

Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan

Steering Group

Dear John

Thank you for your initial comments on the Plan. The Steering Group have met and have the following responses to the points raised. I have not commented on the points addressed specifically to WDBC.

Qualifying Body – We are extremely disappointed that it is an issue being in the joint Council's name, this was initially done in consultation with WDBC. We would prefer the Qualifying Body to be in the two Council's names however if it has to be changed to one Council then the Group agree it should be in the name of Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council (OHPC). Both Councils have also now formally approved this.

Response to Examiner's Initial Comments – The Steering Group have reviewed these comments and have the following feedback –

Neighbourhood Plan Policies

PP1 Settlement Boundary

This is a key policy, it was inserted on the advice of WDBC (Duncan Smith) prior to the Regulation 14 consultation. The boundary was put in place to stop the spread of development into green fields and with the purpose of utilising brownfield sites within the boundary to use for development. We put in a line to show the limits of what should be developed, which is effectively, the parcels identified in the JLP plus the ad hoc Fatherford development.

PP2 Use of Brownfield Sites

Yes other brownfield site development is supported in principle within the Settlement Boundary.

We do not believe it the role of the NP to show more detailed plans, the sites are suggestions only not allocations therefore more details are not considered necessary. Our intention is to show the potential development land available. Northfield Road site was considered but it appears it has been omitted from our Plan, although some of the area is considered in our Green Space policy. Old Mill/Gunns site – we can only assume the prospective developer is drawing up plans as this is already in the planning system (the bat house having been created). Upcott – there are many disused buildings therefore could be treated as a brownfield site. Again, it is a suggestion, not an allocation.

PP3 Green Spaces and Green Infrastructure

An updated map will be produced with the full areas on the periphery. Yes we understood the green spaces would have the status of Local Green Spaces.

We received feedback from two potential developers of green fields in our Reg 14 consultation which tells us our generic approach was effective. The vast majority of the spaces are not privately owned, all agencies had the opportunity to respond to the consultation.

PP4 Views and Vistas

All photographs were taken from the ground by a member of the Steering Group. It is the extent of the view that matters, and is mostly shared by the length of a street or group of buildings looking out on the view.

PP5 Employment Expansion

We are suggesting that a retail hub is also employment. Much of the business use land on Exeter Road remains to be developed. The settlement boundary is to prevent creeping into greenfields. Any employment use is welcome, we think 'retail' would serve the needs of Okehampton well.

PP6 Protecting existing employment land/buildings

Yes North Road Industrial area could be shown on a map.

The Plan would support proposals that would support ancillary employment uses – they are all employment.

The rationale for residential uses within North Road Industrial Estate is within the Brownfield space policy, it attempts to reduce traffic into the town centre and make it easy for residents to walk instead.

PP7 Small employment/starter units

We would consider mixed use on a redeveloped Northfield Rd site. We believe there are small started units (redeveloped barns for example) beyond the proposed settlement boundary, but these are already treated as developments in the open countryside.

PP9 Out of Town Retail Hub

It is not something the Group felt they could decide. There is available land.

Availability also depends on location of transport hub.

Policies are inter-connected and it would benefit the livelihood of the town

The size is not felt to something the Group can determine.

The suggestion for a retail outlet to move from the Town Centre is to help reduce congestion within the Town centre. People in the newbuilds already shop out of the town. This would keep income within the local economy.

All the policies fit our objectives to support a more sustainable Okehampton. We have demonstrated joined up thinking and alternative solutions to current challenges. We are not aware of any retail impact assessment being carried out. We know from our original community survey that shopping habits would welcome an out-of-town retail opportunity.

PP10 Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre

DCC recently produced proposals re traffic flow however these were not supported locally, documentation is available showing more detail. We are clear that it would only happen once the town centre access road was built.

Our view is that the existing/in progress options of the original Link Road and the Nexus Way link road need to be 'completed' with the town centre access road.

PP11 Car Parking Capacity

The Group were advised to include this by WDBC during pre Reg 14 feedback. We were trying to ensure car parks did not become housing.

PP12 Parking in Residential development

The aim of this was to encourage more off road parking within the new developments.

PP13 Safe Access to and within the Town and Hamlets

There is a very significant road safety problem on the Crediton Road and in the new build housing developments (especially given the change of location for the St James school) which has not been properly addressed by the developers or planners, it was felt necessary to include a policy to force the issue to be resolved.

PP14 Town Centre Access Road

This is not an idea from the Steering Group, the plan was in existence in previous planning documents and strategies which were in the public domain. It was then taken away and it has just been reintroduced in an effort to ease congestion and support a more sustainable town centre.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these points in more detail after you have had the chance to review our initial feedback. Our rationale has been to put in place a localised plan which, while it supports the broader strategic objectives of the JLP, resolves many of the issues faced by the people of Okehampton Town and Hamlets as a result of previous planning decisions and lack of infrastructure. We are keen to work with you.

Many thanks

Alison Duckers

On behalf of Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group