

Okehampton Town Council 21st September 2026 Meeting Report

Date:	14 th September 2026
Name:	Emma James

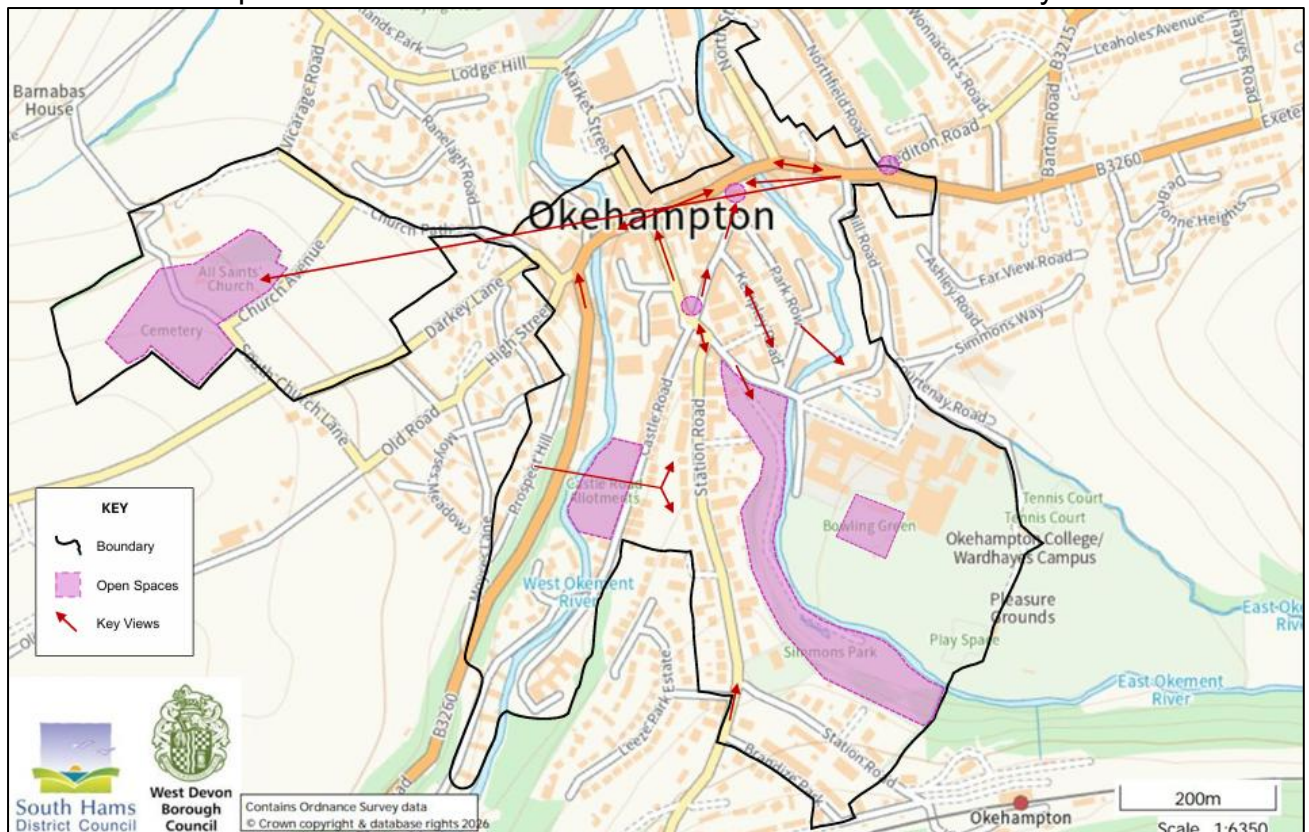
10. Projects and Consultations

10.4 WDBC Okehampton Conservation Area Appraisal – To consider a response to the consultation

As part of a wider programme to review all the Conservation Areas across West Devon, we are consulting on an updated Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan document for Okehampton. Okehampton Conservation Area was designated in 1990, the principal changes in the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan document are:

- 5 proposed extensions (A: Church Street; B: Crediton Road; C: Victoria Street; D: Northfield Road; E: Castle Lane) and 1 possible removal (F: The Chantry)
- More information and photographs of the area including local history
- More heritage guidance including around climate change

Please review the document and tell us anything else you want in the document. Your contributions help make the document better - we want it to work well for your area.



To view the draft document or submit comments use the QR code, search online '[West Devon Borough Council consultation](#)' or use web link

<https://letstalksouthwestdevon.commonplace.is/>



10.5 WDBC Buildings at Risk Register – To consider the documentation and any response to be submitted

I am pleased to share that our Heritage At Risk survey form is live.

[West Devon Heritage At Risk Survey 2026 – Fill in form](#)

The Heritage At Risk Register is about identifying and collating Listed Buildings that are at risk due to their condition or vacancy. As we do not own the buildings nor have any additional funding to undertake activity, this is about directing focus. You are welcome to check out [our previous South Hams register](#) for an idea of what we are looking to update there and produce for WD.

You can confirm if a building is listed using the [Historic England website](#).

Please note we are inviting contributions specifically from town and parish councils, amenity societies, ward members, and relevant heritage groups.

Please do retain a note of any non-listed buildings, in due course we will be welcoming contributions for a local list.

11. Correspondence – To consider the following

11.1 Letter from Okehampton United Charities

I am writing to inform Okehampton Town Council of the proposed merger between Okehampton Foundation (OF) and Simmons Homes (SH), as set out in the recently agreed Heads of Terms.

As you will be aware, OTC currently holds the right to nominate five of the seven trustees of Simmons Homes. Under the proposed merger structure, the assets, operations and governance of SH would transfer to the almshouse branch of OF, with OF becoming the sole trustee of the SH charity in place of the current SH trustees. As a result, the existing nomination arrangements would no longer operate in their current form.

This change would also mean that the Mayor's ex officio trustee role would not continue in its current form. We recognise the historic and symbolic importance of this connection and wish to ensure the Council is fully briefed at an early stage.

As part of the merger arrangements, in order to ensure OF can be appointed as sole corporate trustee of the SH charity as per the Heads of



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Terms, it also will be necessary for the SH trustees to formally amend the SH governing document to remove the ex officio trustee role granted to the Mayor and to remove OTC's right to nominate SH trustees. To avoid the need to obtain Charity Commission consent to this change, please can you confirm written or email consent on behalf of both OTC and the Mayor to these amendments as soon as possible?

Given OTC's longstanding involvement with SH, we want to ensure the Council has full visibility of the process. No decisions have yet been taken beyond the Heads of Terms, and the merger remains subject to due diligence, regulatory consents and formal approval by both charities.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposed governance arrangements and to hear any views the Council may wish to share as part of this process *Okehampton United Charities is the operating name of Okehampton Foundation, a charitable incorporated organisation and registered charity in England and Wales (charity number 1210636) whose registered address is PO BOX 109, Okehampton, Devon, EX20 9BF

11.2 Letter from WDBC Cllrs Dexter and Goffey

Relief Road

Introduction

We, Councillor George Dexter and Councillor Jan Goffey, are seeking the support of the Town Council for a proposal to create a relief road in the centre of Okehampton. An expression of support from the Town Council will significantly strengthen the case for DCC to examine such a scheme.

We have set out this proposal in five sections:

- i) the background;
- ii) the need for a relief road, including the economic and social benefits issues;
- iii) the requirements to be met by any relief road;
- iv) possible route for DCC investigation; and
- v) the suggested process and responsibilities.

i) Background

A proposal was made to Devon County Council around 10 years ago. (see OTC Report "The Summer of Our Discontent")

We are using this original proposal as a basis for the examination of a new scheme based on current configuration and projected changes.

The original proposal was not taken forward on budgetary grounds, but we believe that this shorter route is a strong case to put before the highway authority. It will require them to make a big investment in Okehampton but will result in major improvement to the town by drastically reducing traffic congestion in the town centre. Thereby greatly adding to the ambience, attractiveness, and economic viability of our town centre and its individual shops.

ii) The Need for a Relief Road

The regular and frequent congestion in the town centre causes difficulties and inconvenience for residents when they go shopping or take children to and from school.

The greatest benefit will arise from reducing the congestion in the town centre and will go a long way to relieving the frequent jams in Fore street / Market Street intersections. There are times when the whole centre of town is clogged and nothing moves! There have been a number of schemes suggested to improve this junction by putting in one or more islands as well as changes to the phasing of the traffic lights. The Pelican crossing is supposed to be phased to the traffic lights but frequently fails adding to driver frustration.

All this is caused principally for two reasons.

First, Okehampton, in effect, has just one road running through it. When this is blocked everything is blocked.

Second the traffic related to the three supermarkets and the primary school is funnelled through Market Street, causing significant and frequent holdups.

The need for a viable town centre is a key planning policy for West Devon Borough Council. We contend that traffic problems have a major influence of the viability. A relief road would alleviate many of these problems and increase footfall in the town centre. This would be the single biggest stimulus for the economy of the town.

iii) Requirements for a Relief Road

This relief road should create a second route which will connect to the Link Road and out to the eastern side of town. The road should provide a viable alternative route into and out of the town centre to eliminate reliance on a single road which, for example would be closed for road works or diversions from the A30.

It should provide a safe and viable route from the supermarkets and school which does not pass through the choke point at the junction of Fore Street and Market Street. It should eliminate the need for diversions of many miles when Exeter Road is closed.

iv) Possible Route

We are not highways engineers! Therefore, this is one suggested solution which should be viewed as an initial suggestion only, which would be helpful in framing a DCC feasibility study.

Our outline proposal is an improvement on the plan suggested 10 years ago. As before, cars (and only cars) heading east up through town, would exit Waitrose car park onto Oaklands Drive – existing speed bumps and a new speed limit of 20mph will ensure Rivers Edge residents are not overly impacted. Cars will only be able to turn right. (turning left would only exacerbate the problem 25 yards away!)

In this new version, the road will, almost immediately, turn right, where the Nissen huts are currently. Then drive over a new bridge (incidentally this is the site of the original Beare bridge which was the mediaeval road to Hatherleigh.) The road continues the short distance to join North Road beside the existing Nursery.

[See enclosed map – areas in blue, land owned currently by WDBC. Top L corner is Waitrose.]

The relief road will improve this by allowing traffic from the supermarkets and Primary school to go east of the town and not use the main Fore Street crossroads at all. Waitrose have been contacted and are desperate for an improvement in the current situation, where their tills stop, no vehicles can get into or out of their car park. It is a major problem at certain times for both of the supermarkets in School Way.

v) Way Forward

We have sought the views of residents in the town and found there to be support for creating this inner relief road. We are now looking for the support of the Town Council. Since there are planning policies involved, we will then seek the in-principle support of West Devon Borough Council.

We will then take this forward to DCC Cllr Dan Thomas, as chair of the highways committee for him to drive this through DCC

It will be DCC responsibility to investigate the feasibility of this scheme and come up with any necessary amendments and improvements that they think appropriate.

Recommendations

1. The Town Council to consider this proposal and suggest any possible improvements.
2. The Town Council supports the proposal in outline, for DCC to carry out a feasibility study into the construction of a relief road for Okehampton.

Thank you

Jan Goffey and George Dexter: your Lib Dem West Devon Borough Councillors

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11.3 National People's Emergency Briefing

To consider a suggestion by a member of the public that the council shows the briefing

[National Peoples Emergency Briefing](#)

13. Finance and Governance

13.1 2025/26 External Audit

- a) To note the External Auditors Report and Certificate which does not raise any concerns or actions

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of **Okehampton Town Council – DV0277**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is not a full statutory audit, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with Proper Practices which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2026; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2025/26

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

None.

3 External auditor certificate 2025/26

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2026.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature



Date

14/08/2026

15. Annual Meeting and Mayor Choosing Review, and Mayoral Awards Working Group – To consider a report from the working group

Mayor's Awards

- Maximum of 2 awards will be made each year
- A request for nominations from members of the public will not be requested, however any put forward will be considered

Annual Council Meeting and Mayor Choosing

- The time of the meeting to be 12noon to accommodate representatives from the local schools.
- The meeting takes place in the Council Chamber
- Refreshments/buffet is provided for invited guests in the Charter Hall
- Invitations are focused on local businesses, including those on the industrial estates, rather than dignitaries. However, WDBC and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council continue to be invited.
- A budget to be provided