

Report to: Strategic Planning Committee



Date of Meeting 20 October 2020

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Employment Land Review to year ending 31 March 2020

Report summary:

This report provides summary details of the Employment Land Review produced by the Planning Policy section for 2019-20.

Recommendation:

That members acknowledge this report.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the Council has an up to date report monitoring employment land availability and use within the district and also to provide information on numbers of residents of East Devon in employment and job numbers in the District.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action
- Corporate Services and COVID-19 Response and Recovery
- Democracy and Transparency
- Economy and Assets
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications requiring comment.

Legal implications:

The Employment Land Review is a technical document which the Council is legally required to regularly review, thereby ensuring local plan policies and decision making is based upon adequate, up to date and relevant evidence.

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/monitoring/>
<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/3721231/employment-land-review-to-year-end-31-march-2020.pdf>

Link to [Council Plan](#):

Priorities (check which apply)

- Outstanding Place and Environment
 - Outstanding Homes and Communities
 - Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
 - Outstanding Council and Council Services
-

Report in full

1 Background Information

- 1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework requires Local Authorities to support sustainable economic growth by setting out a clear economic vision and strategy for their area and to ensure there is sufficient land available to support growth. National Planning Policy Guidance advises on what employment considerations can be monitored, which form the basis of this report.
- 1.2 The latest Employment Land Review report for East Devon provides monitoring records up to March 31st 2020.

2 Employment Land Use Monitoring

- 2.1 Monitoring is based mainly on the assessment of 'B' use classes which included B1: Business, B2: General Industrial and B8: Storage and Distribution (as of March 2020). Some 'Sui Generis' or other uses that occupy employment sites, that do not fall into a B category but which are similar in nature, are also monitored.
- 2.2 Employment sites which typically cover at least 1,000 square metres (0.1 ha) containing B uses are mapped out. For avoidance of any confusion, "site" in this context constitutes a whole employment area or estate rather than an individual plot of land; so, for example, Heathpark in Honiton is classified as an employment site and within Heathpark there are vacant plots of land, as well as many existing businesses and buildings.
- 2.3 A list of small sites are also monitored on an annual basis with a threshold of 100 square metres of site area or buildings with 50 square metres of floor space, above which sites are recorded.
- 2.4 A full schedule of relevant planning permissions and completions since inception of the Local Plan in 2013 is provided for all major and small sites, with further information on sites / plots that are under construction or have outstanding permissions.
- 2.5 Records are also provided on the completion of planning permissions during the last seven years.
- 2.6 Vacant, available sites by virtue of a Local Plan allocation or planning permission, which are likely to be policy compliant and with scope for development, are identified. Plots within

employment sites that are not identified as necessarily being policy compliant but which may offer scope for development are also shown in the same category.

- 2.7 Plans of each site are provided illustrating the detail of activity for individual properties during the last five years. Each plan also maps out vacant land as described in paragraph 2.6.
- 2.8 Information is also given on non-domestic rated units within employment sites which are occupied or empty at each site on separate plans.

3. Overview of Employment Land Review for 2019-20

3.1 Planning Permissions

Nineteen planning permissions granted during 2019-20 amounted to approximately 5.56 hectares of net additional site area; seventeen permissions were for plots within major sites and two were at small sites.

3.2 Permissions Under Construction at March 31st 2020

There were six plots under construction, amounting to approximately 2.60 hectares of net additional site area, as of March 31st 2020. This figure includes work on plots at Woodbury Business Park, Dunkeswell Airfield and three smaller sites.

3.3 Outstanding Permissions

At March 31st 2020, there were 56 site areas with extant planning permission amounting to approximately 42.86 hectares.

3.4 Completions

Sixteen completions during 2019-20 amounted to 23.51 hectares of net additional site area. This figure mainly comprises the new Amazon Distribution Centre, near Exeter, but also includes plots at Greendale Business Park and Mill Park Industrial Estate / Hogsbrook Units, as well as a number of smaller sites.

3.5 Allocated Sites

The report details 24 plots of land across a number of employment sites that are specifically allocated in the Local Plan for employment use or are otherwise seen as having possible development potential / being available; these allocations amount to approximately 64.16 hectares. This includes allocations within mixed use sites where specific plots are not yet identified; where this is the case, only one plot has been included in the total of 24 for each site but the overall area of land allocated for employment has been included in full within the stated total of 64.16ha.

3.6 Non-Domestic Rated Properties

At March 31st 2020, there were 1,295 premises within East Devon employment sites rated for non-domestic use; 130 of which (or around 10%) were classed as empty.

4. Employment Numbers in East Devon

- 4.1 This section of the report provides background information on job numbers and employment statistics relevant to East Devon as reported in the monitoring report.
- 4.2 The monitoring report notes that East Devon is characterised by comparatively low wage levels. Drawing on Government data, from the NOMIS web site (see: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157358/subreports/asher_compared/report.aspx) East Devon has the 129th lowest, of the 365 recorded local authorities in Great Britain, median gross weekly resident pay level for full time workers. But, in Devon, all other local authority areas (with the exception of Exeter) have lower median gross weekly resident pay levels for full time workers.
- 4.3 Unemployment rates, reported on NOMIS (see: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157358/subreports/ea_time_series/report.aspx?) for East Devon measured for the April 2019 to March 2020 period are also low (despite the low wage levels). East Devon has a reported unemployment rate of 2.6% (a total of 1,700 people up from 1,300 in the previous monitoring period); this places the District as the joint 64th lowest (down from the second lowest) of the 365 measured local authorities in Great Britain.
- 4.4 It should be noted, however, that the unemployment rate does not show a complete picture of people that are **not** economically active (i.e. not in work) but that may like a job. The Nomis web site (see: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157358/report.aspx>) reports on there being 13,500 economically inactive residents of East Devon aged 16 to 64 – these are people that are neither in employment or counted as unemployed and, of this total, the Nomis website records that 10,100 are under a category of ‘does not want a job’ (Apr 2019 to Mar 2020).
- 4.5 The number of actual jobs located in East Devon, drawing on NOMIS data, fluctuates quite markedly from year-to-year, see: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157358/subreports/bres_time_series/report.aspx

Year	East Devon (employee jobs)	South West (employee jobs)	Great Britain (employee jobs)
2015	45,000	2,366,000	28,565,000
2016	45,000	2,398,000	29,045,000
2017	44,000	2,415,000	29,368,000
2018	48,000	2,447,000	29,583,000

- 4.6 What can be clearly seen is that the reported job numbers located in East Devon can show very marked changes over short time periods. For example, a decrease of 1,000 jobs (down 2.22%) from 2016 to 2017, and an increase of 4,000 jobs (up 9.09%) from 2017 to 2018. The data shows that over the four years from 2015 to 2018 job numbers were at their highest in the most recent survey year, 2018.
- 4.7 It should be noted that whilst many of the jobs that are based in East Devon will be filled by East Devon residents, there are also large numbers of people that live elsewhere that commute into the district for work purposes. The 2011 census – see: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/WU03UK/chart/1132462159> – showed 12,500 people travelling into the District for jobs, but a higher number, 18,405 East Devon residents, travelled out of the District for jobs (most of these, 11,430, were to Exeter).