



Okehampton Town Council

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Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Environment (En)

Introduction

This document sits under the Strategic Plan for 2019-2023 which was adopted by Okehampton Town Council on 28th October 2019.

Environment (En) – Okehampton has a strong identity and character due to its rich natural heritage. The Town Council will work to ensure this heritage is protected and enhanced for present and future generations, including those buildings and areas of land which it owns or is responsible for.

En1 Environment (general) – the Council will actively contribute to and promote policies and initiatives that support, protect and sensitively and sustainably develop the unique historic, build and natural environments of the town

The Council, in March 2020, adopted a Tree Policy setting out how it will respond as a consultee to tree related Planning Applications within the Council boundary, or just outside thereof. The individual circumstances of each application will be considered by the Planning Committee enabling a considered response to be provided.

A Neighbourhood Plan is in the process of being created jointly with the neighbouring parish of Okehampton Hamlets. The working group comprises of Members of both Councils alongside members of the public. Its aim is to ensure that future developments are fit for purpose and the area in which they are proposed whilst giving consideration to the climate, biodiversity and the environment.

The town boundary falls, in the main, just outside of Dartmoor National Park but does contribute to consultations regarding its management and takes its protected status into consideration when responding to planning applications.

Much of the town is included within a conservation area which helps to ensure that its natural environment is protected including the Council owned Charter Hall, and Town Hall which is Grade II listed.

En2 Environment (Council ownership) – the Council will maintain and protect the heritage and natural assets in its ownership, and that it is responsible for, including through the maintenance of appropriate records, maintenance plans, inspections and works

In January 2011 a 10 year management plan for Simmons Park and Kempley Meadows was adopted by the Council. The plan was last reviewed in October 2019 and is due for consideration of renewal prior to the end of the 10 year agreement in December 2021.

In 2002 the formal part of Simmons Park and gardens were Grade II listed by Historic England which in turn give it enhanced protected status. In 2019 the park was awarded the 'Much Loved' status in the Fields in Trust UK Best Park awards having been placed within the top 20% of nominations across the UK.

Contained within the boundary of Simmons Park is Platts Meadow. The Council is working with a local volunteer group, Sticklepath and Okehampton Conservation Group (StOC) to further enhance the area.

Clapps Wood provides an area through which members of the public can take a walk. There is no specific management plan for this area of woodland, however any trees that are lost are replaced with a native species and a regular programme of inspection and maintenance is in place.

The grass verge at West Bridge which is owned and maintained by the Council is normally planted with wildflowers which, as well as creating an area welcoming those coming into the town, positively promotes biodiversity and a boost to the climate.

- En3 Trees – the Council will manage and maintain shrubs and trees on land which it owns or is responsible for, including the maintenance of inspection, arboricultural and planting schemes

Management of trees and shrubs within Simmons Park and Kempley Meadows is set out in the Management Plan.

Regular inspections of the trees on Council land, including Simmons Park and Clapps Wood, are undertaken by suitability qualified contractors to ensure their health and that they do not pose a risk to persons or property. Any work required is undertaken by competent persons.

- En4 Recreation – the Council will maintain, on land that it owns or is responsible for, existing areas of leisure and recreation purposes

With regards to recreation the Council owns and is responsible for Simmons Park, the skate park and BMX track, and Fairplace Gardens.

Simmons Park is widely used by residents, regular visitors and tourists and is maintained to a high standard providing extensive play and recreation areas. The Council is committed to maintaining all of its outdoor spaces for the enjoyment of the public.

The neighbouring secondary school use part of the land for sports as do other groups such as the Football Club and Okehampton Community Recreation Association.

Plans for the creation of a sensory garden at Fairplace and the redevelopment of the Putting Green adjacent to Parklands Leisure Centre in Simmons Park have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but will be progressed in 2021, or sooner if possible.

- En5 New Development – the Council will seek to inform and shape new development in the town to ensure sustainable and managed growth supported by the appropriate

infrastructure, including working closely with the joint Okehampton Hamlets and Town Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Okehampton Town Council continues to work with the Neighbourhood Plan Development Group which consist of members of both the Town and Hamlets Councils and members of the public who reside within the boundary of the 2 areas. It is hoped that West Devon Borough Council will assist with the production of the plan to aid is progress to completion.

The new plan must comply with planning legislation and once approved, will help to ensure that any new development fits the criteria and that new build properties are of the quality and type needed within the community. It will also help to address infrastructure to ensure that it can either cope with the increased demand or is sufficiently amended so that it is able to do so.