

Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion

Okehampton Town Council & Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council

June 2023

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
E.H.	R.P.	A.P.	N.C.B.
Environmental Planner	Senior Environmental Planner	Associate Director	Technical Director

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Prepared for:

Okehampton Town Council & Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited
Portwall Place
Portwall Lane
Bristol BS1 6NA
United Kingdom

aecom.com

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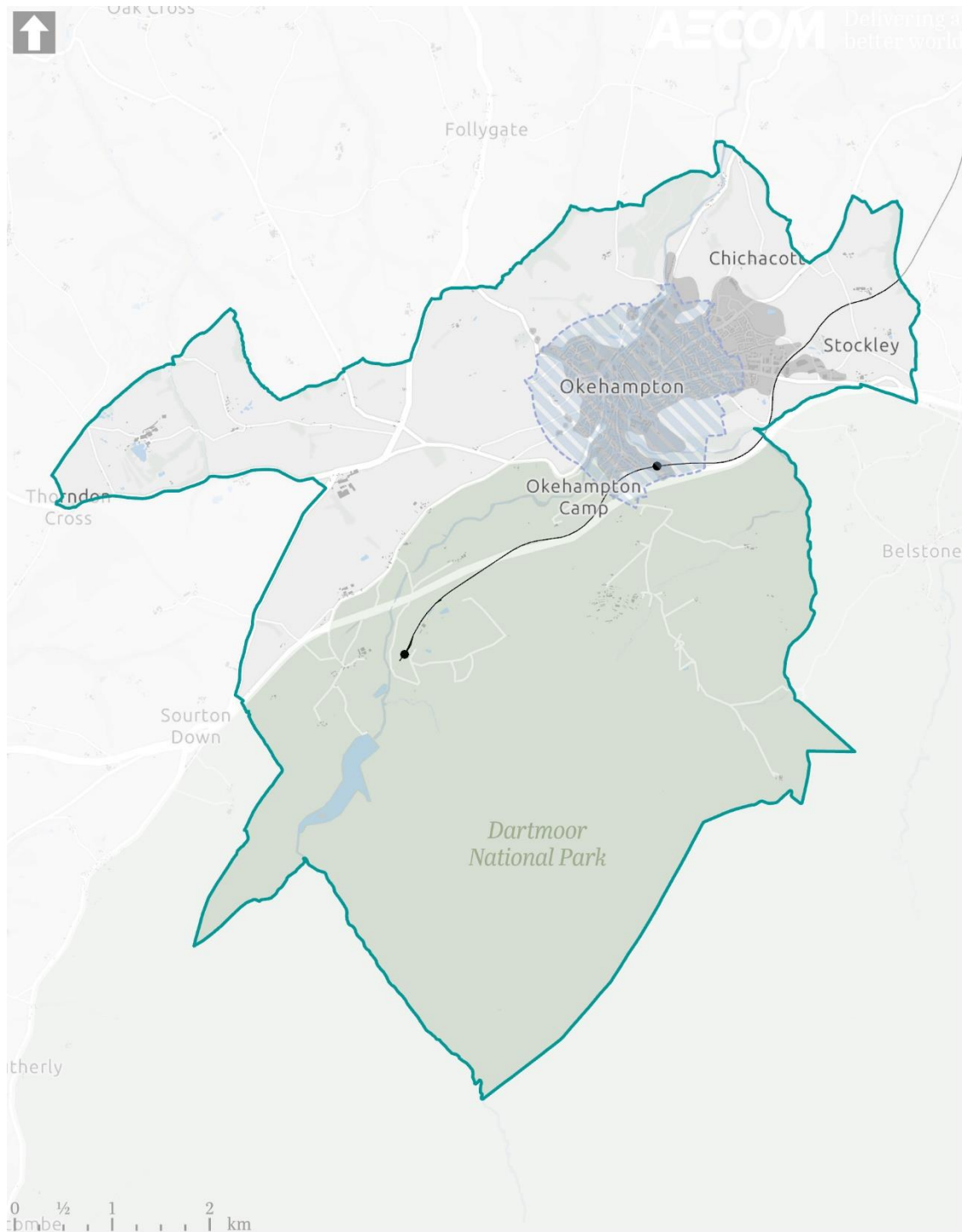
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1. Purpose of this SEA Screening Opinion

- 1.1 This SEA Screening Opinion has been prepared by AECOM in relation to the Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as the 'OTHNP').
- 1.2 The purpose of the Screening Opinion is to set out an opinion in relation to whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process is required to accompany the development of the OTHNP. The Screening Opinion has been provided to the statutory consultation bodies for SEA (Historic England, the Environment Agency, and Natural England) for their opinion.
- 1.3 SEA is a systematic process undertaken to evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of plans and programmes. The requirement for SEA in England was introduced in 2004 through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('The SEA Regulations'), which transposed the European SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).
- 1.4 One of the 'Basic Conditions' that a Neighbourhood Plan is tested against is whether the making of the Plan is compatible with European Union obligations, including obligations under the SEA Directive.¹ Neighbourhood Plans only require SEA where they are likely to lead to significant environmental effects. To decide whether a proposed Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it should be screened against the criteria set out in Annex 2 of the SEA Directive.
- 1.5 Where it is determined that the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require SEA), a statement of reasons for this determination should be prepared and published for consultation with the statutory consultation bodies for SEA (Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England). Where a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, an SEA process must be carried out.
- 1.6 This Screening Opinion therefore provides a view as to whether the OTHNP is likely to lead to significant environment effects, and therefore, where it requires an SEA process. In this context, it presents the following:
 - Details and context of the OTHNP, including its scope and likely content, its relationship with the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP) and the Dartmoor Local Plan (DLP), and key environmental constraints within and near the neighbourhood area (**Chapter 2**).
 - A discussion of the potential significant environmental effects of the OTHNP and their significance (**Chapter 3**); and
 - A summary of the screening opinion (**Chapter 4**).

¹ The UK left the EU on 31st January 2020. Under the UK-EU withdrawal agreement, a transition period ended on 31st December 2020, during which time all EU law continued to apply to the UK. During the transition period the UK needed to continue following domestic law that implements EU law, or directly applicable EU law that is given effect through the EUWA 2018. Beyond the transition period, the SEA Regulations, which previously implemented the requirements of the SEA Directive in England, will continue to apply as before unless and until new legislation is introduced.

1.7 The statutory environmental bodies for SEA are subsequently invited to provide their comments.



Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan

-  Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan Area
-  Okehampton Town
-  National Park



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Figure 1.1 Okehampton Town and Hamlets neighbourhood area

2. Context for the Neighbourhood Plan and area

Key information relating to the Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Key information relating to the OTHNP is presented in **Table 2.1** below.

Table 2.1 Key information relating to the OTHNP

Name of qualifying body	Okehampton Town Council & Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council
Title of the Plan	Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan
Area covered by the Plan	The neighbourhood area covers Okehampton Parish, which includes the town of Okehampton, located at the northern edge of Dartmoor, and Okehampton Hamlets Parish, which covers the hamlets surrounding the town and extends south into Dartmoor National Park. Both parishes are in West Devon. The boundary of the neighbourhood area is shown in Figure 1.1 above.
Timescale	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period up to 2034, aligning with the JLP.
Vision of the Neighbourhood Plan	<i>“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.”</i>
Neighbourhood Plan contact	Alison Duckers, OTHNP Chair Email: alisonduckers@hotmail.co.uk

Local Plan context for the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.2 The OTHNP is being prepared in the context of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP)² and the Dartmoor Local Plan (DLP).³
- 2.3 The JLP identifies the 'Thriving Towns and Villages Policy Area', which incorporates rural South Hams and West Devon, including its market towns, settlements, and villages. The JLP focuses growth in this Policy Area on six main towns. This includes Okehampton, which is the key town within the neighbourhood area. The JLP outlines that, after Plymouth, these towns are the most suitable locations for sustainable growth. They not only contain a large variety of services and amenities, but also support large rural hinterlands that take in a number of other settlements.
- 2.4 Policy TTV3 (Strategic infrastructure measures for the Main Towns) of the JLP lists nine key strategic measures and infrastructure projects that will be provided during the plan period in order to support the delivery of the strategy for the Main Towns. Two of these are relevant to the OTHNP: a road linking Crediton Road to Exeter Road in Okehampton; and improvements to rail infrastructure in Okehampton (and Tavistock). The purpose of the access road would be to alleviate the impact of additional traffic in the town centre as a result of new development delivered in Okehampton through the JLP.
- 2.5 Spatial Priority SP4 (Spatial priorities for development in Okehampton) of the JLP outlines plans to deliver mixed use development in Okehampton, as well as a new primary school in the east of the town, to help reduce traffic movements through the town centre, and contributions towards the delivery of a railway station and/ or improved bus services. The sites allocated for development – which are located to the east of the existing built-up area of Okehampton – have been part of a long-term strategy for the town for some time, first adopted in the Core Strategy in 2011. The JLP highlights that additional, smaller sites might be needed to increase the diversity of housing sizes and types, which could be addressed through the OTHNP.
- 2.6 In relation to the above, Policy TTV14 (East of Okehampton) allocates 'Land to the east of Okehampton' for residential development. Provision is made for approximately 775 new homes. The policy outlines that the development should provide a link road between Crediton Road and Exeter Road and a new primary school. Policy TTV13 (Land at Exeter Road, Okehampton) of the JLP allocates 'Land at Exeter Road' for employment use. Provision is made for approximately 35,000 sqm of B1, B2 and B8 employment floorspace. Finally, Policy TTV15 (Land at Stockley) allocates 'Land at Stockley' for employment/ employment-led mixed use. Provision is made for approximately 42,700 sqm of B1, B2 and B8 employment floorspace.
- 2.7 Within the DLP, the part of Okehampton Hamlets Parish that falls within the Dartmoor National Park is classified as falling within 'the open countryside'. Here, opportunities are strictly limited to development and activities which need to take place in the open countryside. This includes farming and forestry, development needed for the conservation of historic buildings, and farm

² West Devon Borough Council, South Hams District Council and Plymouth City Council (2019): 'Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014-2034', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

³ Dartmoor National Park (2021): 'Dartmoor Local Plan 2018-2036', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

diversification. No allocations for housing or employment uses within the neighbourhood area are identified within the DLP.

Key components of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.8 The vision of the OTHNP is presented in **Table 2.1** above. The Plan also outlines eight key objectives which guide the writing of the policies, which are:
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. Create 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.
- 2.9 Policy PP1 (Settlement boundary) of the OTHNP defines a settlement boundary for Okehampton. New development beyond the settlement boundary will be treated as development in the open countryside and will not be permitted, with the exception of individual developments in the hamlets which satisfy policies within the JLP and DLP; and development that can demonstrate that it meets planning requirements and has no negative net environmental impact.
- 2.10 In terms of key land use policies which should be considered for their potential for significant environmental effects, Policy PP2 (Use of brownfield sites) of the OTHNP has identified several brownfield site opportunities within the settlement boundary through Policy PP1, as follows:
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. Wonnacotts.
 7. North Road.
 8. Former Garden Centre site on North Road.
- 2.11 With respect to housing requirements, the draft OTHNP confirms that development within Okehampton is ahead of projected numbers. Therefore,

the OTHNP does not allocate any specific sites for housing or employment uses. Whilst the brownfield site opportunities listed in Policy PP2 are not being taken forward as specific site allocations, development proposals at these locations are supported in principle subject to the other policies within the Neighbourhood Plan. In this respect, the OTHNP seeks to maintain the existing built-up area of Okehampton and protect greenfield sites from development. By utilising smaller brownfield sites, it is also unlikely to lead to any significant changes in land use. This aligns with the JLP, which outlines that additional smaller sites might be needed to increase diversity of housing types and tenures within Okehampton, as stated above in Paragraph 2.5.

Environmental constraints present in the neighbourhood area

2.12 A key determinant of whether effects are likely to be significant is the sensitivity of the asset affected. In this context, the more environmentally sensitive a location, the more likely it is that potential environmental effects from a plan will be significant.

2.13 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)⁴ provides guidance on this topic through providing a list of sites and areas which should be deemed as 'sensitive areas' for the purposes of environmental assessment.⁵ These comprise:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Natura 2000 sites.
- National Parks.
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- World Heritage Sites (WHS); and
- Scheduled Monuments.

2.14 In the context of the PPG, there are several sensitive areas within or near to the neighbourhood area, which are:

- Dartmoor National Park spans the central and southern parts of the neighbourhood area, up to the B3260 (Tavistock Road) and along the southern boundary of Okehampton Parish. Whilst the majority of the National Park falls within Okehampton Hamlets Parish, a very small part extends into the southern part of Okehampton Parish.
- The Dartmoor Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located in the southern part of the neighbourhood area, in Okehampton Hamlets Parish, spanning the area up to Meldon Reservoir and Okehampton Camp. The SAC is characterised by areas of inland water bodies (1%), bogs, marshes, water fringed vegetation and fens (42%), heath, scrub, maquis and garrigue and phygrana (40%), humid grassland and mesophile grassland (12%), improved grassland (2%), broad-leaved deciduous woodland (1%), and inland rocks, screes, sands, permanent snow and ice (2%).⁶ Annex I

⁴ DLUHC & MHCLG (2021): 'The National Planning Policy Framework and relevant planning practice guidance', [online] accessible [here](#)

⁵ i.e., those sites and areas that should be considered 'sensitive' for the purposes of screening projects for Environmental Impact Assessment (accessible [here](#))

⁶ JNCC (no date): 'Dartmoor', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

habitats that are a primary reason for selection of the site are Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*, European dry heaths, blanket bogs, and Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles. Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of the site are southern damselfly.

- Halstock Wood SSSI is located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the neighbourhood area, in Okehampton Hamlets Parish, just east of Lower Halstock. The SSSI is currently in a favourable condition.
- Meldon Aplite Quarry SSSI is located in the central part of the neighbourhood area, in Okehampton Hamlets Parish, just south of Meldon Viaduct. Both units of the SSSI are currently in a favourable condition.
- Meldon Quarry SSSI is located in the central part of the neighbourhood area, in Okehampton Hamlets Parish, just east of Meldon Viaduct. Both units of the SSSI are currently in a favourable condition.
- North Dartmoor SSSI is located in the southern part of the neighbourhood area, in Okehampton Hamlets Parish, spanning the area up to Meldon Reservoir and Okehampton Camp (covering the same area as the Dartmoor SAC). Unit 78 (Okehampton Common) of the SSSI, which makes up the majority of the part of the SSSI that covers the neighbourhood area, is currently in an unfavourable but recovering condition. Meanwhile, units 89 (Forest – Okehampton Ranges) and 91 (Blackator Copse) of the SSSI, which make up the remainder of the part of the SSSI that covers the neighbourhood area, are currently in an unfavourable and favourable condition respectively.
- Okehampton Park Flush SSSI is located in the northern part of the neighbourhood area, in Okehampton Hamlets Parish, near the southern boundary of Okehampton Parish. The SSSI is currently in an unfavourable but recovering condition.
- Okehampton Parish contains one scheduled monument – ‘Okehampton Roman fort, fortlet and associated enclosures’ – which is located in the northeastern part of the parish, extending across the boundary.
- Okehampton Hamlets Parish contains 62 scheduled monuments, including a particularly large cluster to the southeast of Meldon Reservoir.

2.15 The locations of these sensitive areas are highlighted in **Figure 2.1** overleaf.

2.16 In terms of other key environmental assets (i.e., those which are not defined as ‘sensitive areas’ by the PPG), these include:

- Okehampton Parish contains four grade II* listed buildings, 23 grade II listed buildings and one grade II registered park and garden, which is located in the southern part of the parish to the east of Station Road. It also contains Okehampton Conservation Area, which comprises two areas within the southwestern part of Okehampton Town.
- Okehampton Hamlets Parish contains one grade I listed building – ‘Okehampton Castle’ – and 24 grade II listed buildings, including a particularly large cluster in Okehampton Camp. These are all located in the northern and central parts of the neighbourhood area.

- Areas of priority habitat contributing to local ecological networks, including good quality semi-improved grassland, lowland calcareous grassland, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland meadows, purple moor grass and rush pasture, upland calcareous grassland, lowland heathland, upland heathland, blanket bog, lowland fens, deciduous woodland, traditional orchards, woodpasture and parkland, and grass moorland.
- Areas of ancient woodland, located in both Okehampton Parish and Okehampton Hamlets Parish, but largely concentrated in the central part of the neighbourhood area around the A30.
- Priority species for Countryside Stewardship (CS) targeting, including Brown Hairstreak, which covers the eastern part of the neighbourhood area, primarily in Okehampton Hamlets Parish.
- Black-a-Tor Copse National Nature Reserve (NNR), which is located in the southern part of the neighbourhood area, in Okehampton Hamlets Parish, adjacent to its boundary with Bridestowe and Sourton Parish.
- Old Town Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which is located partially within the southern part of Okehampton Parish, and partially within Okehampton Hamlets Parish, to the north of the A30.
- The North Devon Biosphere Reserve, which covers almost the entire neighbourhood area.
- Several trees (or groups of trees) of amenity value which have tree preservation order (TPO) designations.

2.17 The locations of these key environmental assets are highlighted in **Figures 2.2 – 2.6** overleaf.

2.18 Fluvial flood risk in the built-up area of Okehampton is largely linked to the River Okement, which splits into the West Okement River and East Okement River to the east of Okehampton Primary School.

2.19 Surface water flood risk is also largely linked to the River Okement, West Okement River and East Okement River. Several roads are associated with a medium/ high risk of surface water flooding, include the B3260 (Exeter Road), Crediton Road, Link Road, North Road/ North Street, and Castle Road.

2.20 A Drinking Water Protected Area (Surface Water), concerning the West Okement waterbody, covers the central and southern parts of the neighbourhood area, including Meldon and part of Okehampton.

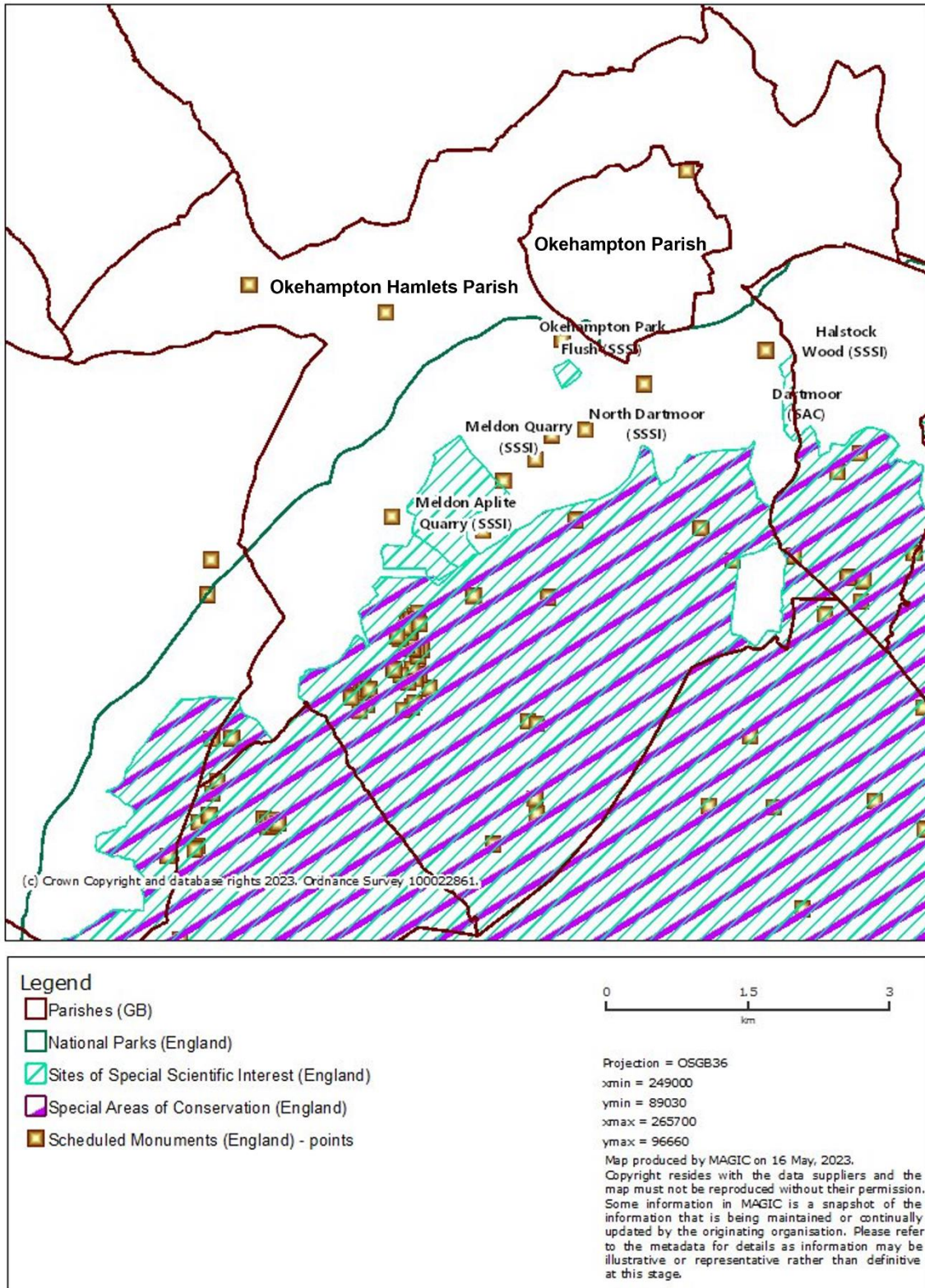


Figure 2.1 ‘Sensitive areas’ – National Parks, SSSIs, SACs, and scheduled monuments – in the neighbourhood area

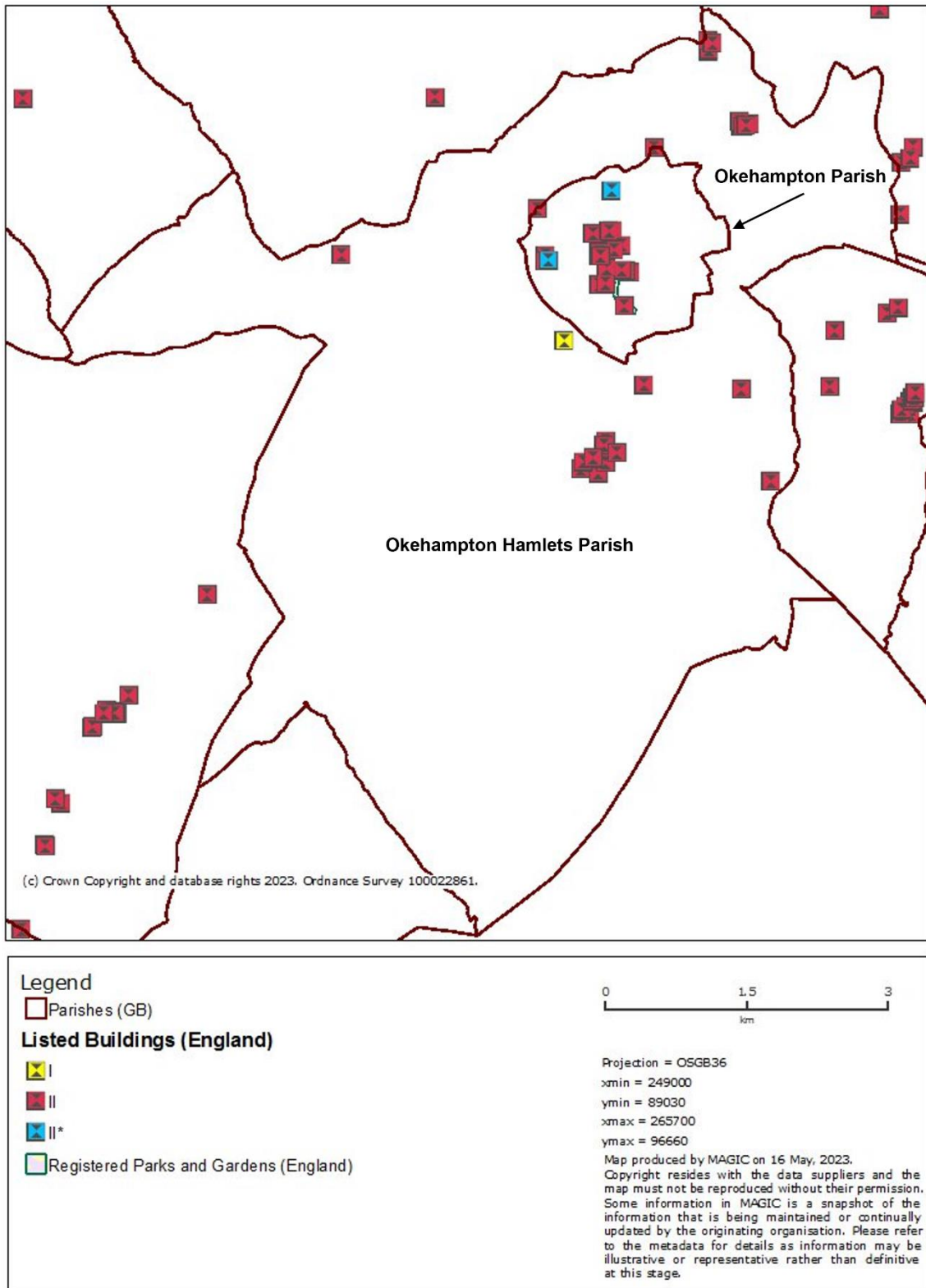
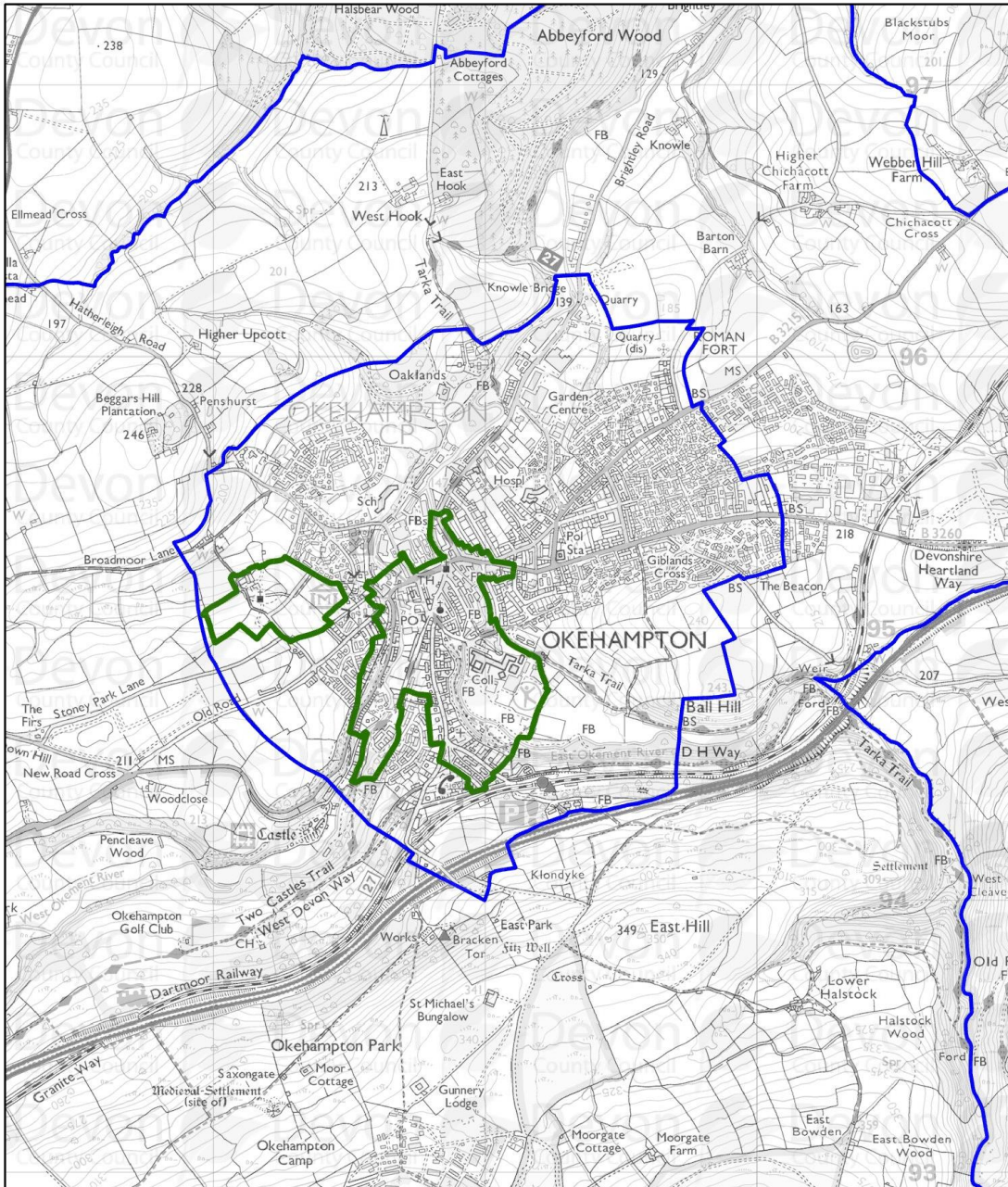
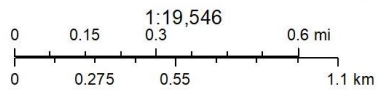


Figure 2.2 Listed buildings (grade I, II and II*) and registered parks and gardens in the neighbourhood area



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- Conservation Areas
- Parish



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Figure 2.3 Conservation areas in the neighbourhood area (with a focus on Okehampton Parish)

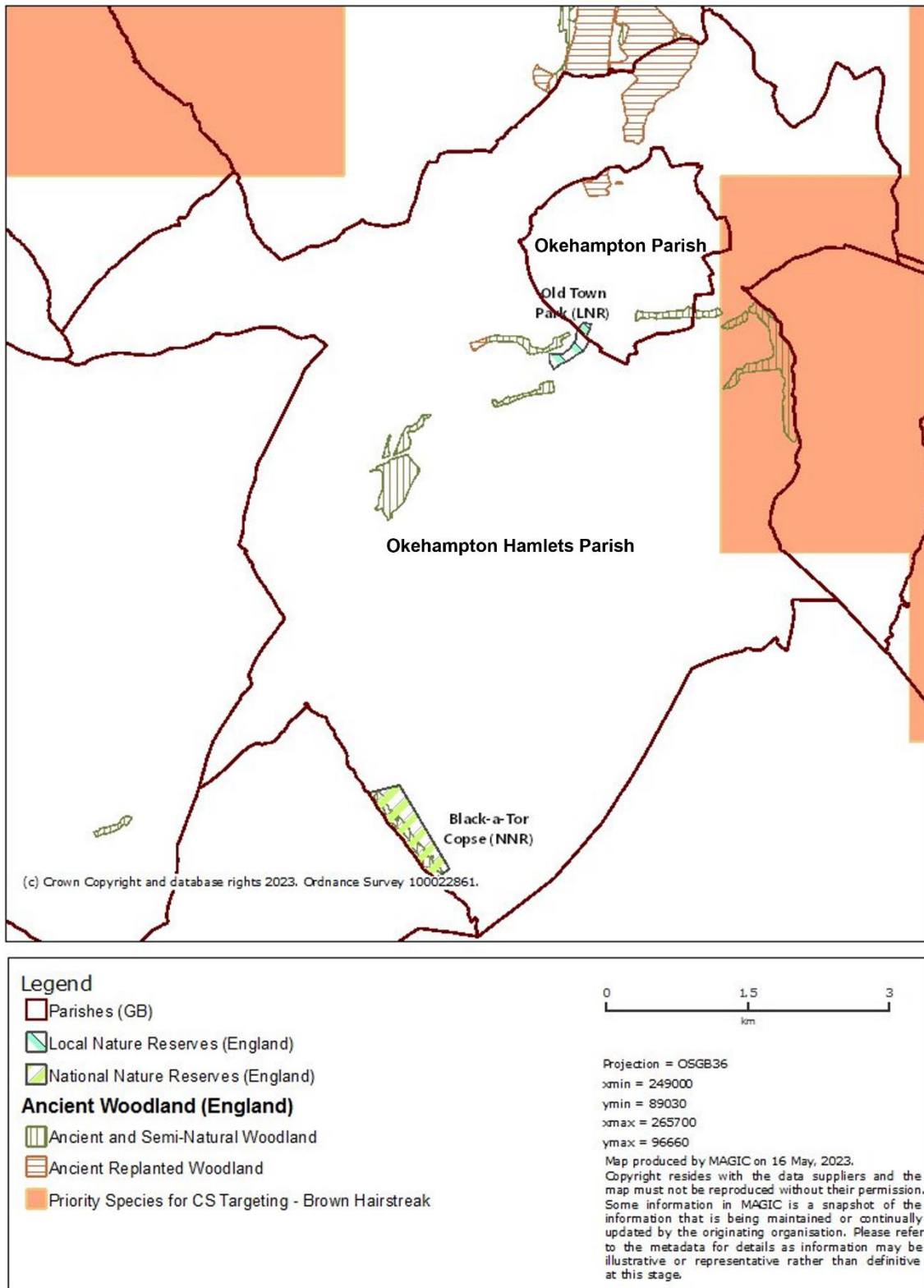
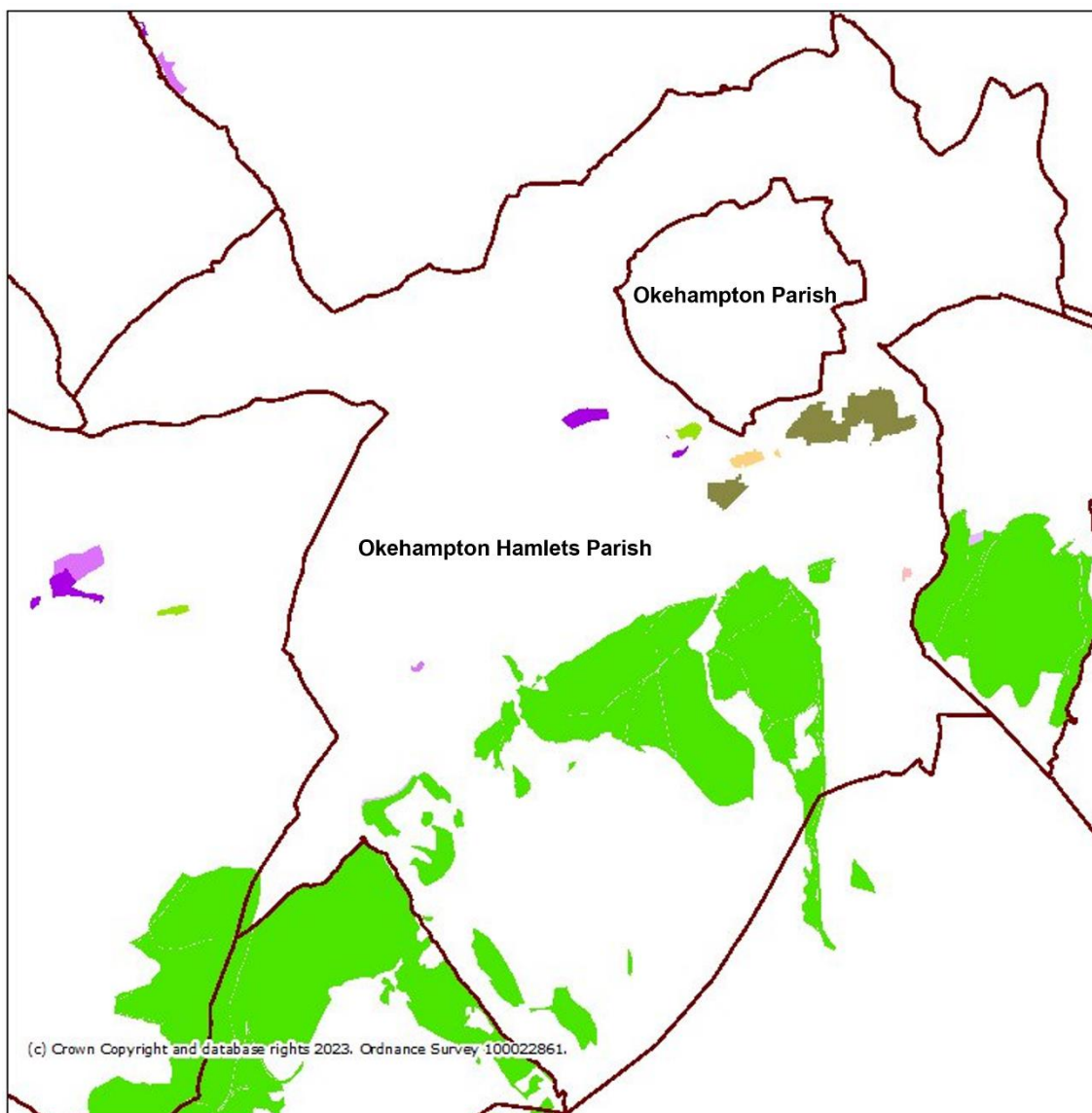


Figure 2.4 LNRs, NNRs, ancient woodland, and priority species for CS targeting in the neighbourhood area



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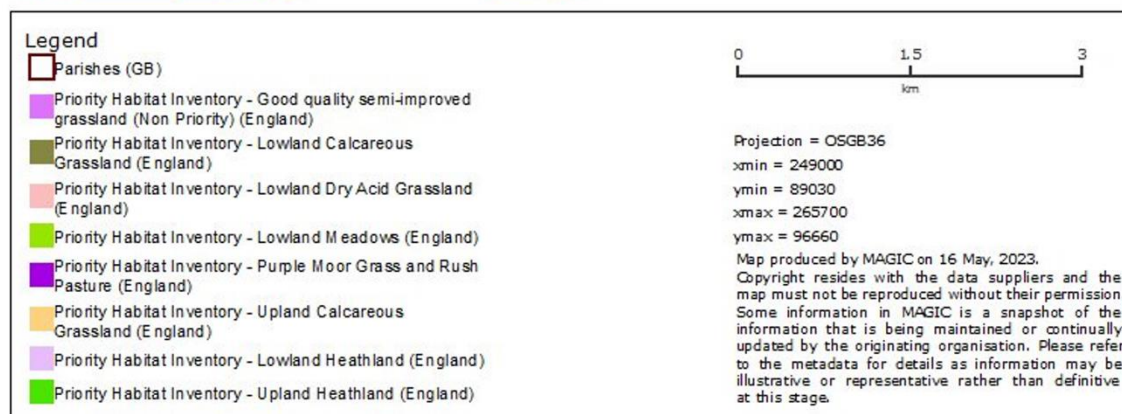


Figure 2.5 Priority habitats in the neighbourhood area (part 1)

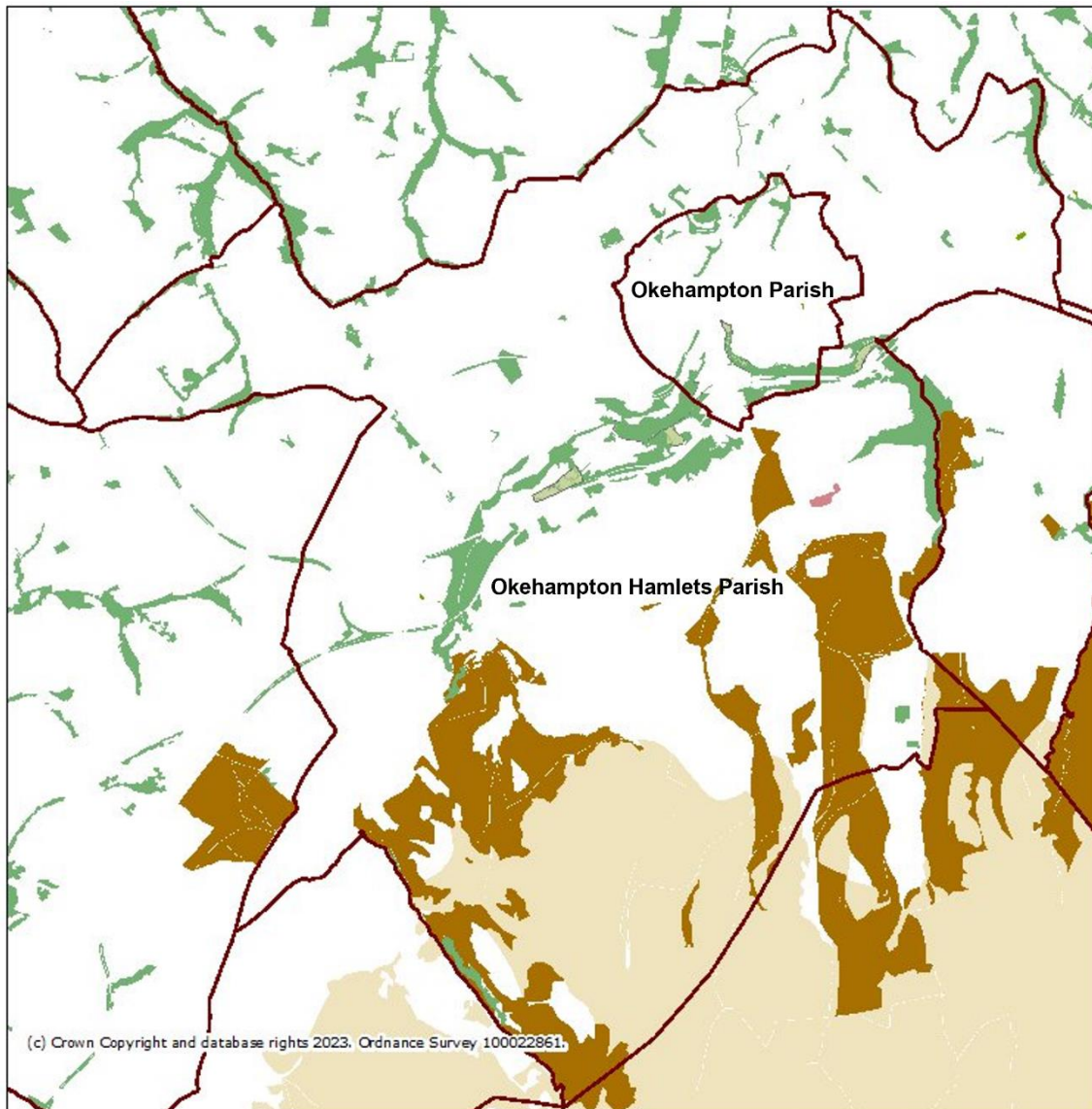


Figure 2.6 Priority habitats in the neighbourhood area (part 2)

3. Screening assessment

3.1 **Table 3.1** discusses the significance of the potential environmental effects of the OTHNP, and their likely significance.

Table 3.1 Potential environmental effects of the OTHNP and their significance

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
Biodiversity	<p>Internationally and nationally designated sites for biodiversity within the neighbourhood area include the Dartmoor SAC, Halstock Wood SSSI, Meldon Aplite Quarry SSSI, Meldon Quarry SSSI, North Dartmoor SSSI, Okehampton Park Flush SSSI, and Black-a-Tor Copse NNR. Locally important sites include Old Town Park LNR and areas of priority habitat (primarily upland heathland, blanket bog, deciduous woodland, and grass moorland). Most of the neighbourhood area is also within SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for residential or employment development associated with these designations.</p> <p>The Dartmoor SAC is characterised by areas of inland water bodies (1%), bogs, marshes, water fringed vegetation and fens (42%), heath, scrub, maquis and garrigue, and phygrana (40%), humid grassland and mesophile grassland (12%), improved grassland (2%), broad-leaved deciduous woodland (1%), and inland rocks, screes, sands, permanent Snow and ice (2%).⁷ Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of the site are Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>, European dry heaths, blanket bogs, and Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles. Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of the site are southern damselfly.</p> <p>Whilst these designations comprise significant sensitivities, as the spatial strategy within the OTHNP encourages future development opportunities on brownfield sites within the settlement boundary of Okehampton, the potential for significant environmental effects on biodiversity are limited. Only one of the aforementioned designations – Old Town Park LNR – falls partially within Okehampton Parish. However, this site is offered protection through policy PP3 (green spaces and green infrastructure) of the draft OTHNP, which seeks to protect and enhance green infrastructure in the neighbourhood area. This includes linking existing green infrastructure assets to form part of a wider network, as well as providing new green infrastructure assets.</p> <p>In light of the above and given the absence of any specific site allocations within the OTHNP, it is considered that effects on biodiversity as a result of the implementation of the OTHNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>.</p>	No
Population and human health	<p>With respect to housing requirements, the draft OTHNP confirms that development within Okehampton is ahead of projected numbers. Therefore, the OTHNP does not allocate any specific sites for housing or employment uses.</p> <p>Okehampton is the second largest market town in West Devon and has a close relationship with neighbouring Okehampton Hamlets Parish. These two areas combined have a collective population of 9,262 according to the 2021 census. The town provides important services and facilities</p>	No

⁷ JNCC (no date): 'Dartmoor', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
	<p>for many of its surrounding rural communities. It is also very well located for easy access to the A30 strategic road network, connecting the town with the city of Exeter and the M5. Its location enables good opportunities for business and commercial development, as well as tourism. The policy approaches within the OTHNP have the potential to boost the attractiveness of the town for both residents and visitors.</p> <p>Policy PP3 (Green spaces and green infrastructure), which seeks to protect and enhance fifteen green spaces in Okehampton Parish, will contribute to the physical and mental health of residents by ensuring these important spaces can continue to be used for recreation.</p> <p>With a focus on employment, policies PP5 (Employment expansion), PP6 (Protecting existing employment land/buildings) and PP7 (Small employment/ start units) will bolster the local economy and contribute to self-containment within the neighbourhood area by providing new local employment opportunities and protecting existing employment areas. Policy PP8 (Tourism development) will also support the local economy by supporting the expansion of tourism in the neighbourhood area, provided that it has no negative effects on the environment or local community. Policy PP9 (Out of town retail hub) will also contribute to employment and business growth by creating a retail hub around the new park way station.</p> <p>Policy PP10 (Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre) aims to close off Fore Street to through traffic, with access only for public transport, taxis and local deliveries at certain times of day. This would benefit the local community by creating new opportunities for recreation and socialising and improving noise and air quality. However, it is recognised that this is dependent on the delivery of the link road identified in policy PP14 (Town Centre Access Road).</p> <p>Whilst the benefits which arise for residents from a well-designed Neighbourhood Plan have the potential to be wide-ranging, these are <u>not deemed to be significant</u> with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p>	
Soil	<p>A recent agricultural land classification (ALC) assessment has not been undertaken in the neighbourhood area. However, based on the more recent (2017) predictive best and most versatile (BMV) land assessment⁸, the majority of the neighbourhood area is underlain by land with a low likelihood of being BMV (20-60% area BMV). Considering this, and considering that the OTHNP supports a brownfield-first approach to new development which may come forward through the plan period, the Plan is unlikely to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land.</p> <p>In light of the above, it is considered that effects on soils resources as a result of the implementation of the OTHNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>.</p>	No
Water	<p>Development proposals influenced by the OTHNP policies may lead to very limited changes in water demand in the neighbourhood area. However, in the context of strategic water management within the wider area and considering the</p>	No

⁸ Natural England (2017): 'Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map South West Region (ALC018)', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
	<p>strategic scale of development being taken forward through the JLP, these effects are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>.</p> <p>Nevertheless, it is recognised that a Drinking Water Protected Area (Surface Water), concerning the West Okement waterbody, covers the central and southern parts of the neighbourhood area, including Meldon and part of Okehampton. Whilst this area is currently not at risk, any development that comes forward during the plan period would need to consider its impact on this area.</p>	
Air	<p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within or near the neighbourhood area. However, the most recent Air Quality Annual Status Report (2021) for the South Hams and West Devon⁹ highlights that Exeter Road in Okehampton is a slight 'hot spot' for pollution. Nevertheless, levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) have been declining since 2016, when monitoring at this location began, and additional monitoring nearby has found no further problems in this area.</p> <p>The policy framework of the Plan works to counteract any negative effects on air quality that may arise as a result of any new development areas which may come forward through the OTHNP. For example, policy PP10 (Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre) aims to close off Fore Street to through traffic, which will improve air quality in this location. In addition, policy PP15 (Cycle routes) seeks to establish safe cycle and pedestrian routes between the town centre and the housing developments to the east of the town, which will encourage the use of active travel as an alternative to the private car, further improving air quality in the town. Another relevant policy is PP3 (Green spaces and green infrastructure), as green infrastructure, particularly when delivered along roads and other transport corridors, is beneficial for air quality as it can absorb pollution.</p> <p>In light of the above and given the absence of any specific site allocations within the OTHNP, it is considered that effects on air quality as a result of the implementation of the OTHNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>.</p>	No
Climatic factors	<p>As the OTHNP identifies brownfield sites which are supported in principle for new development, this has the potential to lead to an increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as a result of an increase in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area. However, it is recognised that by directing development to brownfield sites within the settlement boundary, emissions as a result of the disturbance and release of carbon stores in soil, and emissions from transport (particularly from petrol and diesel private cars), are likely to be significantly limited. The policy framework of the OTHNP further strengthens this by encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport through policies PP10 (Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre) and PP15 (Cycle routes). Another relevant policy is PP3 (Green spaces and green infrastructure), as green spaces and green infrastructure have the potential to store carbon.</p> <p>Fluvial flood risk in the built-up area of Okehampton is largely linked to the River Okement, which splits into the West Okement River and East Okement River to the east of Okehampton Primary School. Whilst all of the brownfield</p>	No

⁹ South Hams District and West Devon Borough Council (2021): '2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR)', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
	<p>sites opportunities in the OTHNP through policy PP2 (Use of brownfield sites) are located near the river, only two small sites north of Mill Road fall within Flood Zone 3. Statutory requirements (including the requirements of the NPPF) will help ensure that fluvial flood risk is addressed through any development proposals which may come forward at these locations during the plan period.</p> <p>Surface water flood risk is also largely linked to the River Okement, West Okement River and East Okement River. Several roads are associated with a medium/ high risk of surface water flooding, include the B3260 (Exeter Road), Crediton Road, Link Road, North Road/ North Street, and Castle Road. Whilst there are some areas of 'medium' to 'high' surface water flood risk associated with the identified brownfield sites in Policy PP2, it is recognised that this is likely to be mitigated through the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). In addition, policy PP3 (Green spaces and green infrastructure) of the OTHNP is likely to mitigate both fluvial and surface water flooding in the neighbourhood area to some degree by providing green infrastructure along roads and other transport corridors, which will provide permeable surfaces to absorb water.</p> <p>In light of the above, it is considered that effects on climate change mitigation and adaptation as a result of the implementation of the OTHNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>.</p>	
Material assets	<p>Whilst the OTHNP supports opportunities for the redevelopment of brownfield sites within Okehampton town, it is considered unlikely to lead to significance increases in the neighbourhood area's waste management requirements. Effects are likely to be further limited by statutory requirements regarding waste management, including through the provisions of the Waste Management Plan for England 2021.¹⁰</p> <p>According to the Devon Minerals Plan (2011-2033)¹¹, there is a mineral safeguarding site in the neighbourhood area – Knowle Quarry – which is located to the north of Okehampton town. As the identified brownfield site opportunities within Policy PP2 are within the settlement boundary, new development at these locations (if proposals were to come forward) is unlikely to negatively impact this mineral safeguarding site.</p> <p>Hence, it is considered that effects on material assets as a result of the implementation of the OTHNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>.</p>	No
Cultural heritage	<p>Whilst the OTHNP does not seek to allocate specific sites for housing or employment, a key focus of the OTHNP is to encourage opportunities for the redevelopment of brownfield sites within the settlement boundary of Okehampton (see Policy PP1 and Policy PP2). It is recognised that the built-up areas of the town are particularly sensitive from a heritage perspective, with some of the identified sites located near to listed buildings, the Grade II listed 'Simmons Park' registered park and garden, and the Okehampton Conservation Area. However, the sensitive redevelopment of underutilised brownfield sites has the potential to enhance the quality of the built environment, including with respect to the setting of</p>	No

¹⁰ GOV.UK (2021): 'Waste Management Plan for England 2021', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹¹ Devon County Council (2017): 'Devon Minerals Plan 2011-2033', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
	<p>nearby heritage assets and areas. This is reinforced by objective 1 of the OTHNP, which aims to “...<i>deliver[ing] high quality design</i>”. Also of relevance is objective 6, which aims to “<i>conserve and enhance the character and heritage of Okehampton Town and Okehampton Hamlets</i>”.</p> <p>Additionally, the Steering Group confirm that Policy PP2 will be updated prior to Regulation 14 consultation to state that any applications for development, which come forward on the identified brownfield site opportunities, should be accompanied by a proportionate heritage assessment. It will need to appropriately consider its sensitivities, special character and significance (recognising the heritage constraints within the town).</p> <p>Scheduled monument ‘Okehampton Roman fort, fortlet and associated enclosures’ is also located within the neighbourhood area. However, this is outside of the settlement boundary defined in policy PP1 (Settlement boundary) of the OTHNP.</p> <p>With a focus on protecting views and vistas, policy PP4 (Views and vistas) of the OTHNP will help to protect the neighbourhood area’s unique heritage by avoiding the loss of public views and erosion of visual qualities. Meanwhile, policy PP10 (Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre), which aims to close off Fore Street to through traffic, will prevent further environmental damage (from traffic) to listed buildings in this location. It will also improve the setting of these buildings by reducing noise pollution.</p> <p>Whilst it is recognised that the neighbourhood area is sensitive from a heritage perspective, overall, it is considered that effects on the historic environment as a result of the implementation of the OTHNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>, particularly given the OTHNP does not explicitly seek to allocate sites.</p>	
Landscape	<p>Dartmoor National Park spans the central and southern parts of the neighbourhood area, up to the B3260 (Tavistock Road) and along the southern boundary of Okehampton Parish. A very small part of the National Park extends into Okehampton Parish. Notably, the brownfield site opportunities identified through the OTHNP are all located within the settlement boundary of Okehampton, and none are near the National Park, including the part that extends into the parish.</p> <p>Policy PP4 (Views and vistas), which seeks to protect identified views and vistas which are locally important, recognises the importance of Dartmoor National Park, with many key views in the town to and from the Park. The policy outlines that development will only be supported where it respects landscape character, setting and important views into and out of the town.</p> <p>Policy PP3 (Green spaces and green infrastructure) will also contribute to improving the quality of the local landscape, particularly when implemented in areas that are currently dominated by man-made structures and materials.</p> <p>Whilst it is recognised that Dartmoor National Park represents a unique sensitivity for the neighbourhood area, OTHNP policies and objectives have a close focus on protecting and enhancing landscape and townscape character, and on implementing high quality design. The OTHNP also does not seek to allocate. As such, any effects</p>	No

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Significant effect?
	are <u>unlikely to be significant</u> in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.	
Transport and movement	<p>By supporting opportunities for the redevelopment of existing brownfield sites in the settlement boundary of Okehampton, the OTHNP seeks to encourage growth in accessible locations, and therefore supports the use of active travel to access local services and facilities and employment opportunities. It also ensures that any future development areas are located close to public transport hubs, such as bus stops and Okehampton Railway Station.</p> <p>The policy framework of the OTHNP has a strong focus on transport. For example, policy PP10 (Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre), which aims to close off Fore Street to through traffic, with access only for public transport, taxis and local deliveries at certain times of day, prioritises active travel and public transport. Policy PP15 (Cycle routes) also prioritises active travel by establishing safe cycle and pedestrian routes between the town centre and the housing developments to the east of the town. Meanwhile, policy PP13 (Safe access to and within the Town and Hamlets) focuses on safety and accessibility, particularly for pedestrians.</p> <p>Due consideration is also given to parking provision through policies PP11 (Car parking capacity) and PP12 (Parking in residential development).</p> <p>A focus point of the OTHNP is policy PP14 (Town Centre Access Road), which supports opportunities to deliver an access road; this 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. It is important to acknowledge that the access road has already been considered within higher-level plans. This includes the Integrated Assessment (incorporating Sustainability Appraisal and SEA) for the JLP¹² and the SEA for the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan¹³. Therefore, no further assessments are required through the OTHNP with respect to the access road. Additional studies completed in 2017 concluded that the creation of a town access road is currently undeliverable¹⁴. In this respect, the OTHNP recognises that due to funding constraints, proposals for a new link road are not likely to come forward within the lifetime of the plan.</p> <p>Overall, it is considered that effects on transport and movement as a result of the implementation of the OTHNP are <u>unlikely to be significant</u>.</p>	No

¹² Plymouth City Council, South Hams District Council, and West Devon Borough Council (2017): [Plymouth and South West Devon JLP Integrated Assessment](#)

¹³ Devon County Council (2011): [Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 3 Paragraph on page 12 of the main document confirming that "the plan has been appraised and found to be sound by a Strategic Environmental Assessment"](#).

¹⁴ Devon County Council (2017): [Okehampton Town Centre - Traffic Management](#) "The Town Access link Road scheme design has recently been reviewed by the County Council which is considered challenging to deliver from an affordability, engineering and environmental point of view."

4. Summary of screening opinion

- 4.1 This screening opinion has considered whether the OTHNP is likely to lead to significant environmental effects in conjunction with the SEA Regulations.
- 4.2 The screening has considered a number of potential environmental effects that may arise as a result of the OTHNP. Whilst some limited environmental effects have the potential to take place as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan, it is considered that these are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.
- 4.3 The SEA topics where effects have the most potential to be significant are biodiversity, the historic environment and landscape. This relates to the significant constraints associated with these topics present in the neighbourhood area, including the Dartmoor SAC, Halstock Wood SSSI, Meldon Aplite Quarry SSSI, Meldon Quarry SSSI, North Dartmoor SSSI, Okehampton Park Flush SSSI, Black-a-Tor Copse NNR, grade II registered park and garden 'Simmons Park', scheduled monuments (particularly 'Okehampton Roman fort, fortlet and associated enclosures' in Okehampton town), multiple listed buildings, many of which are located in Okehampton Conservation Area, and the Dartmoor National Park. However, as the identified brownfield site opportunities listed in Policy PP2 are not being taken forward as specific site allocations within the OTHNP, and are only identified as potential opportunities, the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant adverse effects on these designations.
- 4.4 Additionally, a central element of the Neighbourhood Plan's emerging policies is to limit potential environmental effects and secure environmental enhancements. This includes relating to public realm improvements, green infrastructure enhancements, community value, environmental protection, economic vitality, and transportation (particularly active travel opportunities). This will further limit the potential for significant environmental effects.
- 4.5 For these reasons, it is considered that the OTHNP is not subject to the requirements of the SEA Regulations. As a result, **a full SEA process meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations is not deemed necessary to accompany the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.**

