

Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2034

Basic Conditions Statement August 2023

1. Legal requirements

1.1 This statement has been prepared by the Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan (OTHNP) to accompany its submission of the Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan under section 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish council, the qualifying body, for the area covering both parishes in West Devon.

1.3 The plan proposal relates to planning matters (the use and development of land) in the designated neighbourhood area and covers the period from 2012 to 2034. It does not contain policies relating to excluded development as laid out in the Regulations.

1.4 The following statement will address each of the four 'basic conditions' required of the Regulations and explains how the Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirement of paragraph 8 of schedule 4B to the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act.

1.5 The Regulations state that the neighbourhood plan will have met the basic conditions if it:

- Has regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- Is compatible with European Union (EU) and European Convention on Human Right (ECHR) obligations.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Initial conversations were held during 2015 with a view to how best to proceed with a neighbourhood plan. It was agreed that this should be a joint venture between Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council covering both parishes. The plans for new housing to the east of Okehampton lay in the Hamlets, with the centre being in the Town. Two concerns for local residents had long been the expansive development of green fields and the traffic congestion in the town centre. A neighbourhood plan was seen as a positive opportunity to address both of these concerns along with other priorities identified through consultation.

2.2 Throughout 2016, the following consultation took place:

- a. Initial launch event
- b. Community survey (843 responses)
- c. Business survey (116 responses)
- d. Half-day consultation event
- e. Focus groups:
 - Community facilities in the new housing
 - Town Centre development
 - Traffic and Transport
- f. Land use consultation (including young people)

The top five priorities identified by local people were:

- 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.

3. Having regard to National Planning Policy

3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared having regard to the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of April 2012 (revised July 2021). It also gives regard to the 12 core planning principles contained in paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework, alongside the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) published by the Government in April 2014 in relation to the formation of Neighbourhood Plans.

3.2 Unusually, we have not allocated any sites for housing development. We have however, included a settlement boundary policy and a brownfields policy. National planning policy presently requires the local planning authority to provide a five-year land bank which is deliverable in terms of development. 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.

4. General conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan

4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to ensure that it is in general conformity with the development plan for the area.

4.2 We have considered the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint local Plan (2014-2034) and the Dartmoor Local Plan (2018-2036).

4.3 Our policies are in general conformity with Spatial Priority SP4: Spatial priorities for development in Okehampton, and Strategic Policy 1.2: Sustainable development in Dartmoor National Park 2031.

5. Contribution to the achievement of sustainable development

5.1 A neighbourhood plan must take into account the need to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This involves working to address the three separate strands of sustainability; economic, social and environmental. The following key sustainability 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.

The table below shows how each policy relates to our sustainability objectives.

| | Objective 1 | Objective 2 | Objective 3 | Objective 4 | Objective 5 | Objective 6 | Objective 7 | Objective 8 |
|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| PP1 | Yes | Yes | Yes | | | Yes | | |
| PP2 | Yes | Yes | Yes | | | | | Yes |
| PP3 | Yes | 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 | Yes |
| PP7 | | | | Yes | Yes | | Yes | Yes |
| PP8 | | | | Yes | Yes | | Yes | |
| PP9 | | | | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| PP10 | | | | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| PP11 | | | | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| PP12 | Yes | | | | | | | Yes |
| PP13 | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| PP14 | Yes | Yes | | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| PP15 | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | | | Yes | Yes |

Key to themes:

Housing and Development

Green Space and Green Infrastructure

Supporting Local Business Growth

Town Centre Development

Traffic Transport and Parking

5.2 Our Neighbourhood Plan has undergone a Strategic Environmental Screening Assessment by AECOM and their opinion is that we do not require a full strategic environmental assessment as we are not allocating sites for development.

6. Compatibility with EU obligations and legislation

6.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act. Considerable emphasis has been placed throughout the consultation process to ensure that no sections of the community have been isolated or excluded.

7. Conclusion

7.1 A key priority for the OTHNP Steering Group was to draft a plan which was accessible to ordinary people whilst meeting the basic conditions set out in law. We believe we have achieved both of these objectives. The evidence base on our website alongside the introductory sections of our Neighbourhood Plan document are important in evidencing this.