

East Devon Local Plan 2020-2040

Site Selection report

Employment Site, Venn's Farm,
Sowton



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 East Devon District Council is preparing a Local Plan covering the period 2020 to 2040 that will allocate sites for development. The Site Selection methodology explains the process of how sites are identified, assessed, and selected for allocation, or not.¹ The selection process is a judgement that balances top-down strategic issues relating to the Local Plan district-wide housing and employment requirements and the spatial strategy for the distribution of development, with the specific factors in the site assessments.
- 1.2 For each settlement, a Site Selection report contains the assessment of sites and identifies those which will be allocated, alongside those that will not, with reasons why. It collates evidence from numerous other sources in assessing whether to allocate sites.²
- 1.3 For each site, the report contains identifying details, a map and photos, followed by a summary of the site assessment and conclusion on whether to allocate the site. This is followed by a more detailed assessment of the landscape, historic environment, and ecological impacts of each site.
- 1.4 This report contains the assessment and selection of one site at Venn's Farm, Sowton. A map of the site which has been assessed is below, followed by a table which highlights the site selection findings.
- 1.5 In addition to the sites which have been subject to assessment, other sites were not assessed because they did not pass 'site sifting'. This stage of the process rules out sites that are not 'reasonable alternatives' and therefore not considered as potential allocations in the Local Plan. In summary, to pass site sifting and therefore be considered as a potential allocation, the site should be identified as suitable, available, achievable in the HELAA; in a suitable location; not already allocated in a 'made' Neighbourhood Plan; and not already have planning permission. For obvious reasons, overlapping sites will only be assessed once. Further detail is contained in the Site Selection methodology.
- 1.6 The following sites did not pass site sifting at Venn's Farm, Sowton:
 - GH/ED/67 unachievable in the HELAA for strategic employment development, even alongside HELAA sites GH/ED/66 and 68. This is

¹ INSERT WEB LINK TO UPDATED VERSION OF METHODOLOGY, ALSO INCL. ECOLOGY, LANDSCAPE, HESA SPECIFIC METHODOLOGIES

² Following the approach advocated by the Planning Advisory Service – see Topic 5 – Site Selection Process: [Future Proofing the Plan Making Process | Local Government Association](#)

due to highways access constraints, which will limit the scale and type of development that could be delivered.

- GH/ED/68 unachievable in the HELAA for strategic employment development, even alongside HELAA sites GH/ED/66 and 67. This is due to highways access constraints, which will limit the scale and type of development that could be delivered.
- Sowt_10 not suitable in the HELAA for housing development.

Figure 1.1: Overview of Site Selection findings on land at Venn’s Farm, Sowton

Site reference	Number of dwellings / hectares of employment land	Allocate?
GH/ED/66	19.29 hectares	No

Please Note: After this report was finalised we received an EIA screening and scoping request (24/0004/EIA) for development of employment uses at this site. This report does not take any of the content of the submission into account.

2 Site Reference GH/ED/66

Site details

Settlement: The site is on the opposite side of the A30 to an existing employment site

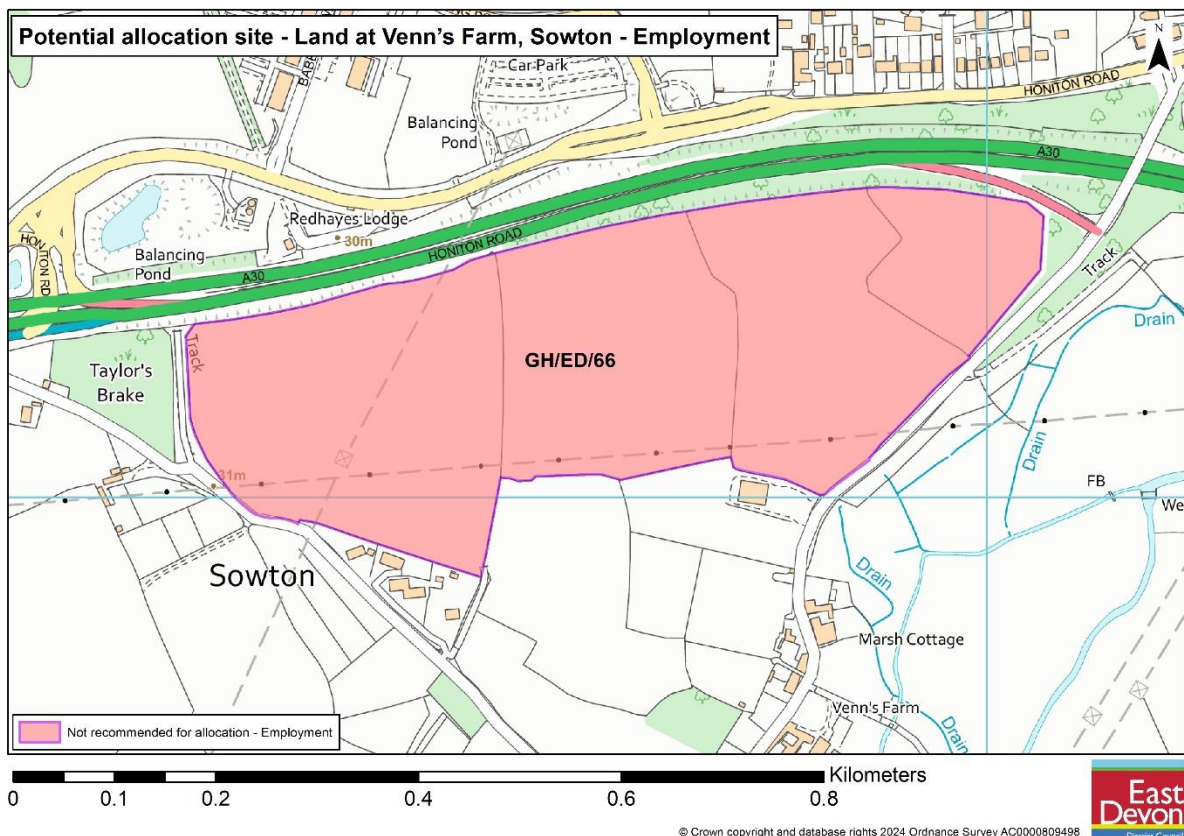
Reference number: GH/ED/66

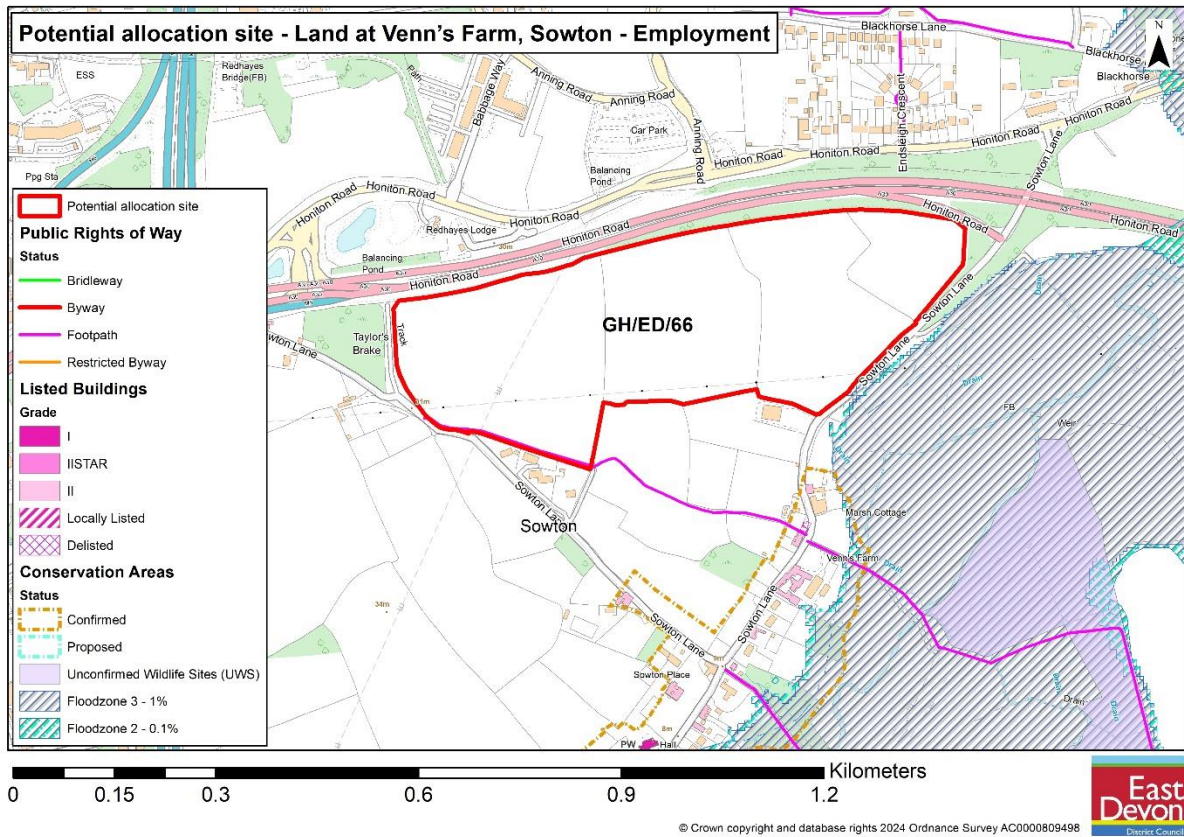
Site area (ha): 19.29ha

Address: Land at Venn's Farm, Sowton

Proposed use: Employment

Site map





Photos



Looking north across the easternmost fields (GH/ED/66b) from the gateway onto Sowton Lane.



Looking north towards the site from the northern edge of the conservation area. The eastern fields are clearly visible and the land rises up towards the A30



Looking eastwards from the western end of Sowton Lane across the western part of the site (GH/ED/66a).



Looking north across the western part of the site. The Science Park buildings on the north of the A30 can just be seen in the middle distance.

Site Assessment Summary and Conclusion

Infrastructure

Vehicular access could be gained to the south of the fly-over embankment on Sowton Lane, where the road levels to the same height as the land. There are issues providing access off the A30, due to proximity to the Junction 29 M5/A30. A developer contribution to the "Clyst Valley Cycle Trail" would be required. The nearest bus stop is 200m away at Blackhorse, which has an hourly or better bus service to Exeter City Centre. Currently no cycle route, but potential to link up to existing cycle infrastructure to Cranbrook and Exeter at Blackhorse. A cycle bridge over the A30 linking to the Science Park and park and change facility on Tithebarn Green would be required to help address access issues. Site would need to provide improved road, public transport, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Landscape

Medium sensitivity. Not within a protected landscape. The site is several adjoining, sloping paddocks. The eastern half of the site is more visible and could impact on the setting of the conservation area to the south.

Historic environment

Medium-High- there is an impact on the conservation area to the south east of the site and individual HERs within the north eastern section of the site. This could be reduced by limiting development to the western half of the site

Ecology

Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant).

Accessibility

Vehicular access could be achieved from Sowton Lane although there are capacity issues at the nearby M5 junction. The nearest bus stop is 200m away at Blackhorse, which has an hourly or better bus service to Exeter City Centre. A cycle bridge over the A30 linking to the Science Park and park and change facility on Tithebarn Green would be required to help address access issues. Site would need to provide improved road, public transport, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Other constraints

Within the Clyst Valley Regional Park. Work is required to ensure that an adequate access can be achieved from Sowton Lane. Archeological assessment is required due to the proximity of HER's. Conservation assessment required to confirm that the CA and listed buildings will not be impacted (including assessing potential for a reduced area designation)

Within Green Wedge in adopted Local Plan 2013-31 or made Neighbourhood Plan?

Yes

Opportunities

The site could provide a new employment site and new pedestrian/cycle links through it and to the wider area, including the wider Clyst Valley Regional Park.

Yield (number of dwellings or hectares of employment land)

19.2 hectares

Contribution to spatial strategy

The site is not directly adjacent to an existing settlement or employment site however it is strategically located in the West End and, if developed, will be linked to the Science Park by a cycle bridge.

Should the site be allocated?

No

Reasons for allocating or not allocating

The site is strategically well located, opposite the Science Park and close to the M5 and West End development. However, close proximity to the Sowton Conservation Area and potential impact on heritage assets reduces the site capacity and restricts development to the western part of the site. Even with a reduced area, the need for a cycle bridge and complex access arrangements will result in potential further harm to the heritage assets and impact upon the financial viability of the scheme, and these impacts cannot be quantified or satisfactorily assessed without much more detailed information.

If whole site is not suitable for allocation, could a smaller part be allocated?

No.