

Feedback to statutory Reg 16 responses (plus one resident)

Andrew Elliott

He originally fed back on Reg 14 but we had already swapped green field allocated spaces for the settlement boundary. We will not revisit this now. Any fields beyond the settlement boundary would be considered as development in the open countryside.

Every year WDBC was producing documents assessing land suitability for land bank. We did look at these on the website.

We have clearly stated that the pedestrianisation would only happen once the town centre access road was built.

We haven't allocated any sites.

We have no control over 106 monies and these do not necessarily match the needs created by the new builds which are paying for them. Everything now considered by WDBC from present plan allocations. Our main concern was for one particular cycle route/ pathway and that is the one that should serve the housing along the Crediton Road and St James school.

Environment Agency

This is really disappointing feedback.

AECOM carried out our Environmental screening, as a result of which we changed the wording of our policies to make it clear we were not allocating brownfield sites, just showing the capacity for development not in greenfields. On that basis a full assessment was not recommended.

We had policies around climate change and sustainability prior to Reg 14 but removed these on WDBC's advice. There was some informal consultation carried out within the authority and we were simply told the results of this.

WE HAVE NOT ALLOCATED brownfield sites.

Map three label needs to be altered to remove 'designations' as per the changed text.

Even if some brownfield suggestions are on flood plains, there is still the option of adaptations or other sites. As we are not allocating the sites, this would be part of a developer's planning application.

Transport

The Town Centre Access Road was in a previous version of the JLP and in DDC's transport strategy but were removed, whilst the 'Nexus' Link Road in parcel 3 was retained.

We need to reduce traffic congestion, but because of the planners' decisions to allow sprawling ribbon development to the east of Okehampton, it is totally impractical to expect people living there to get out of their cars. DCC's latest parking meter consultation suggests they actually want to make money from traffic coming into the town.

WE STATE CLEARLY THAT PEDESTRIANISATION OF THE TOWN CENTRE IS DEPENDENT ON THE TOWN CENTRE ACCESS ROAD BEING BUILT. This would create the alternative should the A30 need to close.

There is plenty of room in WDBC car parks to add some cycle parking.

There are many things we could have put in our policies, but we were not trying to do a localised version of everything in the JLP. We are trying to find solutions to issues faced by residents who live here, and which were not foreseen/were ignored during the planning process for the newbuild housing.

Our cycle route is not about global cycle access but about a safe passage from parcels 1, 2, 3 and 4 to St James school and into the town centre. People will die before DCC agrees to fund this.

All our policies have been checked against our environmental objectives. If the Town Centre Access Road keeps unnecessary traffic out of the town centre we reduce emissions, as does pedestrianisation.

Our policies do not contradict each other, they are working together.

Natural England

They fed back there was nothing of significance to them 😊

National Highways

They have questioned our robustness. This is ridiculous. There was clearly no safety assessment carried out prior to the implementation of all the housing.

We have included the Town Centre Access Road which was already in a DCC previous transport strategy.

They recently tried to remove the traffic lights from Fore Street/George Street/Market Street junction. Local people saw this 'cost saving' exercise was completely impractical.

We have been waiting years for DCC to carry out an updated traffic survey for the town centre.

Flood and Coastal Risk

Drainage issues were not raised by local people in our consultation. We would expect any developers to submit suitable assessments.

We would argue that any temporary (during construction) negative impact to East or West Ockment rivers during development of brownfield sites is no worse than the disruption to wildlife when greenfields are built on, and then left to settle down over many years.

Actually, we would welcome anything that enhances the town centre access to the banks of the rivers and makes them visible.

Conclusion

In general, we do not feel that the statutory agencies fully digested our rationale and have their own drums to beat.

Our neighbourhood plan is an attempt to restore sanity and sustainability to a town and its environs with huge potential for residents, businesses and visitors alike, but who were let down by the planning process, and possibly the reality that we are not a unitary authority in Devon.

If we had to name three priority policies these would be:

- Settlement boundary
- Use of brownfields for development
- Town Centre Access Road

That said, all our policies work together to support an alternative future for Okehampton. The last ten years have clearly shown that the impact of all the new housing to the east of the town was not anticipated by planners.

We would refer statutory consultees to our objectives and how these relate to all our policies/cross-cutting themes.

We did not directly approach the statutory consultees because we knew WDBC would at Reg 16. Our consultations were advertised widely, and it was not unknown that Okehampton was undertaking a neighbourhood plan (after all, we have been in this process a very long time). We have prioritised desk-top research and community consultation over the changing political landscape. If our neighbourhood plan is made, should devolution or central government release new monies we would be ready with a statutory document to respond and bid. WE also feel that any emerging JLP should take into consideration our neighbourhood plan if we are to avoid more of the same.