background

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and SPDs

Section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended by the Planning Act 2008, removed the requirement for Local Planning Authorities to prepare a Sustainability Appraisal for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). Subsequent regulations confirm that SPDs do not require SA unless there are effects not covered by the SA/SEA of the parent development plan, or where an assessment is otherwise required under the SEA Directive.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The SEA Directive (2001/42/EC), transposed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, requires an assessment where a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects. SPDs may, in exceptional circumstances, require SEA; the determining factor is whether significant environmental effects are likely in practice.

Screening Requirement and Consultation

Under Regulation 9, before determining whether SEA is required, the Council must consider the criteria in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations and consult the three statutory environmental bodies (Natural England, Historic England, Environment Agency). If the Council determines that significant environmental effects are unlikely, SEA is not required; the Council must provide a Statement of Reasons (Regulation 9(3)).

Local Plan

The Spelthorne Local Plan 2024–2039/40, adopted on 17 March 2026, has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal incorporating SEA at all relevant stages. Policies relating to affordable housing have therefore already been assessed for likely significant effects. Upon adoption the Affordable Housing SPD will sit alongside the Local Plan and will be a material consideration in decision-making.

Purpose and Scope of the Spelthorne Affordable Housing SPD

The Affordable Housing SPD provides detailed guidance to support the implementation of Local Plan policies, including:

- Interpretation of affordable housing thresholds and requirements.
- Expectations for tenure mix and unit size.
- Guidance on design quality and integration of affordable homes within developments.
- Clarification of delivery mechanisms, including Section 106 agreements, Registered Providers, and financial contributions.
- Guidance on viability evidence and exceptional circumstances.

The SPD does not:

- Create new policy or alter adopted policy.
- Allocate land for development.
- Change the quantum, location, or type of development established in the Local Plan.
- Introduce new environmental requirements beyond those set in policy and legislation.

Screening Methodology

The Council has applied the Schedule 1 criteria of the SEA Regulations to determine whether the SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects. The screening draws on:

- The Local Plan SA/SEA and relevant topic evidence (e.g., biodiversity, heritage, flood risk, landscape, air quality).
- Professional planning judgement on whether the SPD would alter the quantum, location, or nature of development.
- Development management processes and statutory environmental controls that will continue to apply at the application stage; and
- The completed Regulation 9 consultation with the statutory environmental bodies (28 days), which raised no concerns. The Environment Agency provided no comments (indicating no objection); Historic England confirmed agreement with the conclusion; and Natural England did not respond.

The detailed assessment is set out in Table 1. A concise outcome summary is provided in Table 2.

Table 1 Screening Assessment (Schedule 1 Criteria)

Criteria for determining likely significance of effects on the environment	Significant environmental effect?	Justification
Characteristics of the Affordable Housing SPD		
(a) Degree to which the SPD sets a framework for projects/activities (location, nature, size, operating conditions or allocating resources)	**No**	The SPD provides guidance to implement Local Plan policies. It does not set a development framework, allocate land, or influence the scale or location of development. The Local Plan (subject to SA/SEA) sets the framework.
(b) Influence on other plans and programmes, including those in a hierarchy	**No**	The SPD is subordinate to the Local Plan. It assists implementation and does not influence higher-order plans or introduce new strategic directions.
(c) Relevance for integrating environmental considerations with a view to promoting sustainable development	**No**	Environmental considerations are embedded in the Local Plan and its SA/SEA. The SPD focuses on delivery of affordable housing and does not introduce environmental policy.
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the SPD	**No**	The SPD does not generate new development or alter development patterns. Environmental issues (flood risk, biodiversity, air quality, heritage) are addressed through Local Plan policy and development management.

(e) Relevance for implementing environmental legislation (e.g., waste, water)	**No**	The SPD does not establish environmental programmes. It supports Local Plan policies that already reflect statutory requirements.
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected		
(a) Probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects	**No**	The SPD provides clarification on existing policies; it does not introduce development or alter effects associated with housing delivery already assessed in the SA/SEA.
(b) Cumulative nature of effects	**No**	While improved delivery of affordable housing may yield positive social outcomes, the SPD does not give rise to cumulative environmental effects. Impacts from development remain governed by Local Plan policy and project-level assessment.
(c) Transboundary nature of effects	**No**	The SPD applies within Spelthorne and contains no proposals likely to give rise to cross-boundary environmental effects.
(d) Risks to human health or the environment (e.g., due to accidents)	**No**	The SPD does not enable development that would introduce new risks. Risks are managed through Local Plan policy, building regulations, and environmental legislation.

(e) Magnitude and spatial extent of effects (area and population affected)	**No**	The SPD is borough-wide guidance on affordable housing tenure/mix/delivery. No direct environmental effects arise beyond those already assessed for the Local Plan.
(f) Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected: (i) special natural characteristics/cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental standards/limit values; (iii) intensive land-use	**No**	The SPD does not introduce development that could adversely affect designated or sensitive areas. Development remains subject to Local Plan safeguards and statutory protections.
(g) Effects on areas/landscapes with recognised national, Community or international protection status	**No**	Protected sites and landscapes are safeguarded through Local Plan policy and separate legal regimes. The SPD does not alter these protections or introduce development with potential effects on such areas.

Screening Determination (Regulation 9(3)) — Final

Having regard to the Schedule 1 criteria and the scope and purpose of the Affordable Housing SPD and following completion of consultation with the statutory environmental bodies, the Council has determined that the SPD is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

This determination is based on the following reasons:

1. The SPD does not allocate land, change the spatial strategy, or increase the quantum of development established by the Local Plan.
2. The SPD does not introduce new policy; it provides guidance to support implementation of existing Local Plan policies that have already been subject to SA/SEA.

3. Potential environmental effects arising from development proposals will continue to be addressed through Local Plan policies, statutory environmental controls, and project-level assessments where required.

Consultation with Statutory Bodies

In accordance with Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations, the Council consulted the statutory environmental bodies between 18 February 2026 and 18 March 2026 (28 days):

- Natural England
- Historic England
- Environment Agency

Responses received:

- Environment Agency — provided no comments, indicating that the Agency raised no concerns and had no objection to the conclusion that SEA is not required.
- Historic England — confirmed agreement with the conclusion that SEA is not required.
- Natural England — no response was received within the consultation period.

Next Steps

1. Publish this SEA Screening Determination alongside the draft Affordable Housing SPD at Regulation 12 consultation.
2. Ensure the Determination remains publicly available in accordance with the SEA Regulations.
3. Following consultation on the SPD, proceed to adoption of the SPD, with this Determination retained as supporting documentation.

References and Information Sources

- Spelthorne Local Plan 2024–2039/40 — Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating SEA) and evidence base
- Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended)
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning Act 2008)
- National Planning Policy and Planning Practice Guidance on SEA/SA
- Local evidence base relevant to environmental topics (biodiversity, heritage, flood risk, landscape, air quality)

Table 2 — Screening Outcome and Reasons (Summary)

Trigger / Consideration	Outcome	Reason(s)
New land allocations or change to development quantum/location	**No**	SPD does not allocate land or alter the spatial strategy/quantum set in the Local Plan.
Introduction of new policy (beyond Local Plan)	**No**	SPD provides guidance to implement existing policies only.
Potential for significant effects on protected sites/landscapes	**No**	Protections remain via Local Plan policy and statutory regimes; SPD does not change these.
Potential for cumulative or cross boundary effects	**No**	SPD guidance is borough-wide and administrative; no cross-boundary or cumulative environmental effects are anticipated.
SEA required?	**Not required (Final)**	Schedule 1 assessment (Table 1) indicates no likely significant environmental effects.