Okehampton Town & Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan 2021 - 2034

Regulation 14 Draft Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan

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Forewords

From the Chair of the Steering Group

When the Localism Act 2011 was passed, giving the right to communities to make Neighbourhood Plans, it was too late to change most of the development which had already been approved on the east side of Okehampton.

During the neighbourhood planning process we have seen additional greenfield sites approved for housing development. This is the cause of much frustration amongst local people. So, is our Neighbourhood Plan too late?

The Neighbourhood Plan sits beneath the National Planning Policy Framework and the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan and we cannot contradict these. So, is there any need for a Neighbourhood Plan?

We believe that the future of the Town and Hamlets can still in some measure be shaped by us, the local community. We can seek to influence the type of housing built. We can support community build and affordable housing proposals. We can ask for building materials which reflect traditional local styles as well as requesting environmentally sustainable development. We can prioritise building on brownfield sites. We can advocate for safe access, sufficient parking and green spaces. We cannot necessarily refuse development, but we can ensure it is fit for purpose, where younger people can afford to live and where the older population are within walking distance of the town centre.

So much of what makes for a thriving community lies outside the reach of planning policy. It takes roads and businesses and healthcare and local amenities, which are the responsibility of various authorities and agencies, who all interpret the data and evidence differently. We need joined-up thinking and for our councils and services to work together with the local community. We believe our Neighbourhood Plan can be the catalyst for this.

Moving into one of the new build developments a few years ago, like many other recent arrivals, the Neighbourhood Plan has given an opportunity to be part of shaping a thriving local community, by valuing our history, contributing to the vision, and connecting the past, present and future.

So, if you are reading this Neighbourhood Plan as it goes to a public vote, I would encourage you to say "Yes!" It has been a long hard slog to get to this point, but I am convinced it will make a difference.

Alison Duckers
Chair of Neighbourhood Planning Group

From the Town Council

Okehampton is a small rural town on the north-western edge of Dartmoor between Exeter and Launceston. It dates back to Saxon times and is mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086. The original mediaeval town is still constrained by geographical features. Historically, the town boundary is half a mile in each direction from the Town Hall, the modern town centre still emanates from this crossroad junction.

The Town is surrounded by the Hamlet's Parish which was formed in the late 19th Century by Act of Parliament which removed the Ancient Borough of Okehampton.

The newer residents in the periphery estates are encouraged to come down into town and become part of our wider community. Our function as a dormitory town for Exeter will continue and in fact grow as the Railway opens up more accessibility for commuters.

90% of our retailers are small independent shops, providing a range of services and goods increasing the choice of those offered by the three Supermarkets.

Our ultimate vision is of a town where pedestrians do not breathe traffic fumes and can wander through our historical Victorian Arcade and Red Lion Yard. Our pedestrianised areas will continue to be a place for temporary art displays; market stalls and Town Band performances to attract and draw in locals and visitors alike.

For around twenty years an inner relief road has been 'on the books'. It was recognised when the new A30 was built in the early 1990's that North Devon Traffic would still have to pass through the centre of town. Because we only have one main route through the centre the congestion is such now that many residents avoid the town centre and shop in Exeter, Crediton or Launceston, especially if they commute there to work.

However the proximity of the A30 both east and west gives our industrial areas easy access to major transport routes to Cornwall, London and the Midlands. Exeter airport is less than an hour away!

Thus our aim is not only to be a vibrant, community centred, ecologically aware dormitory town in a beautiful part of Devon, but also the centre of business and entrepreneurial activities bringing employment. We want to become a centre where people come from choice, to enjoy shopping, enjoy our park, the Leisure Centre and swimming pool, the Castle, our sports facilities of which we are rightly proud and to be part of the community which is Okehampton.

The re-opening of our station and the building of a new Parkway station for commuting traffic from the Hamlets, will enable tourists to come into the town, cyclists and walkers to access Dartmoor and the Granite Way which takes them through the Hamlets to Meldon and onto Sourton and Lydford. The Parkway is a priority to obviate traffic congestion increasing in the town centre and up Station Road.

A Neighbourhood Plan would help clarify this vision of the future, promote affordable and sustainable housing, encourage employers to recognise our geographical importance in central Devon and on a major spinal route into Cornwall whilst also improve our air and general quality of life

Jan Goffey
On behalf of Okehampton Town Council
(Councillor and former Mayor)

From the Hamlets Council

Okehampton is a unique place within the country. The High Moor, with the highest points in the South of England, give rise to two rivers, the East and West Okement which flow North through the town, combining to form the River Okement. This ancient landscape has been a place of work, living and worship for millennia and still attracts a military presence. The vision for the Parish Council in the twenty first century is to retain our heritage and allow for peaceful and sustainable living with economic prosperity with the changing cultures and lifestyles.

Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council was established circa 1894 by Act of Parliament, which removed the former Borough of Okehampton, and surrounds the original Town of Okehampton. It also borders the parishes of Belstone, Dartmoor Forest, Sourton, Lewdown, Inwardleigh, Sampford Courtney and Bridestowe & Sourton Common.

Within its boundaries are over one hundred listed buildings, heritage buildings and scheduled monuments, including Okehampton Castle and its associated hunting park, part of which, Old Town Park Local Nature Reserve, is owned and managed by the Parish Council. Recent finds also include the remains of a Roman town and road outside the Roman fort. There are residues of previous industrial activity in the form of mines, quarries, mills and railways as well as the continuing military activity from Okehampton Camp around the High Moor. This is also home to the Annual Ten Tors competition.

Many farms are located within the Parish and are managed sympathetically with the landscape. A good number of farmers show annually at the Okehampton and District Agricultural Show, which has its home within the Parish. The Hamlets are also the home of the North Dartmoor Search & Rescue Team.

The majority of the Parish is located within the Dartmoor National Park, which limits development opportunities. However, it attracts many tourists who enjoy the remarkable and historic landscape, including its highest Tor, High Willhays, the Granite Way, which utilises the Meldon Viaduct over the regionally famous Meldon Woods, (owned and managed by the Parish Council), and the Meldon Reservoir. Tourists also enjoy the UK's largest golf resort, the Ashbury Hotel located to the West of the parish, as well as playing at Okehampton Golf Course nearer the town.

The Parish derives its name from the Hamlets around the Town, namely, Brightley, Chichacott, Fatherford, Meldon, Southcott & Stockley. More recently, developments between the Town and Stockley have seen new housing built as well as industrial and commercial premises, with more planned. A new primary school has been built and another school is being built, due to open in 2023.

The proximity to the A30, which bisects the Parish, a part of the national road network, as well as the planned Okehampton Parkway Railway Station near Stockley, attracts interest from new residents and businesses alike, as well as passing tourists.

Future developments within the Hamlets need to be sympathetic to the landscape and recognise its historical and national importance. New sustainable housing will have to reflect the needs of both the Town and Hamlets, together with opportunities for skilled and sustainable employment for the future. Whilst the communities are already thriving, the needs for community infrastructure should be planned in all future developments. The Parish Council is committed to working with all our partners to achieve these goals.

Brian Wood
On behalf of Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council
(Councillor and current Chair)

Policy summary

A Neighbourhood Plan is part of planning policy and processes. We have set out 23 Planning Policies which will apply to future development in the Town and Hamlets.

Policy PP1: Settlement boundary
Policy PP2: Provision of affordable housing
Policy PP3: Use of brownfield sites
Policy PP4: Green infrastructure
Policy PP5: Views and vistas
Policy PP6: Employment expansion
Policy PP7: Protecting existing employment land/buildings
Policy PP8: Small employment/starter units
Policy PP9: Tourism development
Policy PP10: Tourism strategy
Policy PP11: Out of town retail hub
Policy PP12: Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre
Policy PP13: Conservation Area
Policy PP14: Community facilities and community ‘right to buy’
Policy PP15: Community centre in the new build developments
Policy PP16: Car parking capacity
Policy PP17: Parking in residential development
Policy PP18: Safe access to and within the Town and Hamlets
Policy PP19: Town Centre Access Road
Policy PP20: Cycle routes
Policy PP21: Community energy
Policy PP22: Addressing fuel poverty
Policy PP23: Greener transport

These policies do not cover every element of planning, but we have not addressed those elements already catered for in national planning regulations and guidance or in the Joint Local Plan (PSWDJLP) and Dartmoor Local Plan.

Vision

For Okehampton Town and Hamlets to thrive we need sustainable development. The historic market town of Okehampton has spilled over into the isolated farming communities of the Hamlets through housing development which has not been matched by the infrastructure and services which are needed. Recognising that Okehampton Town and Hamlets will increase in population in the next few years, both through developments which are already approved and those which will be required in the future, this Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan (OTHNP) sets out a range of policies which, together, will ensure the current and future wellbeing of residents, businesses and visitors, and help to bring about a more sustainable outcome for Okehampton Town and Hamlets.

What do we mean by sustainable development?

It is likely that there will always be some element of housing development allocated to Okehampton by the local planning authorities. Therefore, the OTHNP calls for sustainable development.

Across the Neighbourhood Plan Area, sustainable development in all future development means:
a) High quality design and layout that integrates the new phases of development with the existing settlement; and
b) Proposals for new development that show an understanding of how the growing number of Okehampton residents will connect to the wider area; and
c) Housing that reflects the needs of the local population; and
d) Proposals that minimise the environmental impact and seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity in the Town and Hamlets.

Both Town and Hamlets Councils will work proactively with developers to find joint solutions throughout the planning application stage and welcome developer pre-application consultation with the community to ensure that future development is sustainable.

Our hope is that this Neighbourhood Plan will add value to the spatial priorities and strategic planning which already exists in the PSWJLP and the Dartmoor Local Plan.

Background and planning context

What is Neighbourhood Planning?

'Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.'

Paragraph 29, NPPF

We are taking the opportunity to shape the future of Okehampton Town and Okehampton Hamlets by preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (OTHNP)

Local Planning authorities

Plymouth, West Devon and South Hams have prepared a Joint Local Plan (PSWDJLP) which was adopted in April 2019 and sets out the overarching strategy for the area, identifying where development will take place, what areas should be protected, and how the area will change through to 2034. Some of our Neighbourhood Plan Area is also covered by the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) Dartmoor Local Plan 2018-2036

In this Neighbourhood Plan, we have sought to follow the principles set out in the Joint Local Plan, the DNPA Local Plan and emerging policy direction.

'Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently.'

Paragraph 30, NPPF

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012, with the latest revision in July 2021, and sets out the Government's planning policies for England with the expectation of how these will be applied. The NPPF is supported by detailed guidance (National Policy Planning Guidance, NPPG) on how the framework and its contents should be applied locally and nationally and are available at http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/

It sets out how the local planning authority must take into consideration a Neighbourhood Plan.

What is the Okehampton Town and Okehampton Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan (OTHNP)?

Neighbourhood Plans provide communities with the opportunity to shape the future development of their area. Sustainable development is necessary, and the community gets a say where that development should occur and what it should look like.

A Neighbourhood Plan gives the opportunity for the community to influence how planning policies should be applied to their Neighbourhood Plan Area and can provide additional or more detailed proposals and policies, particular to the special needs of the area.

Both Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council believe that a joint Neighbourhood Plan covering both council areas is the most appropriate way to deliver sustainable development: Okehampton's new housing and direction of growth is predominantly located within Okehampton Hamlets, with the Town providing local infrastructure.

The OTHNP, when adopted, becomes part of the planning process and will be used when any planning application is made or appealed. It will provide the details to shape any new development in the area, adding value to the policies already in the Development Plan.

It is a legal planning policy document and once it has been 'Made' by West Devon Borough Council (WDBC) and Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA), it must be used by:

a) WDBC and DNPA in assessing planning applications and

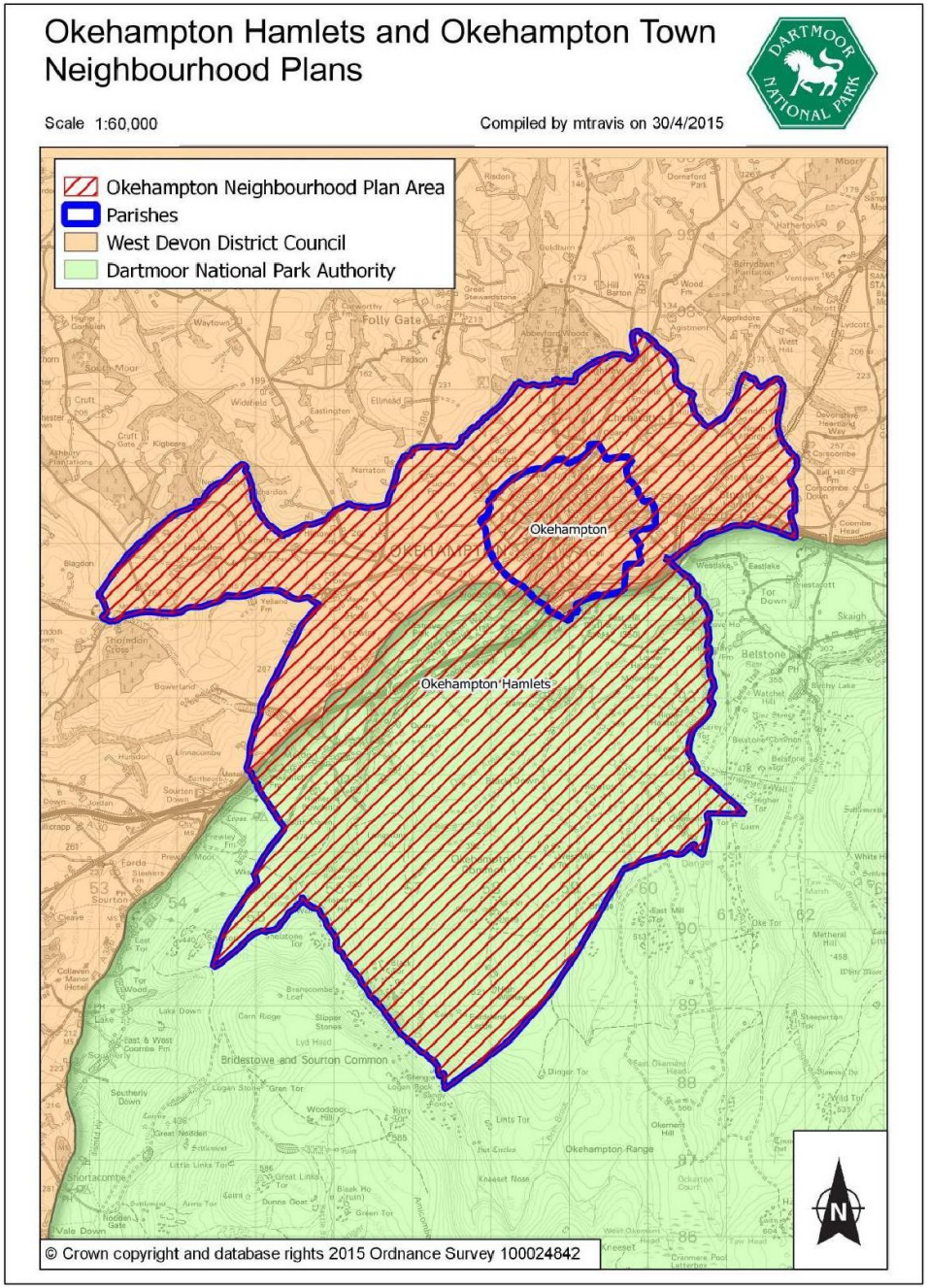
b) Anyone preparing planning applications for submission to WDBC and DNPA.

A Neighbourhood Plan can be used to address the development and use of land. Wider community aspirations and actions which deal with non-land-use matters can be included in a Neighbourhood Plan, however they should be clearly identifiable.

Which area and period of time are covered by the OTHNP?

Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council jointly decided to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan and in Spring 2015 they submitted an application for the approval of the Town and Hamlets (jointly) as a Neighbourhood Plan Area. One application being submitted to West Devon Borough Council and one to Dartmoor National Park Planning Authority (as both Town and Hamlets council areas fall within both Authority areas). Subsequently, both Dartmoor National Park (22nd June 2015) and West Devon Borough Council (20th April 2015) confirmed approval of the designation of the Okehampton Town and Okehampton Hamlet's Neighbourhood Plan Area (See map opposite).

The OTHNP sets out planning policies for the Plan Area from 2021-2034. This timeframe aligns with the South West Devon Joint Local Plan which looks ahead to 2034. The new Dartmoor Local Plan will cover the period 2018-2036.



Map 1: OTHNP area

‘Making’ a plan

Process of submission, examination and adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan

Before submission the Neighbourhood Plan must undergo ‘pre-submission’ consultation and publicity. The way in which this must be done is set out in Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The Regulation 14 consultation gives the people who live, work or carry out businesses in the Neighbourhood Plan Area an opportunity to comment on the Neighbourhood Plan, and to enable amendments to be made, if considered appropriate.

After taking account of all submissions and suggestions made under the Regulation 14 consultation, the final version of the report will be produced, for submission to WDBC and DNPA (under Regulation 15).

Before being ‘Made’, the Neighbourhood Plan must go through a further formal consultation (Regulation 16). WDBC and DNPA carry out their own consultation of the Neighbourhood Plan, prior to it being forwarded to the Independent Examiner.

The Independent Examiner checks that the Neighbourhood Plan meets the ‘Basic Conditions’ and other requirements set out by law and issues a report. If the plan meets the basic conditions, with or without modifications, which the Examiner recommends, the Neighbourhood Plan will then be able to proceed to the referendum stage.

All people who are on the Okehampton Town and Okehampton Hamlets Electoral Register will be given the opportunity to vote at the referendum and if more than 50% of those voting, vote in favour, the Plan will then be ‘Made’ and become part of the development plan for the Town and Hamlets.

Meeting the Basic Conditions

Neighbourhood plans must meet certain 'basic conditions' and other legal requirements before they can come into force. These are tested through an independent examination before the neighbourhood plan may proceed to referendum.

Paragraph 37, NPPF

A Neighbourhood Plan can only be 'Made' if it meets 'The Basic Conditions' as defined by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The OTHNP has been prepared to meet the Basic Conditions and has been through several informal methods of consultation.

All policies within this OTHNP have been written to:

a) Have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) which sets out the Government's planning policy for the Country. The central tenet is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
b) Be in general conformity with the strategic polices of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (PSWDJLP) and DNP Local Plan.
c) Contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development and Human Rights obligations.

Regulation 32 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets out a further basic condition for a Neighbourhood Plan that:

'The making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects).'

See Schedule 2 to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended concerning the examination of neighbourhood plans.

Evidence base

To inform the content of the Plan, we have developed our evidence base so that our policies are underpinned by clear reasoning and justification. We have done this in two ways. Firstly, we have undertaken local consultation (Part of our Evidence Base which is found in Appendix One) and secondly, we have gathered together evidence and data that already exists. Our evidence base is available at **www.okehamptonneighbourhoodplan.com**.

A lengthy process

Back in September 2015, after initial discussions and engagement with the local community, the OTHNP Steering Group was formed. The make-up of the group changed constantly, due to other commitments or frustrations that we couldn't just write the plan, without consultation or gathering evidence. Unfortunate delays, out of our control, meant that it was 2021 before the Steering Group has been able to collate all the evidence, gathered over several years, and write our policies.

Community involvement

Our Steering Group

Over time, our Steering Group has grown and shrunk, but has always included representatives of Town and Hamlets Councils and members of the wider community, both long-standing and newer residents.

Publicity

The progress of the Neighbourhood Plan has been promoted in the Town and Hamlets magazines, and local newspaper. Articles have continued to encourage the involvement of any local resident with an interest in shaping the Neighbourhood Plan.

The OTHNP web site **www.okehamptonneighbourhoodplan.com** is used for sharing information and evidence.

Consultation and engagement

This is a community endeavour, where communication, consultation and feedback have been and continue to be key to the development of the OTHNP. The Steering Group has organised a range of consultation events:

Initial event
Community survey (843 responses)
Business survey (116 responses)
Half day consultation event
Focus groups:

- Community facilities in the new housing
- Town Centre development
- Traffic and Transport

Land use consultation (including young people)

The findings are listed in the Evidence Base in Appendix 1 and can be viewed via our website.

Community survey

The community survey included a comprehensive series of questions covering many issues. 843 questionnaires were returned, with postcodes identifying whether residents lived in the Town or the Hamlets. Once all the results had been analysed, it was possible to see which issues were the priority for the residents of the Town and Hamlets.

TOP FIVE PRIORITIES

- ***Traffic and transport***
- ***Town Centre Development***
- ***Facilities in the housing developments***
- ***Economy, enterprise and tourism***
- ***Railway station***

Since the start of the neighbourhood planning process, rail passenger services between Okehampton and Exeter have been re-instated. Moves are also being made to secure the funding required to build a station between the housing developments to the east of the Town and the business park, regarded as essential for the wider community to avoid town centre traffic and increasing congestion.

Land use consultation

Within the statutory processes surrounding the Neighbourhood Plan, focus should be, primarily, on Land Use. Three events were held, and information sent out to 1,700 households, in order to seek the views of the general public about what the parcels of land, put forward for development by local landowners, should be used for, in the future.

The four main options were:

- Housing development
- Employment development
- Sports and recreation
- Keep as greenfield

The highest number of votes were for keeping sites as greenfield, the second highest for housing development, the next for sport and recreation and the last for employment land, identified in the map on the following page.

The strategic overview from the Local Plans

From the PSWJLP

Policy TTV16

Spatial priorities for development in Okehampton.

The plan seeks to enhance the vibrancy and sustainability of Okehampton. This will include:

1. Providing for mixed use development to help meet local housing need and increase employment opportunities to support the long term resilience of the town.
2. Fully recognising the strategic location of Okehampton for employment growth.
3. Maximising the potential of the A30, and identifying opportunities to invest in rail and bus connections to Exeter.
4. Enhancing the character and vitality of the town centre.
5. Using opportunities to build community infrastructure related to new housing developments.
6. Maintaining and enhancing strong physical and visual connections between the town and the surrounding countryside, including Dartmoor National Park.
7. The delivery of a new primary school in the east of the town and the relocation of the post 16 provision at Okehampton College.
8. Ensuring that all development, singularly or cumulatively, will not negatively impact on the ability of the relevant authorities to improve air quality within
9. Working with relevant authorities to look for appropriate solutions to manage traffic flow in and around the town, including exploring opportunities to deliver a town centre access road.
10. Ensuring appropriate infrastructure is delivered alongside new development.
11. Ensuring that development on the edges of the town is designed sensitively to respond to the changing character from urban to rural.

The OTHNP is also to be read in conjunction with the 'Thriving Towns and Villages' part of the PSWJLP.

From the Dartmoor Local Plan

Strategic Policy 1.2 (2) Sustainable development in Dartmoor National Park

1. In Dartmoor National Park all proposals should pursue sustainable development. Development is sustainable where it:
a) supports National Park purposes;
b) minimises our impact upon climate change by ensuring development takes place where it minimises the need to travel, conserves resources and reduces waste;
c) responds to climate change through community resilience and adaptation;
d) makes efficient use of land and infrastructure, in particular by prioritising the use of previously developed land and buildings;
e) promotes the health, safety and well-being of the population, including by improving and supporting access to workplaces and housing, and ensures active community engagement in planning for the future of Dartmoor and its communities;
f) enables equal opportunities, freedom from discrimination and fair access to services, facilities, and the understanding and enjoyment of the National Park;
g) conserves the quality and quantity of natural resources, including water, air, soils, geodiversity and biodiversity;
h) avoids development which impacts upon flood risk, and allows for the natural drainage of surface water;
i) delivers distinctive high quality design and uses sustainable materials and passive design principles where possible;
j) conserves and enhances the character, quality and tranquillity of the National Park and sustains and enhances the setting, character and local distinctiveness of settlements;
k) conserves or enhances important historic and cultural features;
l) provides essential services and infrastructure, and promotes and enables travel by public transport, cycle or foot; and

We have considered the Local Plans and have included in our Neighbourhood Plan those elements which add value to them or apply district planning policy to the Town and Hamlets. We have mostly left out those elements which are already catered for in the Local Plans or are covered by existing national planning policy.

Our Planning Policies

Our policies are designed to provide a framework which will be used, alongside national and district planning policies, by local authority development management officers and Councillors (elected Members) when considering planning applications for development. Those proposing development in the Town and Hamlets will also need to refer to them to understand the local policy parameters against which their proposal will be tested.

Themes

Our policies are grouped into seven themes:

- Housing and Development
- Green Space and Green Infrastructure
- Supporting Local Business Growth
- Town Centre Development
- Community and Well Being
- Traffic Transport and Parking
- Environmental sustainability

Objectives

The following key objectives guide the writing of our policies, in order to preserve and enhance the character of Okehampton Town and Hamlets.

1. Encourage future housing growth to meet the needs of the local community whilst minimising the impact on the natural environment and delivering high quality design.
2. Ensure easy access to the countryside through green connections, protect and enhance local green spaces whilst supporting nature conservation.
3. Protect and enhance the distinctive rural landscape, natural environment and biodiversity of the Area.
4. Creating an environment that makes it attractive for businesses and tourism to flourish.

5. Support the retention and improvement of existing employment space and encourage a range of further businesses.
6. Conserve and enhance the character and heritage of Okehampton Town and Okehampton Hamlets.
7. Support and enhance the range of services and community facilities.
8. Improve highway safety and provide adequate off-road parking for residents, workers and visitors.

Summary of how our policies reflect the cross-cutting themes

	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4	Objective 5	Objective 6	Objective 7	Objective 8
PP1	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes		
PP2	Yes							Yes
PP3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
PP4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
PP5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
PP6				Yes	Yes		Yes	
PP7				Yes	Yes		Yes	
PP8				Yes	Yes		Yes	
PP9		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PP10		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PP11				Yes	Yes		Yes	
PP12		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PP13	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PP14		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	
PP15							Yes	Yes
PP16	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
PP17	Yes							Yes
PP18	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
PP19	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
PP20	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
PP21			Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
PP22	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
PP23			Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	

Key to themes:

Housing and Development
Green Space and Green Infrastructure
Supporting Local Business Growth
Town Centre Development
Community and Well Being
Traffic Transport and Parking
Environmental sustainability

POLICY PP1: Settlement boundary

Justification

National planning policy requires the local planning authority to provide a five-year land bank which is deliverable in terms of development. Whilst offers of land to the west of Okehampton have been considered in the past, they were not deemed deliverable, and so the bulk of the new developments, identified in the PSWJLP have been in the east of the Town. The main access road through the Town, along with constraints of the local landscape, has turned Okehampton into something of a ribbon development, which increases traffic into the Town, with all the attendant challenges of pollution, parking and traffic jams.

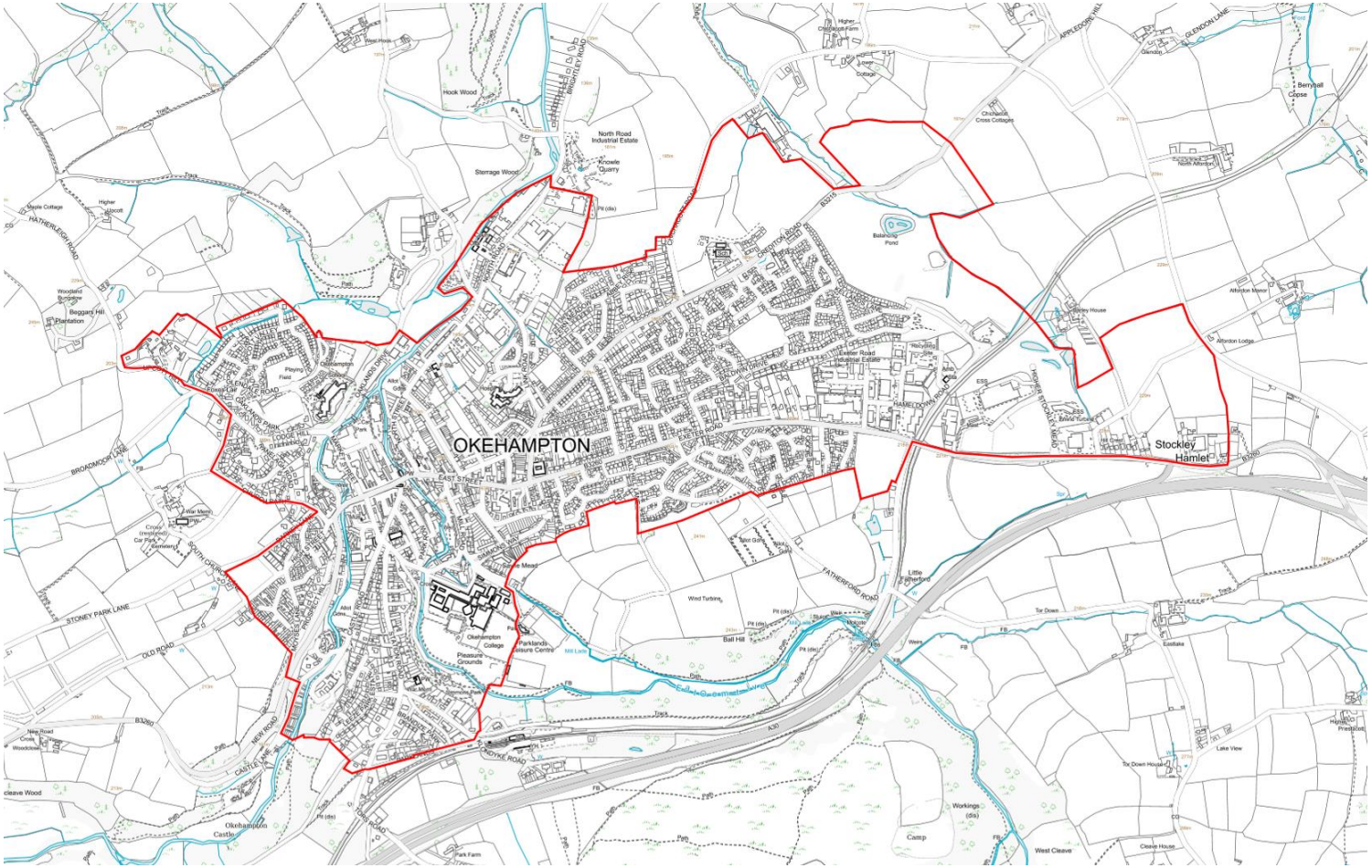
Development in Okehampton is ahead of projected numbers, and we believe that any future requirements for housing development during the life of the PSWJLP and this Neighbourhood Plan, as well as potential allocation beyond this time-frame, can be contained within the existing settlement, either as windfall or brownfield developments. Coupled with the desire to see green spaces and green infrastructure beyond the settlement safeguarded, we are proposing a settlement boundary, as identified on the map on the following page. A settlement boundary refers to the built-up area (residential and industrial) and does not equate to the whole neighbourhood plan area which includes both Town and Hamlets Parish councils.

POLICY PP1: Settlement boundary

A settlement boundary shall exist as identified in Map 3. New developments beyond the settlement boundary will be treated as development in the open countryside and will not be permitted with the exception of:

a) Individual planning applications in the Hamlets which satisfy policies within the PSWJLP and Dartmoor Local Plan.

b) The planning application is necessary and can demonstrate that it meets national planning requirements and limits environmental impact.



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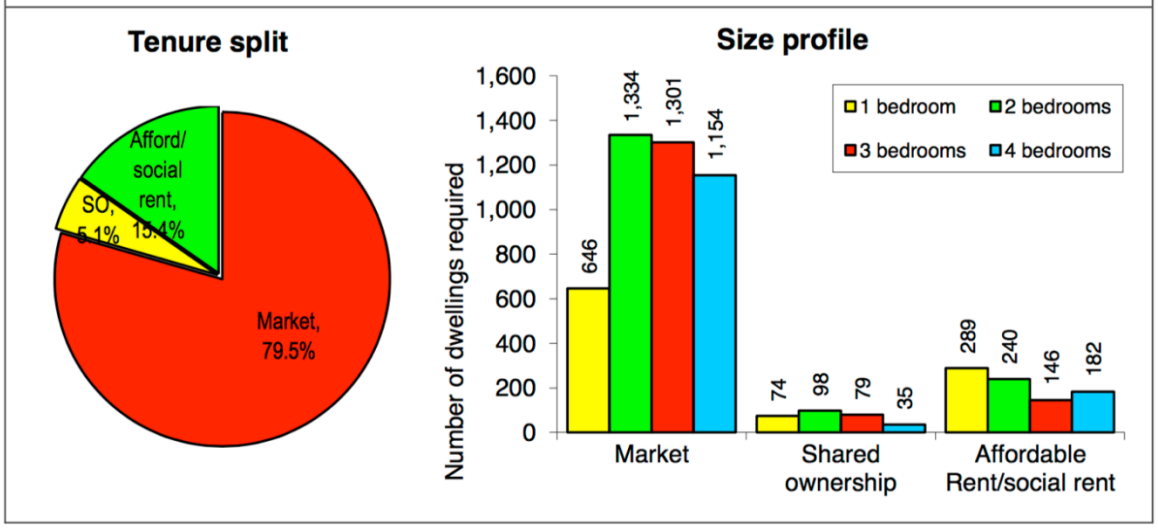
Map 2: Settlement boundary relating to PP1: Settlement boundary

POLICY PP2: Provision of affordable housing

Justification

The Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment Part 2 (SHMNA) provides the most up to date information on the need for accommodation within West Devon and concludes 5,162 dwellings are required between 2014 – 2034 and suggests the following housing mix:

Figure 7.3 Annual requirement for all new housing in West Devon



Extract from The Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon Housing Market Area SHMA, Part 2, Feb 2017)

In Okehampton, 44% of houses are owned by the occupant, 29.2% are mortgaged, 13.3% are privately rented, and 9.5% are subject to social rent (DCC Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2018)

The South Hams and West Devon Housing Strategy identifies that that the mix of homes in South Hams and West Devon varies considerably from the national average.

Both areas have far fewer one and two bed homes, (34%) than the national average for England (40%). The same is true at the other end of the spectrum, with both South Hams and West Devon

having many more four and five bed homes (27%) compared to the national average (19%). This may not be as big a problem if it weren't for the inflated house prices, meaning that bigger houses cost even more than they would elsewhere, which makes them more attractive for developers to build than the small homes that are needed.

Housing Strategy p.9

Whether it is as a result of developer economics or the Covid pandemic demand for rural housing, private rental costs have increased. The South Hams and West Devon Housing Strategy demonstrates the average rent as follows:

1 bed 538
2 bed 650
3 bed 825
4+ bed 1120

The local rented housing market has become increasingly expensive, including the social housing sector, and the proportion of net income required to cover housing costs for low income households has increased.

Housing Strategy p.17

Our own survey of local estate agents showed that local private rents were consistently higher than the average. These elevated private rents can create difficulties for families wanting to live here or young adults becoming independent for the first time.

The following two examples provide anecdotal evidence of difficulties local people have, securing affordable rented accommodation in the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The first refers to private rented accommodation and the second refers to social housing.

"The private rental I moved into was listed as dilapidated, which when I visited expected everything to be very old, patchy and run down which it was. I wasn't expecting all the glazing to be blown, damp to a point the wallpaper doesn't stay on the walls, and black mould in every room. I have been on social housing listing for 7 years but feel stuck in unsuitable housing for myself, full time carer to 2 autistic teenagers, have developed a wheezy chest and chronic depression, both children suffer with depression. There is no private rental I can find which is suitable and definitely not affordable in this area."

"I was lucky to get social housing in an area where it is scarce. I was pregnant with my first child and living with my in laws in a small village just outside of Okehampton. Some new builds were going up in the village and a small percentage were allocated to social housing. The conditions of applying for one was that you had to have a local connection. My partner was born and brought up in the village so we were immediately eligible and successful in securing a small house. We were able to move in just before the baby arrived which I know was such a rare and lucky opportunity."

The JLP requires 30% for schemes in excess of 11 dwellings (JLP Policy DEV 8) whilst on exception sites a 60%/40% private/affordable split is required (JLP Policy TTV27).

POLICY PP2: Provision of affordable housing

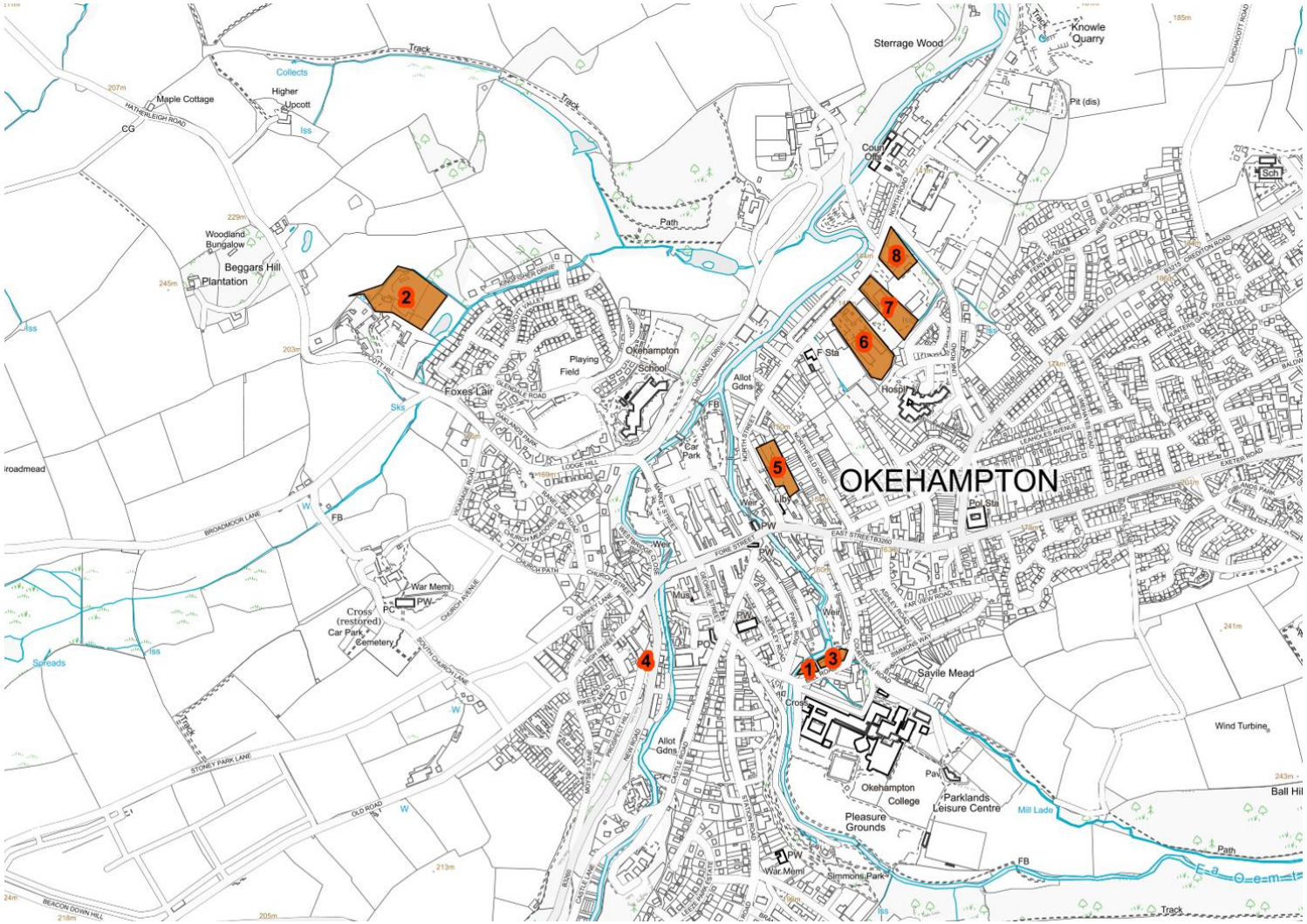
1. Where a planning application to build houses is submitted, the local community expresses a preference for developments which maximise provision of affordable housing.
2. The quality and appearance of affordable housing must be indistinguishable from market housing.

POLICY PP3: Use of brownfield sites

Justification

"Brownfield land' is sometimes called 'Previously Developed Land (PDL)'. A full definition is provided in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). All Local Planning Authorities are required to complete a Register of brownfield sites. The Hamlets currently have no registered brownfield land. There are examples within the Town of brownfield sites, as identified in Map 3.

The Neighbourhood plan seeks to retain new development within the proposed settlement boundary, and therefore, brownfield sites should be maximised. Where a brownfield site is unsuitable for development, for example due to contamination, we propose that the site becomes a designated green space and is planted or landscaped accordingly.



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Numbered sites relate to policy below.

Map 3: Designated brownfield sites referred to in Policy PP3: Use of brownfield sites

POLICY PP3: Use of brownfield sites

The Neighbourhood Plan prioritises following sites, as identified in Map 4, for development within the settlement boundary:

1. **Former Garden Centre site on Mill Road**
2. **Upcott House**
3. **The Old Mill, Mill Road, scheduled for development**
4. **Empty site on New Road beside sheltered housing**
5. **Gunns Yard - now scheduled for development**
6. **Wannacotts**
7. **North Road**
8. **Former Garden Centre site on North Road**

POLICY PP4: Green spaces and green infrastructure

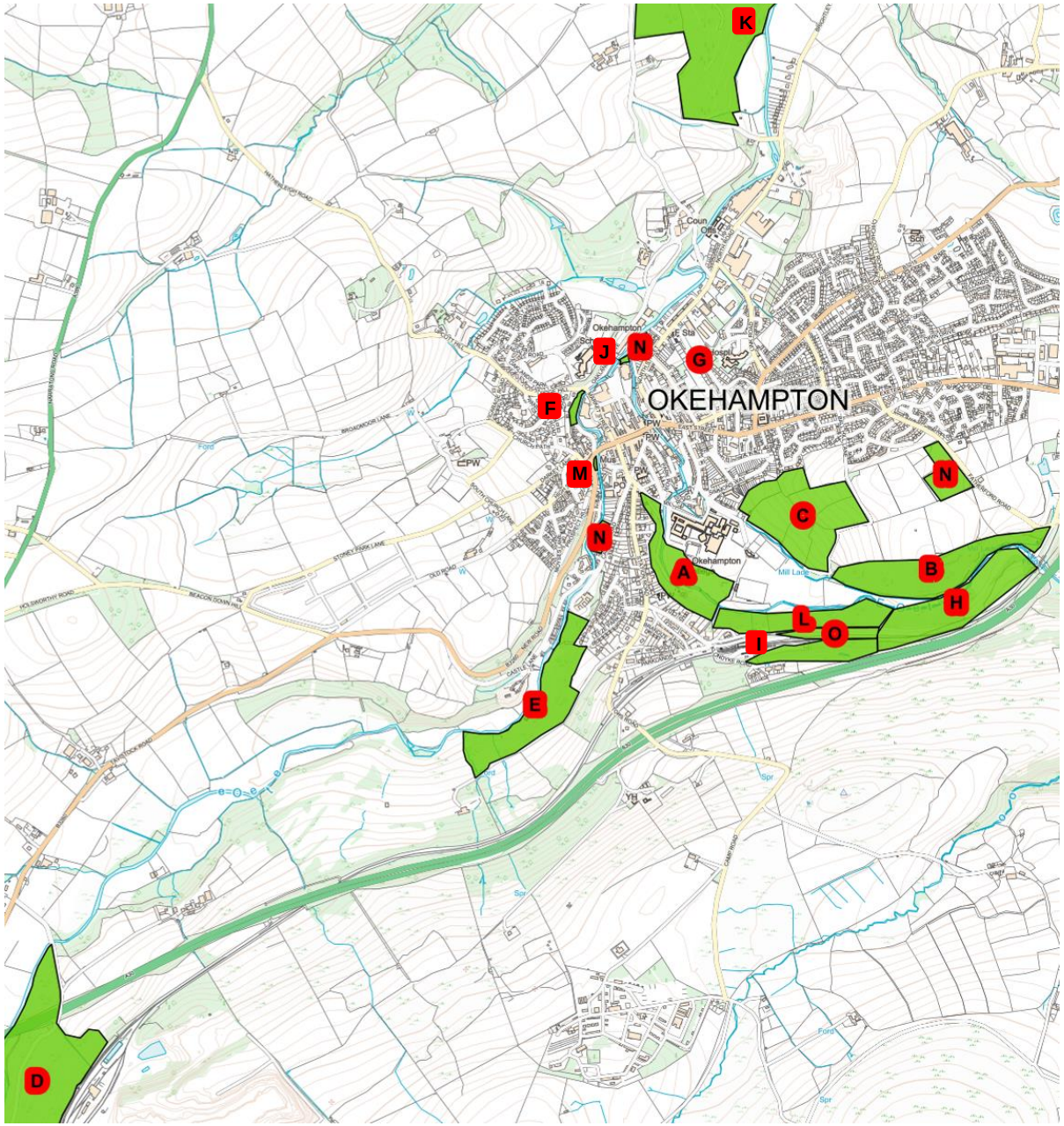
Justification

Green infrastructure (GI) is a catch-all term to describe the network of natural and semi-natural features within and between our villages, towns and cities. These features range in scale, from street trees, green roofs and private gardens through to parks, rivers and woodlands. Green infrastructure assets include open spaces such as parks and gardens, allotments, woodlands, fields, hedges, lakes, ponds, playing fields, coastal habitats, as well as footpaths, cycleways or rivers. Assets involving water can also be called ‘blue infrastructure’, but these are all included in the overarching term of ‘green infrastructure’. Such assets provide areas for recreation and education, habitats for wildlife and also provide environmental services such as flood defence or absorption of air pollution. If they did not exist, then our lives would be very different. For this reason, these natural and semi-natural areas are identified as part of the basic ‘infrastructure’ that enables us to live as we do.

The green infrastructure approach advocates that green infrastructure assets should be protected and enhanced to help sustain and improve our way of life. Green infrastructure assets should be linked to form part of a wider network, as this helps them to withstand climate change and other impacts. Providing new green infrastructure assets can be an alternative to providing engineered structures using concrete and other hard materials otherwise known as ‘grey infrastructure’. Green infrastructure however tends to be multi-functional, often providing the added benefit of providing for biodiversity as well as, for example, flood relief or a cycle route.

Protection and management of our environment is vital to our survival. Recent human activity has resulted in pollution of land, water and air, loss of biodiversity, and degradation of our landscapes at a scale and at a rate never experienced before. This significantly limits the ability of the environment to provide these services.

The following Policy is considered to be the best accommodation of balancing large-scale development whilst protecting the biodiversity in the Town and Hamlets.



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Map 4: Policy PP4: Green spaces and green infrastructure

POLICY PP4: Green spaces and green infrastructure

1. Development proposals which safeguard and, where possible provide net gains in biodiversity and wildlife opportunities will be supported.
2. Development proposals that include measures to enhance, extend and connect walking and cycling infrastructure will be supported.
3. The following sites, as identified on Map 4, should be maintained and preserved:

a. Simmons Park
b. Ball Hill
c. Kempley Meadows
d. Meldon Woods
e. Old Town Park Local Nature Reserve
f. Clapps Wood
g. Land between Northfield Road and Wonnacotts Road
h. Tramlines
i. Woodland above the station
j. Picnic area behind Lidl
k. Abbeyford Woods
l. Woodland Trust land
m. West Bridge planted area
n. Allotments on Castle Road, North Road and Fatherford Road
o. Station Field

POLICY PP5: Views and vistas

Justification

The community places great value on the quality of their landscape and the views it affords both for their own enjoyment and that of visitors. Dartmoor National Park forms the backdrop to the neighbourhood plan area with many important views to and from the Park. This is reflected in the requirements of Policy PP5 which seeks to protect our unique heritage by avoiding the loss of public views and erosion of visual qualities of the area.

In line with national policy and land-use, our Policy PP5 focuses on the elements of landscape and openness which help form the views which are important to us locally. It also offers guidance on how development proposals should contribute positively to minimising any adverse impact on the landscape setting of Okehampton.

Below are series of photographs depicting several of the views and vistas which are important to the people of the Town and Hamlets.

1. Chichacott

2. Looking down towards Giblands

3. View from East Hill.

4. From Stockley, near Mole Avon, across to Dartmoor.

5. South Church Lane looking towards the Town.

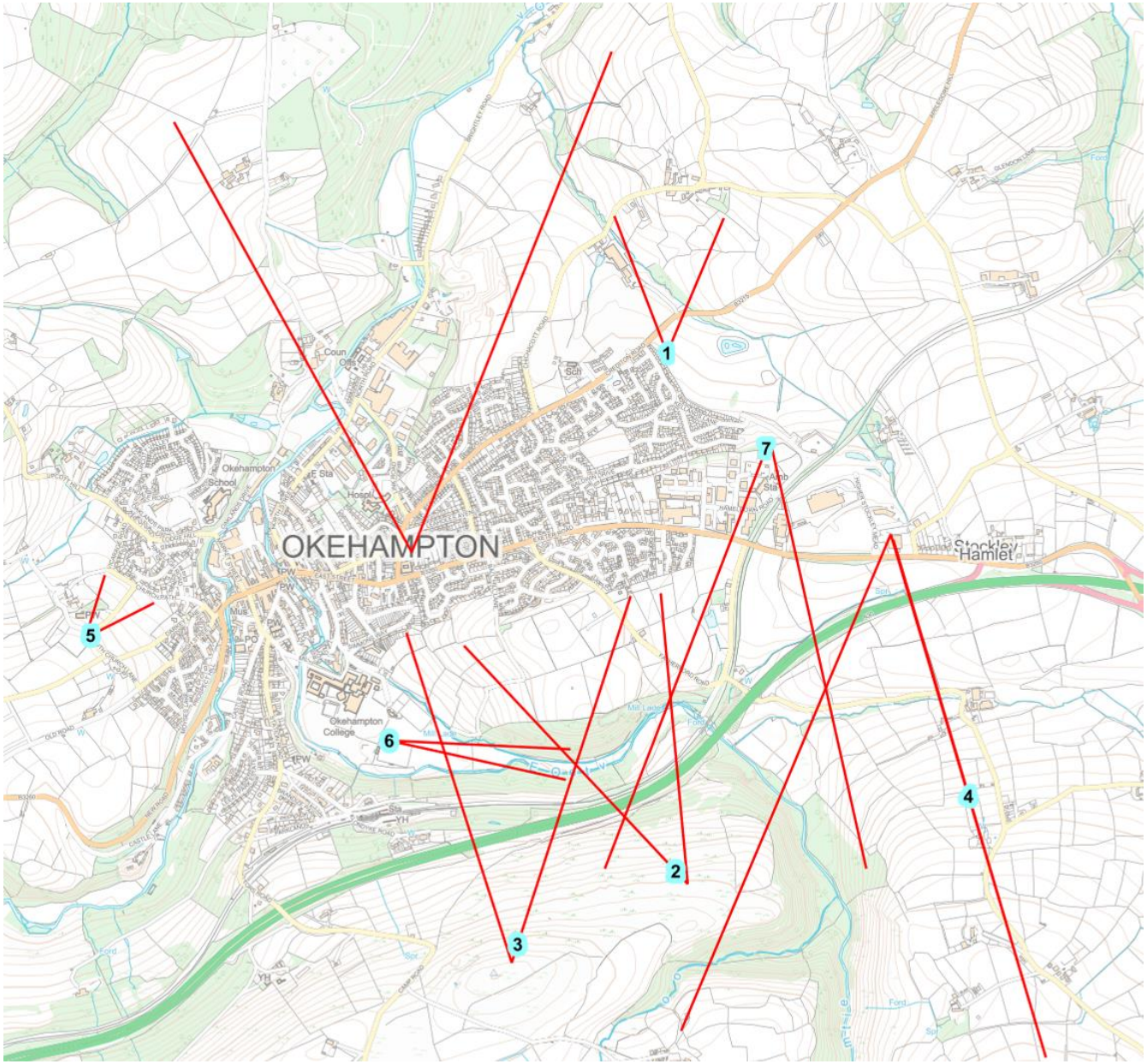
6. Looking across the Simmons Park rugby pitches up the East Okement Valley

7. Across the rooftops of the new developments towards East Hill

8. View towards Tarka Trail and Abbeyford Woods beyond North Road

POLICY PP5: Views and vistas

Subject to other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, proposals will be supported that respect landscape character, setting and important views into and out of the town. The views and vistas are identified in Map 5.



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Map 5: Views and Vistas relating to Policy PP5: Views and Vistas. (Views and vistas numbered as per photographs above)

POLICY PP6: Employment expansion
POLICY PP7: Protecting existing employment land/buildings
POLICY PP8: Small employment/starter units

Justification

We must support business opportunity, where practicable, as a means of regeneration and an opportunity for local people to seek well paid employment in the area they choose to live.

During the Covid pandemic using the home as a working base for at least part of the week was encouraged by Government. Working from home does not usually need planning permission. The key test is whether the premises are still mainly a home, or are they used primarily for business and has there been a 'material change of use'. This can be assessed, for example, by the number of people working at the premises, the nature and number of deliveries and/or storage that takes place.

POLICY PP6: Employment expansion

Business development on land already in employment use in Okehampton will be supported subject to the following criteria:
a) The scale and nature of the proposals would not have significant harmful impacts on the amenities of adjoining activities; and
b) The scale and nature of the proposals would not have unacceptable conflicts with other land-use activities; and
c) The proposal would not have unacceptable impacts on the local road network; and
d) They provide sustainable forms of construction, energy conservation measures and renewable energy where feasible; and
e) Provision is made for parking appropriate to the needs of the development; and
f) They would contribute to the character and vitality of the local area; and
g) They would not have undue detrimental impact on the environment.

Residents and businesses alike are generally keen to promote economic prosperity and encourage the retention of local employment, particularly for young people. The Plan is designed to achieve this by helping existing employers to stay on their sites enabling the Town and Hamlets to continue to provide employment for people living in the locality.

The Neighbourhood Plan takes a holistic approach to those factors which support a thriving community. It is an aspiration that the North Road Industrial Estate can become mixed use, allowing housing to be built on brownfield land, closer to the town centre, whilst encouraging businesses to move to designated employment land on the outskirts. The Neighbourhood Plan does not wish to see a net loss in employment land/buildings. We recognise the retail landscape is changing as internet shopping becomes more prevalent. Empty shops are a blight on the landscape and if they cannot be used as retail, they are best turned into accommodation which helps to keep the town centre populated.

POLICY PP7: Protecting existing employment land/ buildings

With the exception of North Road industrial estate, the Neighbourhood Plan does not support a change of use to existing employment land/buildings resulting in a net loss of employment use.

POLICY PP8: Small employment/starter units

Development proposals for the creation of workshops to support small and medium sized local businesses will be supported in accordance with the development plan and where they have no adverse impact on:
a) The character of the built environment;
b) The character and setting of the natural environment;
c) Residential amenity;
d) Traffic generation;
e) Noise; and
f) Light pollution.
Where proposals are within the defined development area, they will need to demonstrate that they will not make existing parking capacity issues worse and will provide sufficient off-street parking for the anticipated number of employees and visitors using the units in line with up-to-date Local Highway Authority standards.

POLICY PP9: Tourism development

Justification

Tourism can provide many benefits for the community, such as employment and additional spending in the local economy. It also helps to maintain the fabric of many important buildings and provides facilities which can also be used by local residents. However, excessive levels of tourism can harm the environment through erosion, add to traffic congestion and pollution and create competition for resources.

This policy encourages the development of new or the enhancement of existing high-quality sustainable tourism facilities, attractions and accommodation appropriate in scale to their location and accessibility, to provide a balanced mix of economic, social and environmental benefits.

POLICY PP9: Tourism development

Proposals for the development and expansion of tourism - related businesses will be supported providing that:
a) The scale of development is small and proportionate to existing activity and the immediate locality; and
b) The potential impact on neighbouring residential properties is acceptable having regard to potential noise and disturbance; and
c) They do not have a significant adverse impact on the landscape and are mitigated by extensive landscaping and visual screening; and
d) Traffic, access and highway issues are satisfactorily addressed

POLICY PP10: Tourism Strategy

Justification

In the OTHNP we have talked about many things that would encourage tourism, for example, promoting Okehampton as the ‘Gateway to Dartmoor’, improving traffic flow and pedestrianisation of the Town Centre,

the Electric Hub, our community assets, the Conservation area, festivals and community events, and improving walking and cycle access to green spaces.

In recent years, attempts have been made to create a brand for the town, with a logo, but which had limited success. With the new railway opening, there is no better time to devise a comprehensive Tourism Strategy. Promoting Okehampton is vital, but this requires more than branding. As our Neighbourhood Plan is implemented, by working in partnership, we can achieve a Town and Hamlets which thrive long into the future. For example, the business sector can play its part through retail and hospitality. The community sector can consolidate the calendar of events and festivals. The public sector can work to improve infrastructure and development.

There are many appreciative comments, especially now the Dartmoor Line has brought new visitors to Okehampton, for example:

"We came here by train from Kent. What a lovely little town and so many cafes and interesting little shops. We have enjoyed walking on Dartmoor and exploring the Museum."

A visitor to the Museum of Dartmoor Life /Tourist Information

The opening of the railway service has already begun to have an impact on visitor numbers to Okehampton. One local café owner stated:

- He has noticed the increased visitor numbers since the train opened.
- He regularly has more customers from singles to couples and groups of 3/4.
- All day trippers.
- Furthest was Gloucester. Others from Bristol, Weston, Dawlish, Newton Abbott, Teignmouth.
- They come because they have rail cards and regularly use the trains, or they are train enthusiasts.

- They say they are surprised because they didn't realise that Okehampton is such a nice and attractive town.
- They come to see the architecture eg old arcade, granite buildings/houses, history/church.
- They also go to the museum, Castle, and Simmons Park.
- They don't like the climb to and from the station! It will be better once the Parkway station is built.

"It's wonderful that Okehampton is now a 'destination' and not just a place to bypass as you travel down the A30."

Proprietor of Crumbs Cafe in the Victorian arcade

Our tourism development and strategy are open to continuous improvement and constructive feedback is welcomed.

The increased feedback from visitors since the railway opened suggests two priorities:
1. A Tourism Strategy working group, drawing on expertise, skills and enthusiasm from all sectors, could come together to consider how we can grow tourism to the Neighbourhood Plan Area.
2. The need to secure funding for the parkway station.

We know how great a place this is to live and work. Now we want the world to know it too!

POLICY PP10: Tourism strategy

To establish a Tourism Strategy working group, drawing on expertise, skills and enthusiasm from all sectors, that would come together to consider how we can grow tourism to the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Policy PP11: Out of town retail hub

Justification

The parcel of land in the Hamlets, to the east of the Town, designated TTV17 in the PSWJLP, is for employment use. It is located adjacent to the proposed site for the new parkway station. The Neighbourhood Plan believes a retail hub should be developed around the parkway station to include a café and supermarket as this will contribute to employment and business growth.
One of the preferences identified in our community survey was to have an out-of-town supermarket. This would reduce congestion in the Town, and rather than detract from Trade in the Town, would capture the custom of those who already choose to go to Exeter or Crediton rather than going into the Town, due to issues with parking and traffic flow.

It may be a case of encouraging one of the three existing retailers to move, rather than attracting competition. This would be attractive to shoppers who commute daily via the A30 and could be seen as

favourable alternative to traffic and parking challenges in the town centre. It may also be beneficial to attract two or three retailers who are new to Okehampton, providing choice that does not already exist within the Town.

Policy PP11: Out of town retail hub

To create a retail hub around the new parkway station to include a café and supermarket, along with up to five new retailers, where:
a) The new retail units do not have a detrimental impact on traders within the Town; and
b) One of the existing supermarkets can be encouraged to move to the out of town location

POLICY PP12: Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre

Justification

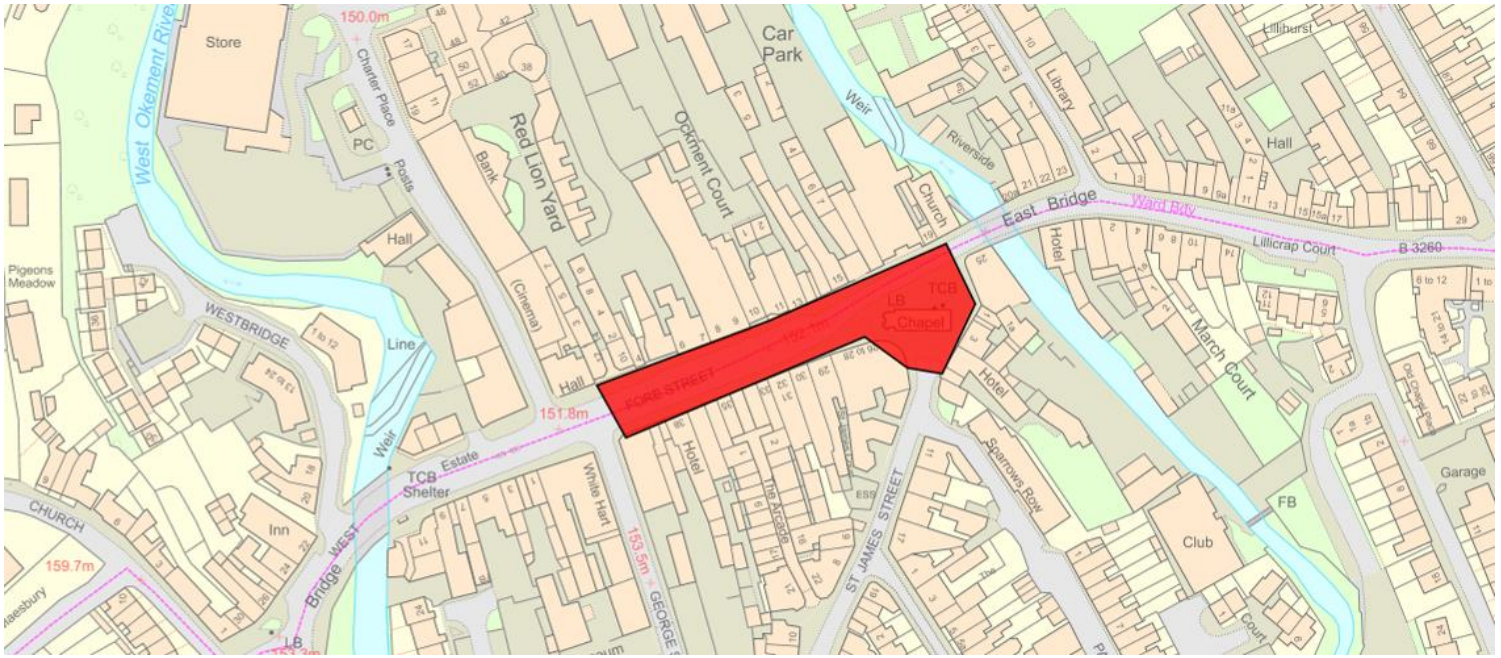
With the re-establishment of passenger rail services to Okehampton, an increase in footfall in the Town is envisaged. It would transform the retail experience of visitors and local residents alike if Fore Street (the very centre of our High Street) were to be pedestrianised, with access only for public transport, taxis and local deliveries. It would also have obvious benefits to local businesses.

Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre allows both the community and traders to be more creative and diverse in their approach as to its use. There is a strong community spirit within the Neighbourhood Plan Area and lots of imaginative ideas that could be developed. Examples include street theatre and dance; temporary art installations; community events and festivals. Already in Okehampton there are events such as the annual Food & Drink Festival; Lantern Festival; Edwardian Evening and Carnival, music festivals, etc., and there could be so much more.

The paved area outside St James Chapel, in the heart of Fore Street could be utilised all year round for events and activities, if there was a reduction in traffic noise and fumes. A new ‘Town Square’ could be created. Similarly, new riverside areas, adjacent to sections of both East and West Okement Rivers, consisting of walks and terraces could also be created.

These developments would contribute to the long-term sustainability of the Town. They would benefit the local economy; create new opportunities for recreation and socialising; encourage tourism by promoting Okehampton as the ‘Gateway to Dartmoor’; improve noise and air quality; and save our mediaeval buildings from further environmental damage.

It is acknowledged that for this policy to be realised, a suitable alternative route needs to be created for traffic. Policy PP19 identifies our proposed route from Crediton Road via Link Road across the river and round via Oaklands to the Hatherleigh Road.



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Map 7: Locations relating to Policy PP11: Pedestrianisation of Town Centre

Policy PP12: Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre

a) Subject to the completion of the Town Centre Access Road, to close off Fore Street to through traffic, with access only for public transport, taxis and local deliveries at certain times of day; and
b) To establish a 'town square' in the vicinity of St James' Chapel; and
c) To develop access to sections for seating, terraces and walks to sections of the East and West Okement rivers; and
d) To encourage creative community and business opportunities in the pedestrianised area

POLICY PP13: Conservation Area

Justification

If residents spend more time in the Town Centre for leisure and recreation, and with an increase in visitors and tourism, it is important to safeguard and enhance the Conservation Area.

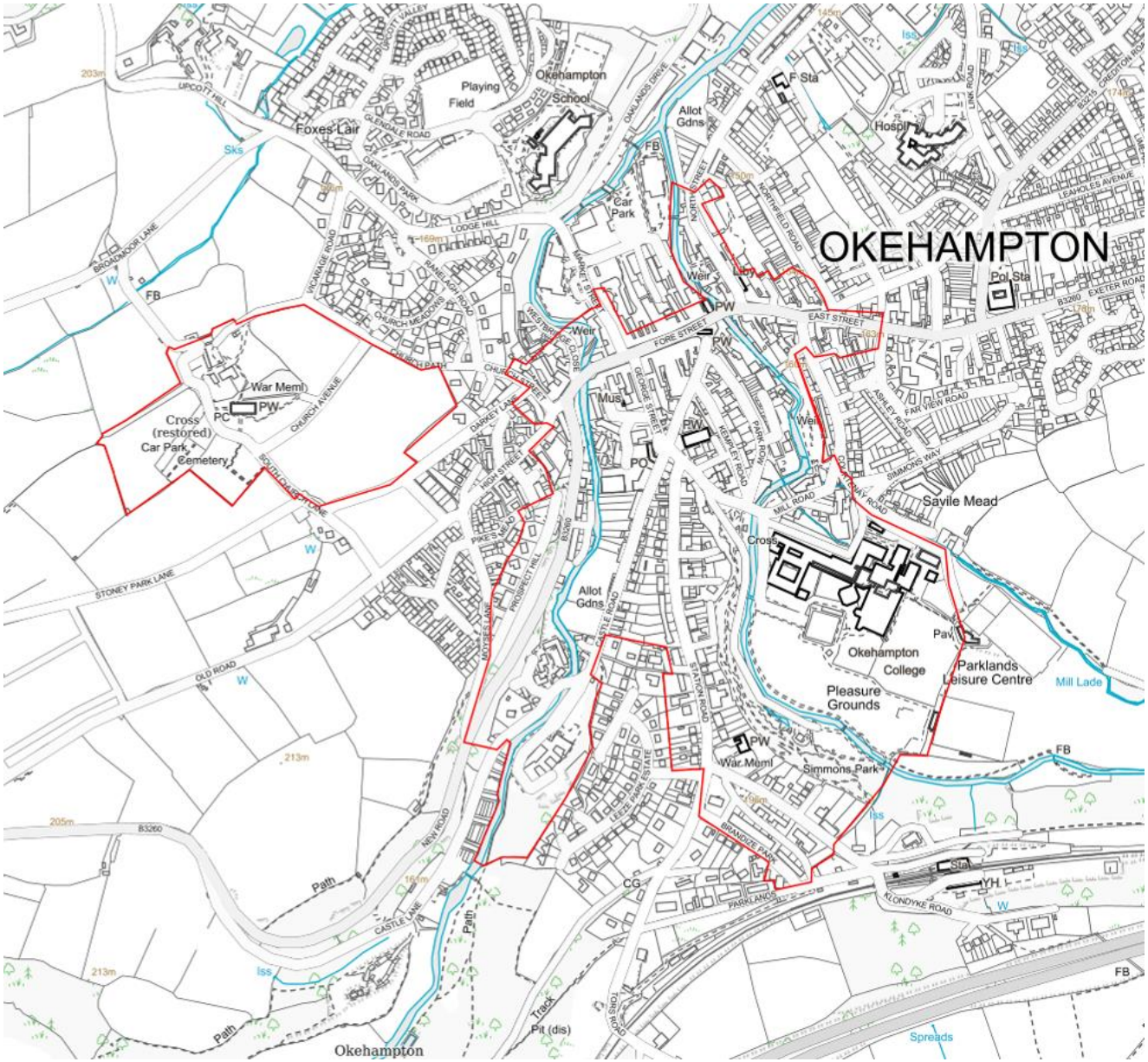
The appearance and architectural integrity of the Town Centre is important, because along with the Victorian Arcade, our buildings have the power to attract residents and tourists alike.

In the summer, hanging baskets adorn our Town Centre buildings, and at Christmas, the decorative lights are beautiful, but we also need to address the all-year-round quality and character of the buildings themselves.

Whilst national policies and local planning processes exist to safeguard the Conservation Area, local concern has encouraged a policy to monitor the Conservation Area more closely. We have not included a Neighbourhood Plan policy concerning designated and non-designated buildings of historic or archaeological interest in the Town or Hamlets, as listed in Appendix 2, also safeguarded by national policy.

POLICY PP13: Conservation Area

a) To preserve and protect the historic centre of the town within the Conservation Area; and
b) To monitor wherever possible that development within the Conservation Area is in accordance with national policy and local processes.



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Map 8: Okehampton Conservation Area (Map taken from the WDBC website relating to POLICY PP12: Conservation Area

POLICY PP14: Community facilities and community ‘right to bid’

Justification

The Neighbourhood Plan aims to safeguard local facilities for present and future generations. Their retention and prosperity are important to local well-being.

Where buildings and land currently owned by public or voluntary sector organisations to provide services to the community are to be sold or developed, the Neighbourhood Plan supports local community organisations or charities exercising the ‘Community Right to Bid’.

Public sector owned buildings are listed as follows:

- Leisure Centre
- Library
- Police Station
- Community Hospital
- Ambulance Station
- Fire Station
- Market Street Toilets
- Fairplace Toilets
- Town Hall
- Charter Hall
- Train station
- Youth Centre

Charity or voluntary sector owned buildings:

- All Saints Parish Hall
- Table Tennis Centre
- Museum of Dartmoor Life
- Ockment Centre

- Pavilion in the Park
- Meldon Village Hall

Some land and associated buildings are owned by public sector or charities and are used for sport and recreation. Where no suitable alternative site can be found, these facilities should not be used as development land.

The facilities are as follows:
- Football club
- Rugby Club
- Skate Park
- Golf Club and course
- Allotments (Fatherford)
- Community Garden
- Allotments (Castle Road)
- Allotments (North Street)
- Simmons Park
- The cricket field

Other buildings or structures are under private or heritage ownership but are of historic value to the local community, adding to the character of the Town and Hamlets, and contributing to tourism. Those assets which are not protected by national planning policy or safeguarded by the existing Conservation area should be protected from inappropriate development and maintained for the benefit of the local community where possible.

They are as follows:
- Okehampton Castle
- Roman Archaeology
- Meldon Viaduct
- Red Lion Yard
- Victorian Arcade
- Cinema
- Water wheel on The Mill, Mill Road
- The Old Mill chimney
- The Leets

Natural environments and green spaces have been incorporated in Policy PP4: Green Infrastructure. Heritage assets in the Town and Hamlets which are listed already receive protections through national planning policy. Sites of archaeological interest must be safeguarded from inappropriate development or destruction and where possible, should be incorporated into a development so that they are accessible to the public and conserved.

POLICY PP14: Community facilities and 'community right to bid'

Where buildings and land currently owned by public or voluntary sector organisations to provide services to the community are to be sold or developed, the Neighbourhood Plan supports local community organisations or charities exercising the 'Community Right to Bid' option on the following amenities:

a) Public sector owned buildings are listed as follows:

- **Leisure Centre**
- **Library**
- **Police Station**
- **Community Hospital**
- **Ambulance Station**
- **Fire Station**
- **Market Street Toilets**
- **Fairplace Toilets**
- **Town Hall**
- **Charter Hall**
- **Train station**
- **Youth Centre**

b) Charity or voluntary sector owned buildings:

- **All Saints Parish Hall**
- **Table Tennis Centre**
- **Museum of Dartmoor Life**
- **Ockment Centre**
- **Pavilion in the Park**
- **Meldon Village Hall**

POLICY PP14: Community use and 'community right to bid' (continued)

c) Land and associated buildings used for sport and recreation

- **Football club**
- **Rugby Club**
- **Skate Park**
- **Golf Club and course**
- **Allotments (Fatherford)**
- **Community Garden**
- **Allotments (Castle Road)**
- **Allotments (North Street)**
- **Simmons Park**
- **The cricket field**

POLICY PP15: Community centre in the new build developments

Justification

The Neighbourhood Plan community survey identified the need and desire for a community hall/centre amongst the new build developments to the east of the Town. With some of the housing situated at least a mile from existing facilities in the Town, a community facility in the Hamlets, where most of the new builds identified in the PSWJLP are located would help reduce traffic into the town centre contributing to pollution and jams and taking up parking spaces.

POLICY PP15: Community centre in the new build developments

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the building of a community hall/centre in close proximity to the newbuild developments identified in the PSWJLP or future housing development to the east of the Town.

POLICY PP16: Car parking capacity

Justification

The impact of traffic and parking upon town life is consistently raised as a community concern. It was the number one priority in our community survey.

Existing car parks identified on the map are important assets to the local community and essential to the functionality and economic vitality of Okehampton town.

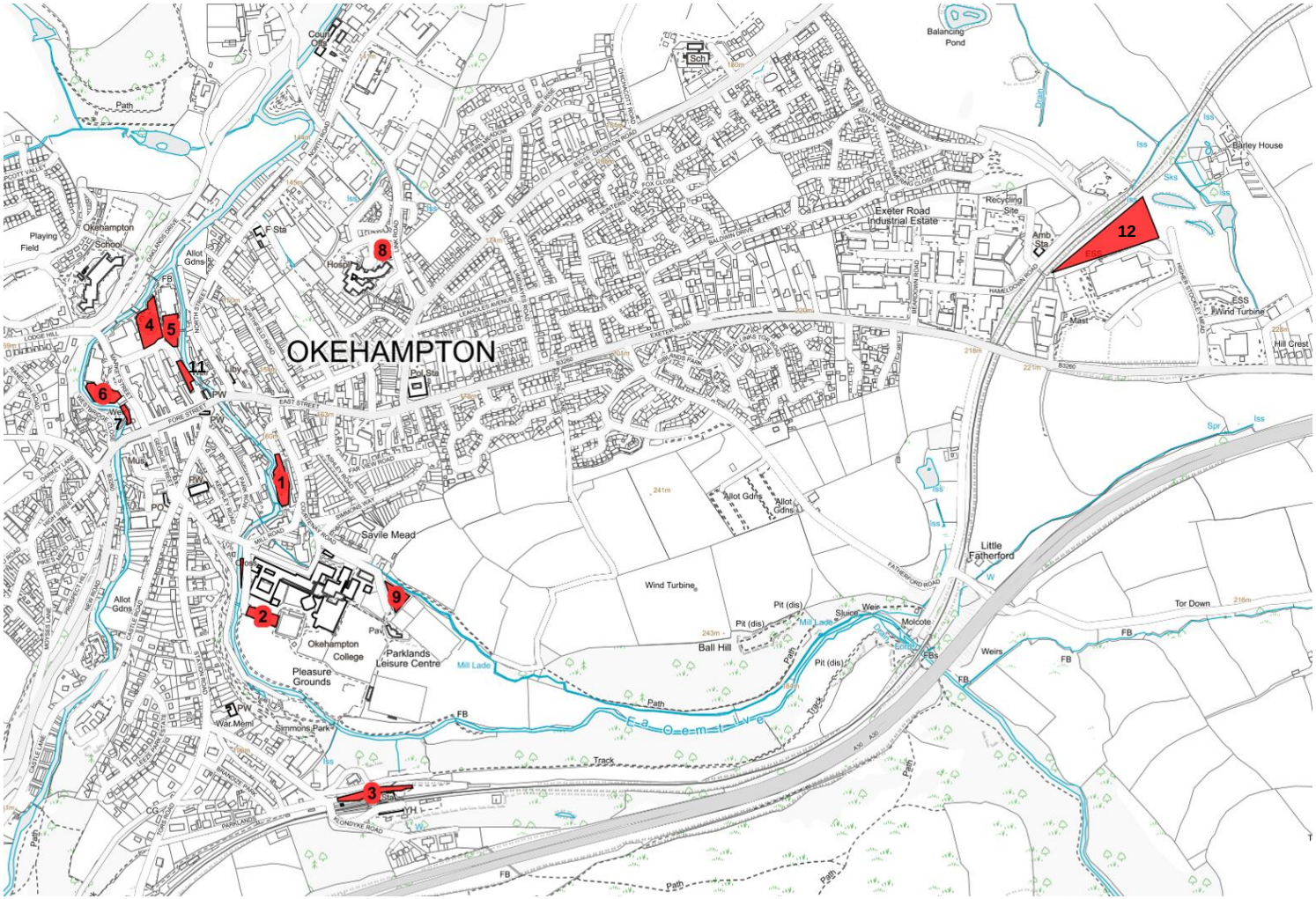
The provision of parking spaces in the centre of town, especially at the beginning and end of the school day, but also during peak visitor periods, is not sufficient to meet need. Many of the community facilities in the Town lack bespoke parking. With the return to passenger rail services, a further challenge is posed concerning commuter parking. It is vital for the new parkway station to be built as soon as possible.

Currently, residential streets, which already lack sufficient parking for residents, are being used as overflow car parks.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to improve the quality of parking provision in town centres and recognises the particular needs of rural areas. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect and increase current parking capacity in the Town, whilst also providing additional capacity with the parkway station.

POLICY PP16: Car parking capacity

There should be no significant loss in car parking spaces available to support the town's shopping and tourism roles with particular recognition being applied to the importance of the existing car parks to tourism, trade and use of community facilities.



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1. Mill Road	2. Simmons Park	3. Station	4. Waitrose
5. Lidl	6. Co-op	7. Rosemery	8. Hospital
9. Pavilion	10. Parkway	11. Acorns	12. Parkway

Map 9: Car parking capacity

POLICY PP17: Parking in residential development

Justification

Parking provision in the new build housing developments to the east of the Town is inadequate to meet need.

With the lack of local employment opportunities, it is likely that each of the adults, normally residing in the two, three and four-bedroom properties, require their own car, to commute to and from work or to combine work with using local services in the Town.

Added to the necessary capacity for residential parking, is an equal need for visitor parking. There is simply not enough provided by the developer, and where there are visitor spaces, these are used as overspill by residents.

When cars are parked on the road, speeding drivers have no reaction time if a child or pet runs out from between the parked vehicles. On street parking also poses a hazard for emergency vehicles, especially where cars are parked on both sides of the road.

POLICY PP17: Parking in residential development

New residential development should provide adequate off-road parking for residents and visitors with roads being of sufficient width and an appropriate layout to ensure easy two- way vehicular access, without compromising the safety of pedestrians or cyclists.
Proposals are encouraged to exceed Local Highway Authority standards where viable:
a) to help ensure that existing parking problems in the Town and Hamlets are not made worse;
b) to provide the opportunity to maintain good and safe accessibility on local roads;
c) to take realistic account of vehicle ownership (and use of commercial / business vehicles) per household in the Town and Hamlets; and,
d) to ensure that their layout provides easy access for residents and their visitors, to service vehicles (for example refuse vehicles) and to emergency service vehicles.

It is also inconvenient and dangerous, for the freehold and leasehold contracts to prohibit small business vehicles from the estates. Owners proceed to park on the access roads into the development.

4.214 DEV12.10 of the PSWJLP states that the planning authority will ensure developments are adequately and appropriately serviced in terms of parking facilities, and that developments should be designed to achieve the required on-site parking levels as set out in planning guidance.

The OTHNP wants to anticipate any further parking issues in future housing developments by highlighting the guidance and effective practical use of it.

POLICY PP18: Safe access to and within the Town and Hamlets

Justification

The PSWDJLP outlines a number of strategic measures and infrastructure projects that will be provided to support main towns including Okehampton. Policy TTV3 refers to improvements to rail infrastructure and a road linking Crediton Road to Exeter Road. It is vital, for the safety and quality of life of residents, that these routes are properly managed transport corridors, not simply roads through housing developments.

POLICY PP18: Safe access to and within the Town and Hamlets

Improvements to accessibility within and to the Town and Hamlets will be supported where:
a) There is due consideration to the safety of pedestrians;
b) These routes are properly managed transport corridors; and
c) Where due attention is paid to any impact on traffic flow along adjoining roads.

POLICY PP19: Town Centre Access Road

Justification

As far back as 2010, Okehampton was designated as needing an inner ring road to alleviate the single through road and the central crossroads, which become totally clogged with traffic trying to exit from the Market Street junction, especially at school times and summer weekends. Below is a page from the West Devon Infrastructure Delivery Plan from 2015.

Table 3: Critical Infrastructure - Okehampton

Infrastructure Item	What is required?	On-site provision / financial contributions and funding sources	Lead delivery organisation	Additional comments
Link road between Exeter Road and Crediton Road	In addition to the remainder of the link road being delivered, the following is required: • Provision of a roundabout access on Crediton Road • Provision of a right hand turn lane on Exeter Road into Exeter Road Industrial Estate	Financial contributions and/or on-site provision Indicative cost at time of writing is £2.2m. Engineers have been asked to review cost estimate, detailed site investigations are required before a firm cost can be provided. Funding sources: • Developer contributions	Developer DCC	The strategic development to the east of the town is located between Exeter Road and Crediton Road. It will be important that traffic from the development does not add to congestion at key junctions in the town, especially if the journey is not to the town centre. Although the delivery of road is needed alongside the development, DCC recognise the importance of this road to the local community. It would be delivered through development south of Crediton Road, however DCC will look to proactively deliver the road in advance of that, subject to funding, consents and access to land.
Town centre access road	As a result of further development in the town, a road is required to the town centre which provides an alternative to Fore Street and Market Street	Financial contributions Funding sources: • Developer contributions Costs are estimated at around £8m	DCC	It is important to ensure that new development does not have an adverse impact on the town centre environment or its vitality. It is expected that this road will come forward towards the end of the plan period as funding is required from the new development to support the delivery. The scheme would include parallel enhancements to the town centre to realise the benefits from the road.

15 | West Devon Infrastructure Delivery Plan –February 2015

The proposed Town Centre Access Road would run from the land north of Waitrose (Oaklands Drive), along the side of the river and exit at Brayhams Terrace/ North Road by the Link Road, in order to join the

new link road through the new builds between Crediton Road and Exeter Road. This would give rise to easy access both to North Devon and the A30.

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Map 10: Proposed route of Town Centre Access Road

DCC have consistently said the Town Centre Access Road is too expensive. But expensive for whom? Currently, it is very expensive for lost business within the town. It is expensive for pedestrians and residents who suffer traffic pollution levels that have been deemed dangerously high. We need to find a way of funding the Town Centre Access Road.

Due to funding constraints, it is acknowledged that a Town Centre Access Road may not be completed within the lifetime of this plan, but the policy demonstrates a commitment to lobby for funding and to ensure the road, as originally envisaged, is prioritised.

POLICY PP19: Town Centre Access Road

a) To improve traffic flow into and through the Town by ensuring a Town Centre Access Road is built, as identified on Map 7.
b) To lobby for funding and to ensure the road, as originally envisaged, is prioritised.

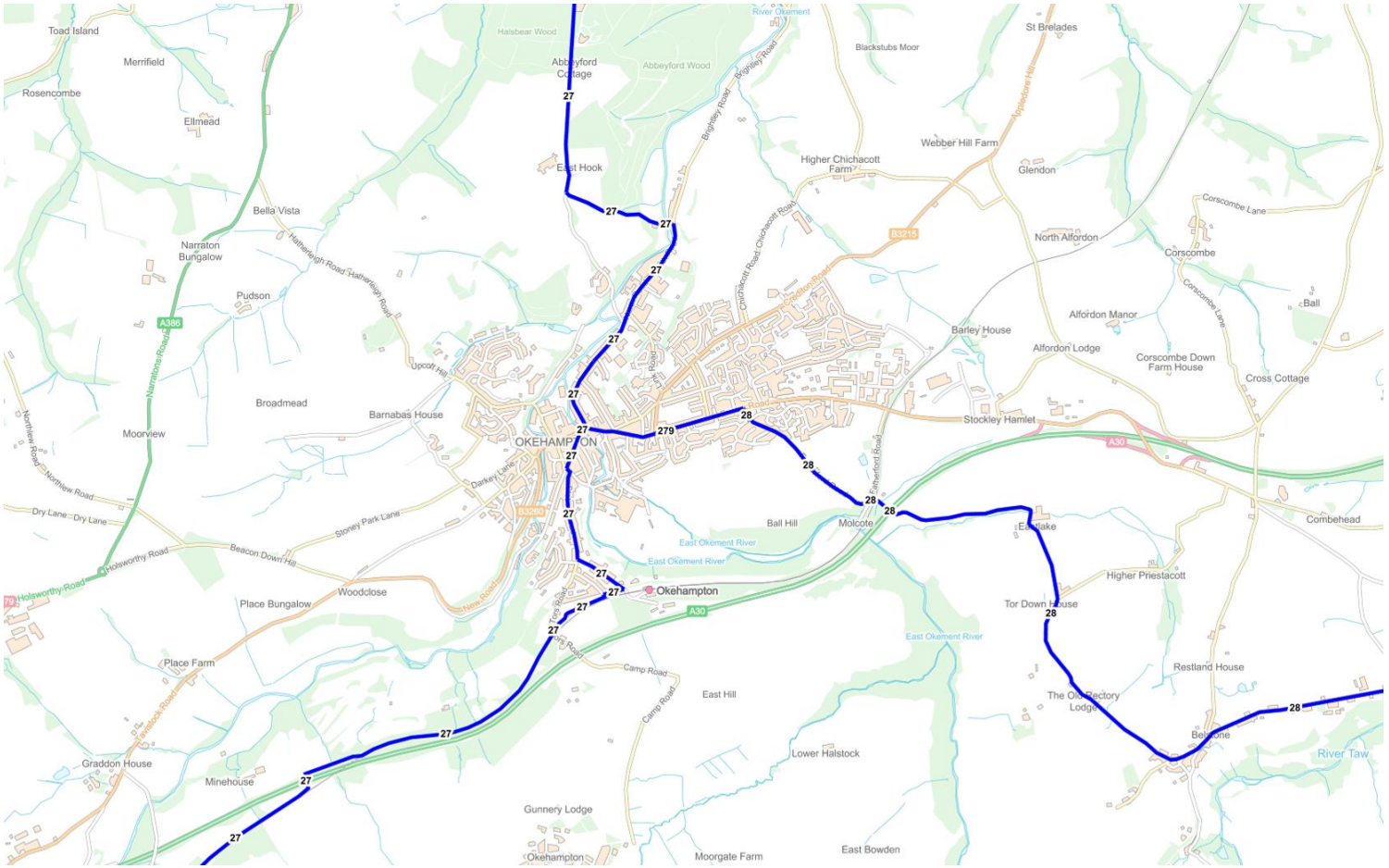
POLICY PP20: Cycle routes

Justification

The map below shows how Okehampton is linked to various cycle networks. It is important, for both the environment and our health, to provide opportunities and encourage more sustainable modes of transport for both resident and visitor alike. This includes maintaining and enhancing the cycle networks.

POLICY PP20: Cycle routes

All new development proposals should take every available opportunity to provide and enhance safe cycling routes within the town. Where appropriate developments will also be expected to make contributions towards the provision of cycle and pedestrian links to the Hamlets and the National Cycling Network.



Map 8: Cycle routes

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Sustrans have recently submitted a proposal to carry out a feasibility study for a traffic free multi-user path, approximately 8 km, between Okehampton and South Zeal. The National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 28 already connects these two towns, although the route is entirely on road, following the lanes.

It would benefit pedestrians and cyclists if new estates built by separate developers were linked by joint pedestrian and cycle paths to allow access. It is not possible to influence existing approved plans but it would be good to see new developments considering alternatives to car use.

POLICY PP21: Community Energy
POLICY PP22: Addressing fuel poverty

Justification

Both Town and Hamlets Councils have signed up to the Devon Climate Change Strategy and West Devon Borough Council Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. There is also a local Climate Action Group.

National planning policy stresses the need for plans to provide a positive strategy for renewable energy, and encourages plans to identify suitable areas for renewable energy.

'It's clear that responding to climate change will require a total transformation of how we supply and use energy, and a major increase in the number of renewable energy developments hosted in local communities.'

NPPF paragraphs 151 & 152

Whilst improving traffic flow, and pedestrianisation of the Town Centre, have clear environmental benefits, our vision goes further. We would like to embark on a whole range of new initiatives to combat the use of fossil fuels and mitigate climate change.

We would like to: provide Electric Car/bike/Mobility scooter charging points across the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Currently there is an EV bike charging point at the Youth hostel, and a current planning application for developing the Old Mill Site includes EV charging points. We would like to see more solar power installations on buildings and to revitalise the old leets that were built in the 18th and 19th centuries for water-power in the Town mills, so they once again provide hydro power and with mini turbines to power Town Centre buildings beside the rivers. Finally, through addressing good links with public transport into and the Town and Hamlets, we want to encourage more people to use public transport to and from the town, especially now the passenger rail service is operational again. These ideas are explored further under Environmental Sustainability.

Planning for local renewable energy has many benefits. There is opportunity for local ownership, with revenue being re-invested in the local community. There is also potential for reduced bills, with new mechanisms that allow reduced tariffs in a locality. We become less reliant on finite fossil fuel reserves. By decarbonising our energy supply, we mitigate climate change. A local energy market is fairer and more resilient, balancing local supply with local demand.

We live in an area that has good potential for renewable energy eg. the streams and rivers that used to have mills on them, areas with a good wind resource, and fields suitable for solar farms. Local farmers could benefit from an anaerobic digester. There are two leets and two rivers in the Town that used to supply water-power to mills and other premises. Okehampton was one of the first towns in England to have electric streetlights, so we have a history of being at the forefront of new technology!

The NPPF states that local planning authorities should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy (NPPF paragraph 152). Okehampton Town Council has already invested in the Tamar Energy Community and had our own CORES (Community of Okehampton Renewable Energy Society) looking at the provision of centrally supplied solar panels on the roofs of Town Centre buildings. The initiative could be regenerated now that such methods of sustainable energy are cheaper to install and more durable.

POLICY PP21: Community Energy

Proposals for individual and community scale energy from micro hydro-electricity, solar photovoltaic panels, local biomass facilities, anaerobic digestions and wood fuel products will be supported subject to the following criteria:
a) the siting and scale of the proposed development is appropriate to its setting and position in the wider landscape; and
b) the proposed development does not create an unacceptable impact on the amenities of local residents; and
c) the proposed development does not have an unacceptable impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance.

POLICY PP22: Addressing fuel poverty

To help all residents access assistance towards mitigating fuel poverty and ensuring maximum insulation and encouraging carbon reduction in energy provision.

POLICY PP23: Greener transport

Justification

Whilst recognising that car usage is vital in rural areas, public transport like buses and trains will help to reduce our carbon emissions. Electric car charging points are being installed in the town centre and already exist on at least one of the Service Stations in the Hamlets. There are also e-bike-charging points at the youth hostel. We aim to have electric car and e-bike charging points accessible for all who need them, especially at transport hubs and car parks. Increased provision of cycle paths and footpaths connecting the new areas to the town centre and beyond into the villages are already proposed.

There is an urgent need to prioritise construction of the Parkway Station at Stockley to reduce commuter traffic into Exeter.

POLICY PP23: Greener Transport

1) Alternative transport from outer areas into the centre is to be encouraged.
2) More footpaths and cycleways expanding the current network to be planned.
3) Charging points for electric (and other forms like hydrogen) fuelled cars to be located for easy access by all residents and visitors.
4) Railway access from Town and Hamlets to encourage student, commuter and visitor traffic both into and out of the locality.

Conclusion - working together to achieve our vision

Throughout the OTHNP reference has been made to the strength of community spirit in the Town and Hamlets, along with some of the many community organisations who enable Okehampton to be a place where people enjoy living, working, and increasingly, also visiting. Some of these are mentioned in Appendix 3.

Volunteers support tourism, maintain and conserve the green infrastructure, provide community services and campaign for anything which threatens to impact adversely on the life of Okehampton.

We recognise the ambition of some of our policies, and we are not ignorant of the challenges ahead. We know that if we are to achieve our vision for a thriving Town and Hamlets we need to work together.

Our hope is that through the processes of making our Neighbourhood Plan, individuals and organisations or agencies will become more aware of what each is already doing. We want to see joined up thinking, so that infrastructure precedes development. We want to see united action, so that organisations work act together and not in silos.

This Neighbourhood Plan is the fruit of Town and Hamlets Councils working with each other and with the local community. A thriving community depends on public bodies coming together and working with businesses and residents.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed photos. Images have been included to represent the Town and Hamlets in general and do not necessarily illustrate the adjacent text.

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We would like to express our thanks to the many individuals who have been involved in the lengthy process of producing our neighbourhood plan.

Monitoring and review

While there is no statutory requirement for the impact of this Plan and its policies to be monitored, the Town and Hamlets Councils will endeavour to periodically monitor the impact of policies on change in the Neighbourhood Plan Area by considering the policies' effectiveness in the planning application decision-making process. The Town and Hamlets Councils will do this by referring to this Plan when reviewing planning applications. The Town and Hamlets Councils will endeavour to keep a record of the application, any applicable policies, the comments from the Town and Hamlets Council and the eventual outcome of the application.

A full or partial review of this Plan is likely to be considered necessary during its lifetime unless triggered by changes to legislation, changes to National or Borough planning policies or significant planning issues being raised by the local community which cannot be dealt with effectively by a combination of National, District and/or existing Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Appendix One

Evidence Base

Our Neighbourhood Plan is based on three areas of evidence:

- Key: statutory planning documents
- Community consultation carried out by the OTHNP Steering Group
- Other internet-based documents, reports, data and information

Key statutory planning documents

Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (PSWDJLP)
https://westdevon.gov.uk/jointlocalplan

Dartmoor Local Plan 2018-2036 (Regulation 19 submitted draft)
https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/96721/Local-plan-reg19-for-web-CC2019.pdf

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
https://gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

Community consultation carried out by the OTHNP Steering Group

The Community Survey in July/August 2016

Survey results summary (residents and business surveys)
Data analysis of residents' responses

The Business Survey in July/August 2016

Land use consultation Autumn 2017 (including with young people)

Presentation of issues
Data analysis of responses
Questionnaire

Survey of local estate agents March 2021 (rented housing)

Half day consultation event
Notes from action planning (post-its, scribbles etc.)

Focus group - Community facilities in the new housing
Notes

Focus group - Town Centre development
Notes

Focus group - Traffic and Transport
Notes

Other internet-based documents, reports, data and information

The West Devon Borough Council (WDBC) website https://westdevon.gov.uk/ gives access to a range of relevant information:

Evidence Base for the Joint Local Plan

PSWDJLP 2014-2034 Authorities Monitoring Report 25 February 2021

Plymouth, South Hams & West Devon Local Planning Authorities' 2020, 5 Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement December 2020

The PSWDJLP Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Adopted in July 2020

West Devon Borough Council East of Okehampton Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted January 2014)

WDBC Core Strategy (Adopted plan for the Borough to 2026)

Hamlets and Town map identification PDF (OS with superimposed NP area)

Map of Conservation Area

West Devon Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2015

Land allocated to the east of the town (SP22) for employment and residential development

Land Availability Assessments

The Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment

Other sources:

Okehampton Town Centre Access Road: Traffic analysis and issues report 2010

DCC joint strategic needs assessment 2018

Devon County Council Transport Plan 2017

Okehampton Housing Needs Assessment (AECOM 2017)

DARE RCEF FEASIBILITY 2016 Okehampton application for Hydropower

Listed buildings https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/

Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012)
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/pdfs/uksi_20120637_en.pdf

*PDF documents or links to websites can be found on our website
www.okehamptonneighbourhoodplan.com

Appendix Two

Heritage sites and listed buildings

Listed Buildings in Okehampton

a) 1 and 3, St James Street
b) 1 and 3, West Street
c) 11 and 13, East Street
d) 13, Fore Street
e) 14, Fore Street
f) 26-38, Station Road
g) 37, North Street
h) 5, West Street
i) Beach Court Church House
j) Brock's Almshouses
k) Chalet Treloar
l) Chapel of St James
m) Chimney About 50 Metres West North West of Town Mill
n) All Saints Church
o) Churchyard Cross Immediately West of All Saints Church
p) Darley House Including Front Garden Area Railings and Piers
q) Footbridge About 30 Metres West of Chimney at Town Mill
r) Former Congregational Church
s) K6 Telephone Kiosk Outside St James's Church, Fore Street
t) Lloyds Bank
u) Lower Upcott and Oaklands
v) South Lodge Including Garden Area Railings to South West
w) Town Hall
x) Town Mill
y) White Hart Hotel
z) Simmons Park

All of the above are Grade II listed, with the exception of the Town Hall, All Saints Church, the Chapel of St James and Oaklands which are Grade II* listed.

Listed Buildings in Okehampton Hamlets

a) Barn Approximately 10 Metres to East of Lower Chichacott
b) Barn Immediately to East of Lower Chichacott Cottage
c) Brightley Bridge
d) Brightley Farmhouse
e) East Bowden higher Halstock
f) Fice's Well and Cross
g) Former Chapel Approximately 10 Metres South of Brightley Farmhouse
h) Higher Chichacott Farmhouse
i) Hilltown Farmhouse
j) Knowle Bridge
k) Lower Chichacott
l) Lower Chichacott Cottage
m) Lower Halstock Cottage Approximately 170 Metres to North North East of Lower Halstock Farmhouse
n) Okehampton Camp: Building 100 (formerly Officers' Stables No.1)
o) Okehampton Camp: Building 116 (formerly Guard Room)
p) Okehampton Camp: Building 121 (formerly shell magazine)
q) Okehampton Camp: Building 150 (formerly hospital staff accommodation block) and Building 151
r) Okehampton Camp: Building 69 (formerly Warrant Officers' and Staff Sergeants' Quarters)
s) Okehampton Camp: Building 82 (formerly Harness Room 1)
t) Okehampton Camp: Building 85 (formerly Dining Room 2)
u) Okehampton Camp: Building 94 (formerly Officers' Quarters)
v) Okehampton Camp: Building 99 (formerly Officers' Stables No.2)
w) Okehampton Camp: Revetment walls and steps to the South-Western Camping Ground
x) Okehampton Castle
y) Priory Cottage
z) Higher Croft Farmhouse

*All of the above are Grade II listed, with the exception of Okehampton Castle, which is Grade I listed.

Scheduled Monuments within Okehampton Hamlets include:

- Meldon Viaduct
- Four deserted medieval sites near Okehampton Camp
- Medieval homesteads near Meldon Quarry
- Roman Fort, Fortlet and associated enclosures
- Okehampton Artillery Range has: -
    - Experimental Parapets and Redoubt
    - Linear and Curved Target Railways on F Range
    - Observation Post 16 and flanking target butts
    - Observation Post 6 and Incline Target Carrier Railway
    - Observation Post 7
- There are numerous Cairns including
    - Longstone Hill, 18 Cairns a length bank and a recumbent stone
    - Ring Cairn SE of Cullever Steps
    - Round Cairn NW of Yes Tor summit
    - Round Cairn NNW of East Okement Farm
    - Round Cairn and cist on Blackdown
    - Round Cairn on Black Down SW of Anthony's Stile
    - Tor Cairn on High Willhays summit
    - Tor Cairn N of High Willhays summit
    - Circular Cairns, Ring Cairn and Ovoid Cairn within a cairn field on Homerton Hill
    - Platform Cairn NW of Fordsland Ledge
- A Promontory Fort 270m west of the confluence of the East Okement River and Moor Brook.
- Guide Post at Place Cross
- Wayside Cross in the garden hedge of Southcott Cottage at Southcott Cross

Listed Properties with Okehampton Hamlets

Other sites of historical or archaeological interest

Roman excavations on Romansfield Estate
Other crosses, memorials, water wheels, stone bridges etc.

Appendix Three

Key past or present community projects

This appendix provides information to support future community involvement by highlighting those community projects which have already benefited from community involvement. Some of the policies in the neighbourhood plan will build on work already undertaken.

Community Hospital

Okehampton Community Hospital serves a diverse and geographically wide-spread population, with the catchment area stretching well beyond our Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Okehampton has had the benefit of a Community Hospital for about 200 years. The current hospital was built in 2004 and had a state-of-the-art Maternity Unit with a Birthing Pool, a Physiotherapy Department, X Ray Unit, a Dialysis Unit, Podiatry and 40 odd clinics run from the RD&E in Exeter.

Okehampton Community Hospital lost all their community beds, over 30 of them had been used for the recuperating, the frail and dying.

More recently the Maternity unit was also closed with all patients transferred to RD&E in Exeter. In 2016 the Clinical Commissioning Group stated that the population of Okehampton was insufficient to maintain the hospital and second GP surgery despite extensive building of new housing at six locations to the east of the town which together with houses under construction in the wider catchment area (within 15 miles of the town) will add in the region of 1,000 new homes.
The second GP surgery was therefore closed leaving around fifteen thousand people now registered at the nearby Medical Centre, which also took over Emergency provision which is currently only available within weekly working hours.

Okehampton Community Hospital serves the town, the hamlets, and the villages in the wider catchment area which is estimated to grow to over 42,000 people within the next five years.

It is also worth noting that the demographic of the Okehampton catchment area varies from the average Devon County in that:

- There is a higher than average percentage of over 65s.
- It is classified as an economically deprived area.
- Public transport is very poor or absent in most of the village areas.
- Approximately 25% of the local population do not own a car.
- Apart from the A30 all roads are single carriageway and B roads can be single track with passing places.
- All roads suffer from slow moving agricultural vehicles and summer tourist traffic.
- Flooding affects many areas and in winter, only the main roads are cleared of snow.

Travelling to the hospitals where local patients are now sent, Tiverton, Sidmouth, Exmouth is impossible without a car.

We need our hospital to be fully operational once again to meet the needs of the people living in the town and wider rural areas.

Community centre in the new build developments

When new housing developments are planned, the Planning Authority and the developer negotiate a Section 106 agreement. This releases funding to mitigate the impact of new housing on the local community. The agreements surrounding housing developments to the east of Okehampton contributed to the new school and the planned link road between Crediton Road and Exeter Road. Unfortunately, no provision was made for community facilities, and geographically, this housing is furthest from the town centre, with as yet, no sense of community focus. Whilst recognising that where possible we should not detract from the need to integrate into the life of the town, community facilities within easy walking distance are required. A small shop is planned for, on the land north of Crediton Road.

The PSWDJLP recognises the facilities which would enhance the life of residents who would be living in the developments:

1. Open space to protect the setting of the Roman Fort and Roman Road and to provide appropriate, useable open space for the surrounding neighbourhoods.
2. Neighbourhood centre providing a focus to the residential communities in the east of Okehampton. Appropriate uses may include a small shop, pub and community centre.

3. Potential railway station.
It is disappointing that only one of the three, the Railway Station, is even on the table for discussion.

The new school has a ‘community room’ and a separate hall, with kitchen facilities, but due to limited access, the provision does not meet the wider needs of the community, with the expectation that a community centre would be available every day, including evenings and weekends, with use of the kitchen.

After our initial community survey identified the need for community facilities in the new housing developments, a focus group explored the issue further with local residents, considering:
a) What would help to build community in the east end of Okehampton?
b) What facilities/community resources would be helpful in the east end (whilst balancing the need for integration with the whole of Okehampton and the parking and traffic issues associated with driving down into town)?
c) What do we imagine the east end of Okehampton might look like in 20 years’ time?
The group decided to explore whether a community owned/run facility was feasible.

A residents’ group was established on Meldon Fields, organising some community events and campaigning for small benefits like a noticeboard. The main focus has been a social-media-based forum, since without community facilities, it is hard to establish a sense of community. Similarly, residents have formed an embryonic group in Romansfield.

Our community survey showed that more than half the residents who responded did not feel that the following facilities were available close by:

- Supermarkets
- Local independent shops
- Pub
- Doctor’s surgery
- Community Hall
- All weather sports provision

Given that the housing developments in the Hamlets, to the east end of the settlement, are over a mile from existing facilities in the town, there is scope for establishing these facilities at the east end of the settlement.

Community Energy

In 2016, a consultancy, Devon Association of Renewable Energy (DARE), presented the Town Council with a report on their recent feasibility study in renewable energy for Okehampton. They noted that six sites had been identified for solar PV and further sites had been listed for small-scale hydro potential. As a result of this, a community joint working group was set up and CORES (Community of Okehampton Renewable Energy Society) was formed.

The newly formed CORES commissioned its first solar panel installation on a roof on the Exeter Road Industrial Estate. For the first time in a hundred years, Okehampton was generating its own electricity again. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Okehampton was generating hydroelectricity from the rivers. Unfortunately, the hoped-for dividends did not materialize and only two installations were built.

Sometimes the timing is wrong or external factors cannot be controlled. Five years later, and the issue is even more pressing. With both councils declaring a climate emergency and new national mechanisms in place, it is time to return to the ambitions of CORES.

Community energy can still bring huge benefits: local ownership, reinvesting in the local economy, reduced, resilience, mitigating climate change, balancing the local energy market between supply and demand.

Neither has Okehampton's potential to generate renewable energy disappeared. We still have local resources and locations for renewable energy plants, in abundance. As one of the first towns in England to have electric streetlights, it is time to reclaim our renewable heritage, now that methods of sustainable energy are cheaper to install and more durable.

Old Town Park Local Nature Reserve

Old Town Park is situated across the West Okement River from Okehampton Castle which was built soon after the Norman Conquest and occupied by Baldwin de Brionne, Sheriff of Devon. In the 13th century a deer park was enclosed south of the castle covering 1700 acres. Old Town Park is just a small portion of this historic deer park.

In 2019 Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council took over ownership and management of the Old Town Park from West Devon Borough Council and are beginning to manage it sympathetically for both the wildlife and visitors.

Consisting of mostly ancient semi-natural woodland, including upland oak, it also has an acid flush and a small riverside meadow.

The remains of an adit (mine entrance) when the area was mined and those of an open-air swimming pool next to the river can also be seen.

Two Public Rights of Way go through the park, The Two Castles Trail and West Devon Way. These are part of a network of footpaths giving access to Dartmoor, Okehampton being the ‘Gateway to Dartmoor’.

Volunteer organisations and individuals are helping to develop the park to protect the wildlife. These include the Okement Rivers Improvement Group (ORIG) and Sticklepath and Okehampton Conservation Group (STOC).

Some areas will be sympathetically coppiced, and access restricted to allow the environment to support butterflies, dormice and other species. The flora and fauna are rich and include deer, Atlantic salmon, pied flycatchers, great spotted woodpeckers, and bank voles as well as bluebells and various lichens and fungi. New oak trees will be encouraged to grow, holly reduced, and Himalayan balsam eradicated where possible.

Established unofficial footpaths need to be managed to allow safe and appropriate access to the nature reserve.

Conserving Old Town Park as a local nature reserve fits perfectly with our commitment to environmental sustainability, with the Parish Council committed to producing Management Plans for this area and Meldon Woods (which is also part of the ancient deer park).

Railway and Parkway

For so many years, local campaigners pushed for the re-opening of passenger services between Okehampton and Exeter. The new passenger service starting in November 2021 has been the cause of much celebration.

Once plans for housing and employment development to the east side of Okehampton had been proposed, the need for the Okehampton East Parkway - Rail Halt was obvious.

Situated on the eastern edge of Okehampton, within the new industrial area of the Hamlets, it can be easily accessed from the A30. It will enable the commuters of Okehampton, whether they be workers, students, shoppers or visitors, to have the choice of the quaint and historic Town Station or the modern and easily accessed Parkway, from which to travel in or out of our town.

Currently, two-coach trains with 90+ seats are operating an hourly service throughout the day, In the morning, many passengers arrive by car or bus or bike or on foot and leave their transportation at the station to use on their return.

During the day, travellers will also arrive from Bude, Launceston and Tavistock, and the huge rural hinterland of 42,000 potential passengers, generating more traffic than the Town Centre can cope with.

The new proposed Parkway Transport Hub creates an opportunity for much-needed facilities including parking, a bus station, with possibly, a café and toilets. Re-routed bus services to transport travellers to the Town Centre and beyond are planned. It might even prove beneficial to move one of the Town Centre supermarkets to the outskirts.

Although discussions around the Parkway are well underway, the challenges facing us are funding, and the sheer length of time it takes to build a new station. We would like to see the station built as soon as possible! The café could provide opportunities for community ownership, retaining the revenue within the economy of the Town and Hamlets.

Sports facilities

Okehampton benefits from good sports facilities, including a table tennis club, Okehampton Argyle football club, Okehampton Rugby Club, the OCRA Pavilion with its hard, all-weather pitch and tennis courts, Parklands Leisure Centre with swimming pool, a skate park, a golf club, a bowling club, and a squash club.

Okehampton Primary School has a recently constructed all-weather surface, and St James Primary School is progressing an all-weather surface through the planning process. It is unclear how much scope there will be for public use. Simmons Park is home to green spaces, including a cricket pitch, which Okehampton Community College currently has fenced off, restricting public access.

With the increasing population of Okehampton there is also an increasing need for sports surfaces open to public use. Space for such facilities within the Town is limited.

Okehampton Rugby Club has benefitted from some of the latest Section 106 monies to build new training pitches. These will be situated in the Hamlets.

Appendix Four

Glossary

OTHNP	Okehampton Town & Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan
PSWJLP	Plymouth, South and West Devon Joint Local Plan
DNPA	Dartmoor National Park Authority
SHMNA	Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment
NCN	National Cycle Network
DCC	Devon County Council
NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
WDBC	West Devon Borough Council
GI	Green Infrastructure
PDL	Previously Developed Land
CORES	Community of Okehampton Renewable Energy Society

September 2022
Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan 2019 - 2034
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