

Objectives

4. To facilitate a greater level and variety of employment within the town.
5. To welcome and support measures which maintain and improve the effectiveness and vibrancy of the town's retail and business centre, ensuring a thriving town.
6. To support the safeguarding of existing public transport and promote better links with other towns and areas - especially those of Exeter and Okehampton.

Introduction

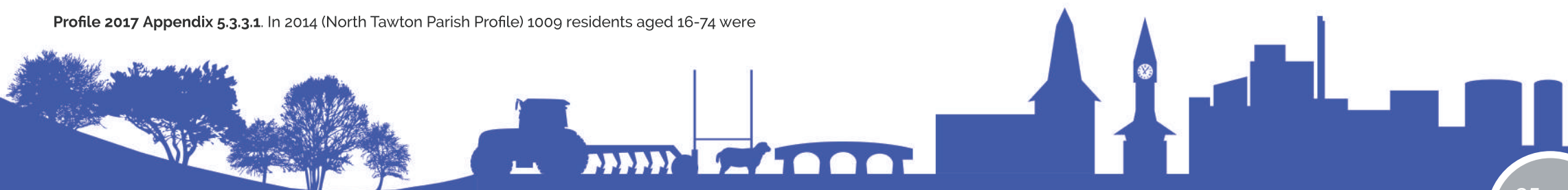
35.1 North Tawton is one of West Devon's more important settlements, providing local services and facilities for the surrounding rural parishes. In recognition of this it was identified as an important local centre for the surrounding villages in the West Devon Core Strategy (2011) and is named as one of the key 'Smaller Towns' in the Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan (Draft) (JLP). The location of the town and its easy access to the A30 means it has good links with Exeter and nearby Okehampton.

35.2 In 2017 the total population of North Tawton was 2032, of which 60.5% were aged between 16 and 64 years, slightly higher than in West Devon and the wider Devon County **JSNA Community Profile 2017 Appendix 5.3.3.1**. In 2014 (North Tawton Parish Profile) 1009 residents aged 16-74 were

economically active and 346 were economically inactive or not working. Of those working, just under 50% were full time employees, with 22% part time. A further 21% were self-employed either full or part time. Like most of West Devon, North Tawton has a higher proportion of economically active residents who are self-employed than the regional or national average.

35.3 In 2016 9.5% of North Tawton's population were dependent on benefits or tax credits, with 9.8% unemployed (*JSNA Community Profile 2017*). This is a similar level to neighbouring Okehampton and in West Devon as a whole. Households within North Tawton experiencing fuel poverty (14.3%) was slightly higher than in West Devon. Twelve % of young people aged 16-24 were claiming benefits, higher than the South West and nationally. In 2017 80% of young people gained 5 GCSE's or more A*-C which is 23% higher than the national average and considerably higher than the West Devon average, something for the young people of North Tawton to be proud of **Appendix 5.3.3.1 JSNA Community Profile 2017**.

35.4 North Tawton is well served by a number of strong businesses which have been a significant feature within the local economy for many years. These include Gregory Distribution and warehousing, Taw Valley Creamery (Arla Foods) and Vital Pet products at The Barton; all have a national or international reputation and provide employment opportunities for the residents of North Tawton and the surrounding areas. Each of these businesses developed historically from the agricultural productivity of the parish, and the wider agri-food industry continues to be important locally, contributing to food and drink, and tourism businesses, and underpinning the employment base.



3.0 Policies - Theme 3: Economy

36.1 Modelled supply chain data for the south west, by the Centre for Rural Policy Research, suggests that 44% of primary production is supplied to the region. A local example is the milk delivered to Arla from local, and wider peninsular farms, to manufacture cheese. Agriculture is responsible for about twice as much employment in Devon as it is generally in Great Britain with 15% of Devon's manufacturing employment being in food and drink processing.

36.2 Most of the land in the North Tawton parish is actively managed farmland and much is classified as best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV), with a belt of Grade 2 land lying to the south of the settlement, and substantial areas of Grade 3a throughout the parish. The NPPF sets out in paragraph 112 that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality with consideration given as to the impact on the future farming of the land and on the community.

36.3 There are other smaller employers within the town offering a range of employment opportunities including local retail outlets, hospitality and tourism, health services, motor mechanics, vets, skilled trades, fire station, manufacturing and artisan and craft.

36.4 Although still thriving, the town has experienced closures and changes to businesses particularly within the main Square. At the time of writing, the Store, Hardware Shop, the butchers and Nat West bank have closed. However, in a positive vein, the pharmacy has recently purchased the old bank, providing an updated and modern pharmacy facility, and the Post Office has undergone refurbishment. As shops or other businesses close or move premises there is a concern that these will no longer offer business and retail opportunities and the premises be absorbed into the residential sector.

36.5 A frequently raised issue that affects the viability of the retail centre of the town is adequate car parking and congestion. The policies within this theme seek to address these concerns, to ensure that North Tawton continues to be a vibrant and thriving town. The Draft JLP, through its Strategic Objective SO1 emphasises that development and change will be planned for and managed in accordance with principles of sustainable development. The policies within this Economy theme aim to address these principles of sustainability. The following sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) underpin these policies:

- Building a strong, competitive economy;
- Ensuring the vitality of town centres;
- Supporting a prosperous rural economy;
- Supporting high quality communications infrastructure;
- Promoting healthy communities.



3.0 Policies - Theme 3: Policy E1 - Local Employment Land

37.1 **Policy E1 i-iv** highlights the land within North Tawton that is currently utilised for employment and areas allocated within the JLP. **E1 v-vi** shows land where there is planning permission from West Devon for employment development which are commitment sites within this Plan.

37.2 Planning permission for the Bathway Development (planning reference 01037/2013) includes an area of land allocated for employment use which is an allocated site within the Draft JLP as 1,300 sq.m Class B1 Employment Space. This was the subject of a planning application for a further 28 houses with a request to use the land earmarked for employment units to build more houses. North Tawton Town Council have objected to this application, citing as their main reason the need to retain this for its intended purpose, that of employment. West Devon also refused the application. This area of land is currently for sale.

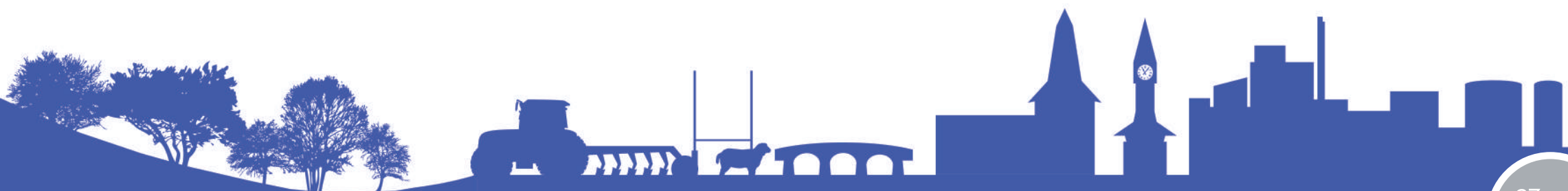
37.3 The land at the Woollen Mill had planning permission for mixed use – housing and B1 employment, which was valid until April 2018. Residents have for many years expressed a desire to see some positive development on this site. This is no longer an allocated site within the Draft JLP as it is unlikely to be developed in the near future. In the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, 47 out of 153 responses (31%) felt that the Woollen Mill site would be the best place for any new development, whether employment or housing, to take place. This site is allocated within Policy HO1.

37.4 Planning permission has been granted for employment use at land adjacent to Taw Bridge (planning reference 01153/2014).

37.5 There is some evidence of a need for businesses to seek new premises in the area; however this was only a small number of respondents within the Questionnaire (7 out of 23).

Relevant local and national Policies

- *Draft JLP: Strategic Objectives SPT4, SO8, SO9, TTV29. Policies DEV2, DEV14*
- *West Devon Borough Council Core Strategy 2011*
- *NPPF: Paragraphs 21,22,28*



3.0 Policies - Theme 3: Policy E1 - Local Employment Land

The following areas, shown on **Map E1**, are currently designated as local employment land:

- i) Haulage, Warehousing and Transport Depot
- ii) Taw Valley Creamery
- iii) The Barton
- iv) Former Station Yard

The following areas shown on **Map E1** are commitment sites for employment use

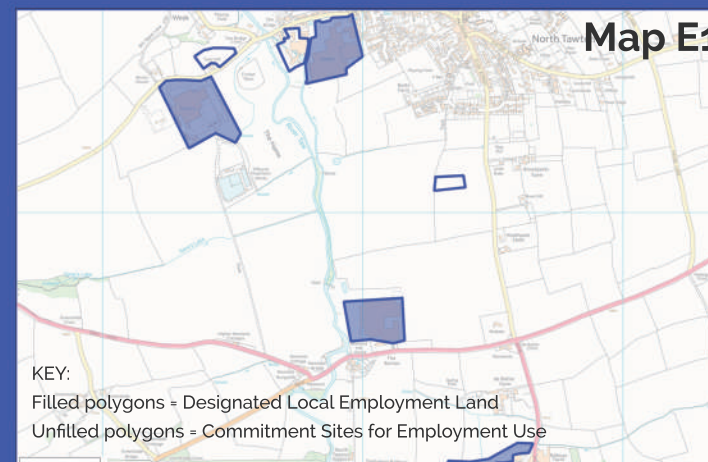
- v) Batheway Employment land (01037/2013)
- vi) Land at Taw Bridge (01153/2014)

Development proposals within these areas will be supported which:

- i) are for employment premises serving B1*, B2* or B8* uses (or a combination of these uses);
- ii) provide sufficient and secure off-street parking for cars, vans, HGVs, and bicycles;
- iii) have no adverse impacts on:
 - a. the character of the built environment;
 - b. the character of the natural environment and setting;
 - c. residential amenity;
 - d. traffic generation and congestion;
 - e. noise; and,
 - f. light pollution;
- iv) do not contribute to increased flood risk and use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to mitigate this risk;
- v) do not cause the significant loss of best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV) graded 1 or 2.

Proposals which result in a more appropriate or efficient use of the site as employment land will be supported:

1. Where proposals are for the extension of existing premises, they should demonstrate, through a business plan, a net increase in full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs or demonstrate a need for the additional space to enable the business to grow;
2. Which suggest a change of use to an alternative use or uses on the site will only be supported where:
 - a) The alternative proposed use fulfils a need for that use locally;
 - b) It can be demonstrated that the use of the site solely for employment (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8) is no longer viable, through an active twelve-month marketing exercise where the property or site has been offered for sale or letting on the open market for these uses at a realistic price and no reasonable offers have been refused.



3.0 Policies - Theme 3: Policy E2: Homeworking

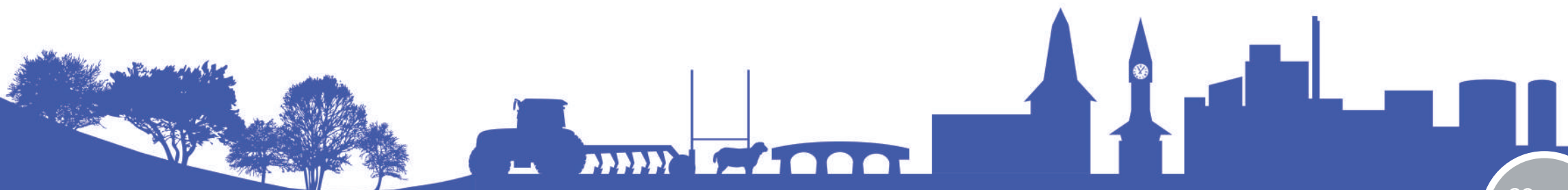
39.1 In 2014 21% of residents were self-employed. Like most of West Devon, North Tawton has a higher proportion of economically active residents who are self-employed than the regional or national average. Providing diverse employment opportunities for people, including working from home, enables the town to create a more rural entrepreneurial culture. This could be by providing space to develop small businesses (subject to appropriate planning approval) as well as opportunity to have a dedicated office space within the home. Policy E3 encourages developers to consider how they might make provision within dwellings for flexible space that can be used for home working.

Relevant District and National policies

- *Draft JLP: DEV15*
- *NPPF: Paragraph 21*

Policy E2 - Homeworking

Developers will be encouraged to make provision, within dwellings, for homeworking including internal space, availability of power, telephone and internet sockets to allow for flexible working arrangements.



3.0 Policies - Theme 3: Policy E3 - Live-Work Units

40.1 North Tawton is a working town and steps need to be taken to support and diversify the local economy. As well as making land for employment available, consideration needs to be given to business support and training. This Objective identifies the need to provide a greater level and variety of employment within the town. As evidenced above within **Policy E1** there is a lack of suitable or available land and sites for developing new employment opportunities. There is a need therefore for more creative and imaginative solutions. Live Work units offer a degree of flexibility and solution for residents seeking to develop a business and have affordable living accommodation. North Tawton has recently seen the development of such accommodation.

Relevant district and national policies

- **Draft JLP: DEV14&15**
- **NPPF: Paragraphs 21, 28**

Policy E3 - Live-Work Units

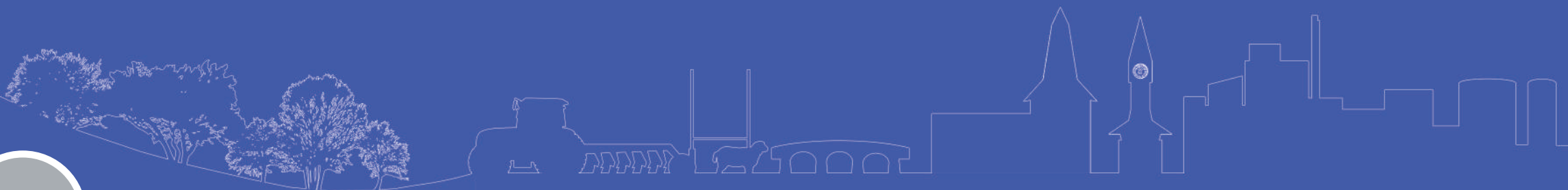
Development proposals which enable or facilitate working and living in the same building or on the same site will be supported where:

- they are well-related to the surrounding land and building uses;
- the uses do not cause unacceptable nuisance to neighbouring premises/properties;
- the proposal provides satisfactory living conditions for future occupants;
- they provide sufficient and secure off-street parking for cars, vans, HGVs, and bicycles;

- they do not contribute to increased flood risk and use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to mitigate this risk; and,
- there is no adverse impact on:
 - the character of the built environment;
 - the character of the natural environment and setting;
 - residential amenity;
 - traffic generation and congestion;
 - noise; and,
 - light pollution.

Proposals which seek the change of use of existing employment space to form accommodation must demonstrate that such changes do not result in an unacceptable loss of existing employment space to the detriment of the local economy. Proposals should retain existing ground floor employment space.

To ensure that the supply of live-work employment premises are retained for the benefit of the local economy, and to prevent the use of this policy to achieve wholly residential use through conversion of live-work units in the future, new additional development of live-work units permitted under this policy must remain as their proposed use in perpetuity to support the local economy unless it can be demonstrated, through a robust local economic assessment, that there is no demand or need for the live-work unit to remain as such for 3 years from the point of assessment.



3.0 Policies - Theme 3: Policy E4: Maintaining the Retail & Business Offer

41.1 North Tawton residents value the town's community spirit and the services and facilities around which that is centred. The hub of the town is The Square where the majority of the retail businesses lie. At one time there were shops selling a wide range of products in the streets leading into and around The Square ensuring that residents could buy everything they needed within the town. Today there are fewer shops and services. However these continue to be much valued by the residents, particularly the older people of the town and those without transport.

41.2 As well as shops and services North Tawton has three Public Houses – The Fountain, White Hart and Copper Key within walking distance of The Square and The Railway on the edge of the town. There is also a café, fish & chip shop and restaurant, and international fast food outlet within The Square. All these businesses contribute to the viability and vitality of the town.

41.3 In the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, just under 50% of respondents said they used the local shops daily rising to 90% for weekly visits. The majority of these used the Post Office and pharmacy. 93% of respondents said they shopped in the town to 'top up' grocery shopping whilst only 7% did their main shopping in the town. The majority used Okehampton for their main shopping although an increasing number use online shopping. In response to the question 'what kind of business should we be trying to attract to North Tawton' a significant number of respondents indicated independent shops and restaurants.

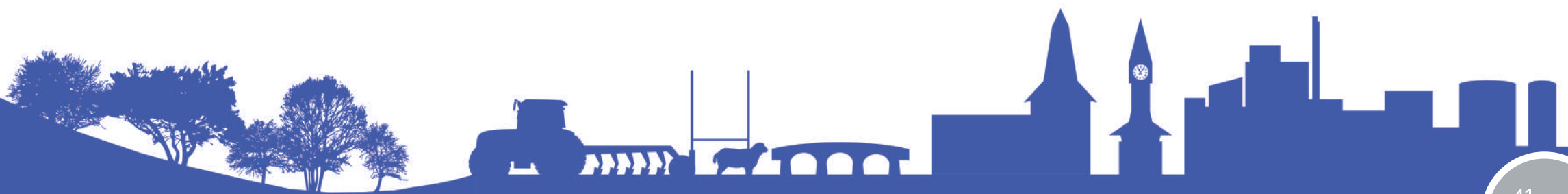
41.4 In response to the question 'what one thing would make you do more shopping in the town' the three most frequent responses were a greater variety of shops offering more choice, cheaper products and better car parking.

41.5 **Policy E4** provides an important timeframe for considering the future of retail and business premises if and when they become vacant, thus indicating the value of retaining, wherever possible, availability of choice for residents. This was reinforced by the feedback from residents at the Consultation Event (10th December 2016).

41.6 Policy DEV18 in the Draft JLP – Protecting local shops and services, – reinforces this stating that development within centres should maintain the vitality and viability of the centre and ensure it retains its role in the retail hierarchy, meeting the needs of the area it serves. Change of use to other facilities of local community importance, will only be supported where there is no significant harm to the level of service locally and where there is no reasonable prospect of the business or community use continuing.

Relevant district and national Policies

- *Draft JLP: Policy DEV17 &18*
- *NPPF 23,28, 70*



3.0 Policies - Theme 3: Policy E4 - Maintaining the Retail & Business Offer

Policy E4 - Maintaining the Retail & Business Offer

North Tawton Town Centre and the town's primary retail & business premises are defined on

Map E4

Within the town centre's retail and business area, the primary retail premises will be protected from change of use and development proposals for change of use to non-retail and non-service uses will only be supported where they demonstrate that:

- i) they have been marketed for existing use for a period of 12 months;
- ii) there is no significant harm to the level of service locally and where there is no reasonable prospect of the business continuing;
- iii) the proposal demonstrates that there is no demand for the existing or alternative uses suitable to the town centre retail area;
- iv) options of conversion to alternative service uses have been considered and it has been demonstrated that such uses would not be viable and there is no market demand.



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3.0 Policies - Theme 3: Safeguarding Public Transport

Safeguarding Public Transport and Opportunities for the Reinstatement of the Railway

43.1 Currently there is no regular train service between Okehampton and Exeter. In the summer months there is a Sunday service which has proved popular with residents and visitors to the area. There has been a much-publicised campaign to reinstate a regular all-year-round service between Okehampton and Exeter, a need which became even more urgent during the winter of 2014 when the mainline through Dawlish to the South West was closed due to flooding. The Neighbourhood Plan supports the reinstatement of the railway between Okehampton and Exeter. North Tawton has not had its own Railway Station since the 1960s however, should a regular service be introduced, the re-opening of a local station or halt would be an aspiration for the town.



43.2 This would not only provide access to Okehampton and Exeter for shopping and employment for residents but also bring visitors to the town and surrounding areas. Policy E6 reinforces this commitment to supporting the reinstatement of the railway. This is supported within SPT8 – Strategic Connectivity, within the Draft JLP and also SO8 which refers to sustainable transport links to other settlements.

43.3 88% of respondents to the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire expressed support for the Okehampton to Exeter railway to reopen on a regular basis. 80% said they would use the railway for social reasons, 67% to connect to mainline train services, and 24% would use the train to travel to work.

43.4 30% of respondents raised the Bus Service as a transport issue, with a number of people highlighting the need for the buses to run later in the evening. Should the train service from Okehampton to Exeter be reinstated, within the life of this plan, a direct bus service from North Tawton to Okehampton should also be reinstated.

Related district and national policies

- *Draft JLP: Strategic Objective SPT8 & SPT9, policy DEV31*
- *NPPF: Paragraphs 29,30,69*

