

Spenn Valley Locality Plan



Executive Summary

Locality Profile

Economically, the Spen Valley has a long association with textiles - a cottage industry since medieval times. The production of textiles was established during the industrial revolution.

By the middle of the twentieth century, the Spen Valley called on resources from local colliery and ironworks. This enabled the area to have a broader manufacturing base, including the production of food and drink.

Bradford is within six miles of Cleckheaton town centre. It offers employment opportunities for local residents. The major economic centre of Leeds is further afield. This can be accessed by the M62 Trans-Pennine motorway. Leeds offers residents a popular commuter destination.

Despite being semi-rural, Spen Valley's population density is twice the Kirklees district average.



Gomersal Public Hall

Heckmondwike, Cleckheaton, Roberttown, Gomersal and Scholes are the locality's main centres. There are also smaller residential areas scattered across the locality in the form of a number of semi rural villages.

Socio-demographics

The Spen Valley has an older age profile than other Kirklees areas. This is noticeable amongst the 65-74 age groups. This, together with findings from the Local Area Agreement (LAA) tracker survey, shows the locality has, at 31%, a larger percentage of retired residents than any other locality. This is 7% more than the Kirklees average.

According to consultation (Best Value Performance Indicators - BVPI) 82% of residents have lived in the area for more than ten years. This is higher than the

rate experienced across Kirklees, which is 72%. There is a strong sense of local identity within the locality's areas.

The ethnic profile of Spen Valley is mostly white. It has a small but significant minority ethnic community which make up 7% of the population. This is compared to 14% across Kirklees. Residents of Pakistani origin make up a large proportion of the non-white population (70%). Most live in the Heckmondwike area of the locality.

Introduction

This document provides key information about the Spen Valley locality and sets out ambitious priorities for change over the next ten years.

The very nature of any plan which strives for improvement is that it tends to focus on negative aspects, and this document may come across in that way though it is recognised that there are many things to celebrate about, and within, the Spen Valley. The document does not attempt to be an analysis of the experience of living in the Spen Valley per se but does set out areas where it is felt progress can most effectively be made to improve the lives of individuals, and benefit the community within the locality.

The locality priorities identified within section 7 will become the subject of individual workstreams and performance management arrangements. Local Elected Members will monitor the progress made against these priorities.



Summary

The Spen Valley locality takes its name from the River Spen. Rising to the north of Cleckheaton, the natural waterway creates a route through Liversedge before joining the River Calder to the south of Dewsbury. Spen Valley is located on the northern edge of Kirklees. It shares a border with Calderdale and Bradford.

Spen Valley covers an area of 3060 hectares and has a population of approximately 49000. It includes the electoral wards of [Heckmondwike](#), [Cleckheaton](#), [Liversedge](#) and [Gomersal](#).

It has a settled population which has a strong sense of local identity.

82% of residents have lived in the Spen Valley area for over ten years.

Spen Valley has a small minority ethnic community which represents 7% of the population. People from Pakistani origin make up the majority of the ethnic minority community.

Spen Valley does not suffer from widespread deprivation. However, there are small pockets of need. These are generally hidden by ward statistics.

Deprivation is largely related to educational attainment and pensioner poverty. The area also has the greatest reduction in recorded crime across all localities and is a well placed location.

Local context for change

The Spen Valley is in a process of change. This is shaped by various factors which include working to improve the locality's housing, town centre and transport infrastructure.

Heckmondwike and Cleckheaton are identified as priority areas under the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA2). The LPSA2 aims to create stronger local economies and quality environments in regenerated town centres. Other initiatives include improving the accessibility of the Spen Valley to major employment centres.

Vision for the future for the Spen Valley

The vision is to make the Spen Valley a vibrant, attractive and prosperous locality. Major regeneration will take place in public sector housing which will lead to improved housing with more customer choice.

This work will be complemented by more access to open spaces and leisure activities. The revival of the towns will create vibrant and attractive centres which will provide residents with employment and recreational opportunities. An improved transport infrastructure will also become an important part of a flourishing economy. This will improve the sense of connectivity within the Spen Valley to other parts of Kirklees and larger towns by major motorways.

In order to make sure the Spen Valley has a smooth transition into a vibrant, attractive and prosperous locality, some key challenges need to be addressed through a creative planning process. The plan should cover the following:

By year 3: raise aspirations amongst local residents

Survey findings indicate a lack of ambition amongst some of the locality's residents. The desire to learn and achieve amongst the population is important if residents are to take the opportunities provided by local development. This is essential for economic growth.

By year 5: improve education and skills attainment

Educational attainment levels are below average in comparison with Kirklees as a whole. Whilst general improvement would begin to redress this, narrowing the gap between the worst performing areas is essential.



Improved accessibility to high quality education and vocational training is also needed.

By year 10: creation of a vibrant local economy

The Spen Valley is a locality with huge potential for economic growth. This could be maximised by developing a niche market in manufacturing. This would support the creation of vibrant centres in Cleckheaton and Heckmondwike, as well as housing redevelopment and an improved greener transport network.

In addition to the areas identified within the 10 year vision above, there are also a number of Borough wide priorities for change which it is also important to express within the context of the Spen Valley.

To support an environment helpful to economic development, there is a need to sustain healthy, cohesive communities. Despite having a population that has lived in the Spen Valley for a long time, the locality suffers from a lack of resident involvement as well as increasing community tensions. Great effort is needed to remove barriers to social integration and improve agency and public sector working as well as continuing to build positive community relationships.

Support must be given to promote lifestyle change. Especially around sexual health and alcohol consumption in young people and people with high blood pressure rates, heart disease, stroke, pain problems, obesity and smoking.

There is also a need to improve access to services across the locality, for example health services, affordable childcare and youth activities.

Additional challenges include:

- maintaining the reductions in crime levels with a focus on violent crime and recurring hotspot locations
- redressing the high level of welfare benefit claimants in certain areas of the locality
- tackling pensioner poverty which is highlighted in health data sources. Pension credit information is also shown to be an issue.

