

Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan

Statement of Community Consultation

During the early months of developing the Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan (OTHNP) the Steering Group organised a range of consultation events and activities:

1. Initial launch event
2. Community survey (843 responses)
3. Business survey (116 responses)
4. Half day consultation event
5. Focus groups:
 - Community facilities in the new housing
 - Town Centre development
 - Traffic and Transport
6. Land use consultation (including young people)

Reports on the findings are listed in the Evidence Base in Appendix 1 of the OTHNP Plan document and can be viewed via our website. They are as follows:

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 "When a plan comes together" March 2017

Notes from action planning (post-its, scribbles etc.)

Focus group - Community facilities in the new housing 2016

Notes

Focus group - Town Centre development 2016

Notes

Focus group - Traffic and Transport 2016

Notes

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.

The top five priorities for local people were as follows:

- 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. The funding has also now been secured 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.

Many of the issues raised by the community were not necessarily planning matters so could not be incorporated in our policies.

Land use consultation

Within the statutory provisions for a 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.

Informal draft plan consultation

As the process of realising the OTHNP had been lengthy, we wanted to go back to the community to find out if we were still on track. A draft plan document was available via the website and social media during the summer of 2021.

The original social media post reached almost 6000 people. Obviously, some of these will not be Okehampton residents/employees/business owners, but it shows there was a widespread engagement across social media.

Locally, the pages/groups where it was posted included:

Okehampton Information Hub
Okehampton Notice Board
Okehampton Community Events
Okehampton Neighbourhood Plan

We also received a handful of email responses.

Nothing new came to our attention with regards community issues and priorities. A feedback report is in the evidence base on our website.

Regulation 14 consultation

Our Regulation 14 consultation was carried out between 22nd October and 3rd December 2022. It was advertised through social media and the Okehampton Times newspaper as well as on the OTHNP website and those of both Town and Hamlets Councils.

The consultation window opened with a launch event in the Ockment Centre attended by around 30 members of the public. The Regulation 14 Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan document was available in hard copy, and as a PDF on our website.

At this stage, we were no longer seeking general feedback about issues but specific feedback about each of our policies. A feedback proforma was available to members of the community. A copy of the pro forma is available in the evidence base on our website.

The steering group members present held several conversations with those who attended the launch event. Again, the issues raised were not new. After the event we received five responses via the feedback document, one of which came in after the deadline, along with three emails.

One response was helpful with proofreading our many clerical errors. Having considered all the responses, the steering group did not feel it necessary to change the plan materially. Two of the emails were from developers wishing to build on land which would fall outside our proposed settlement boundary policy.

We also received some informal feedback from officers within West Devon Borough Council. As a result of this feedback, we reduced the number of policies to fifteen, removing those which were still not entirely planning policy, and which added nothing to the Joint Local Plan. We have tried to include in appendices material which relates to community priorities, that does not fall within planning policy.

Our intention throughout the whole process has been to try and remain as faithful as possible to community priorities whilst satisfying planning policy.

February 2023