

**East Devon Local Plan 2020-2042**

# **Site Selection report**

## **Employment Land North of Exeter Airport**



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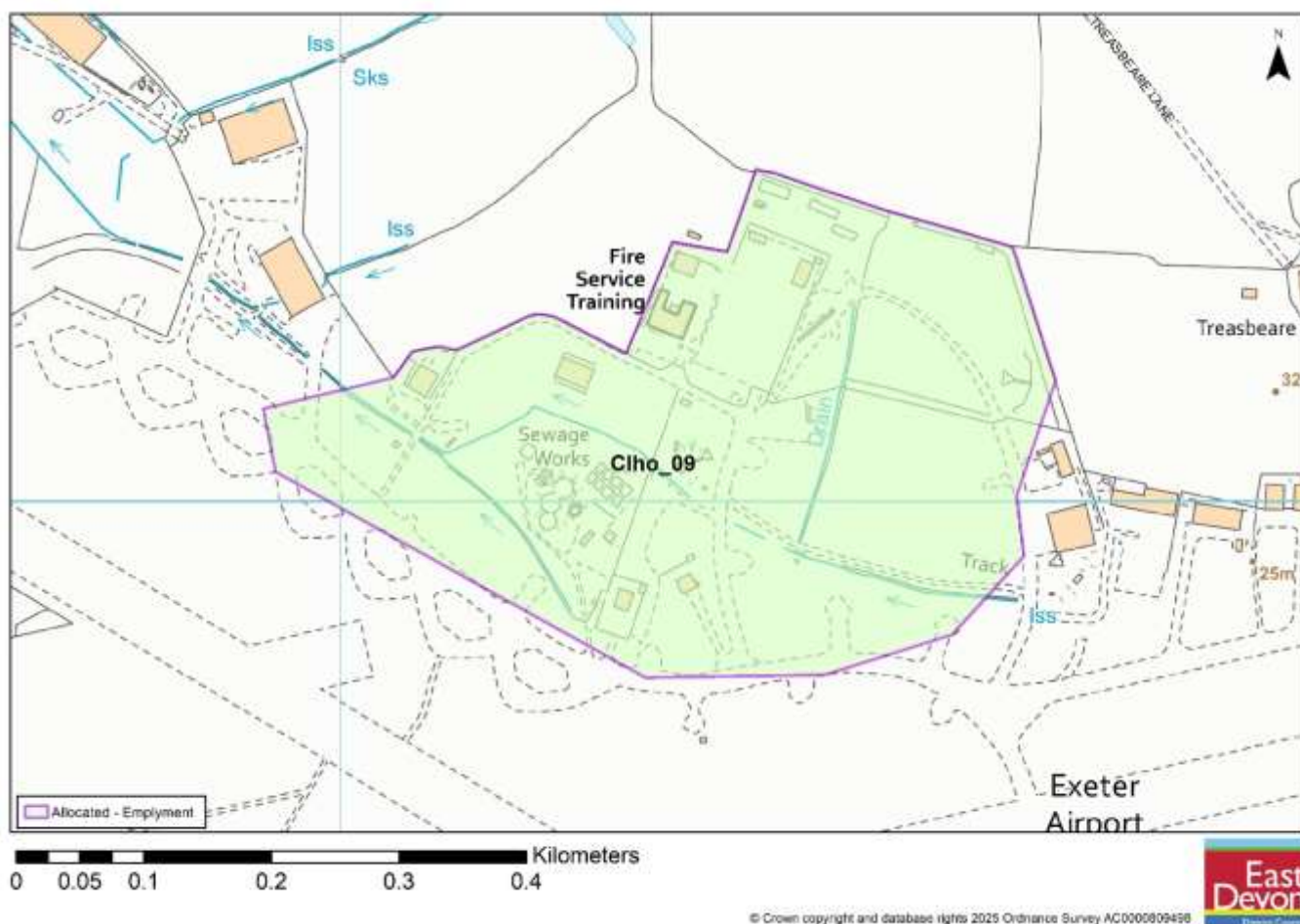
# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 East Devon District Council is preparing a Local Plan covering the period 2020 to 2042 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>
- 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 to the North of Exeter Airport. 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 land to the North of Exeter Airport:
  - GH/ED/01 overlaps with Clho\_09.

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<sup>1</sup> Site Selection Methodology (2024): [sal-001-site-selection-methodology\\_v2-2020-2042.pdf](#); Landscape Assessment: [sal-002-landscape-sensitivity-assessment-methodology.pdf](#); HESA Methodology: [sal-003-historic-environment-site-assessment-methodology.pdf](#); Ecology Guidelines: [sal-004-ecology-guidelines-for-housing-allocation.pdf](#)

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



**Figure 1.1: Overview of Site Selection findings on land North of Exeter Airport**

Site reference	Number of dwellings / hectares of employment land	Allocate?
Clho_09	15.3ha	Yes

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## 2 Site Reference Clho\_09

### Site details

**Settlement:** North of Exeter Airport

**Reference number:** Clho\_09

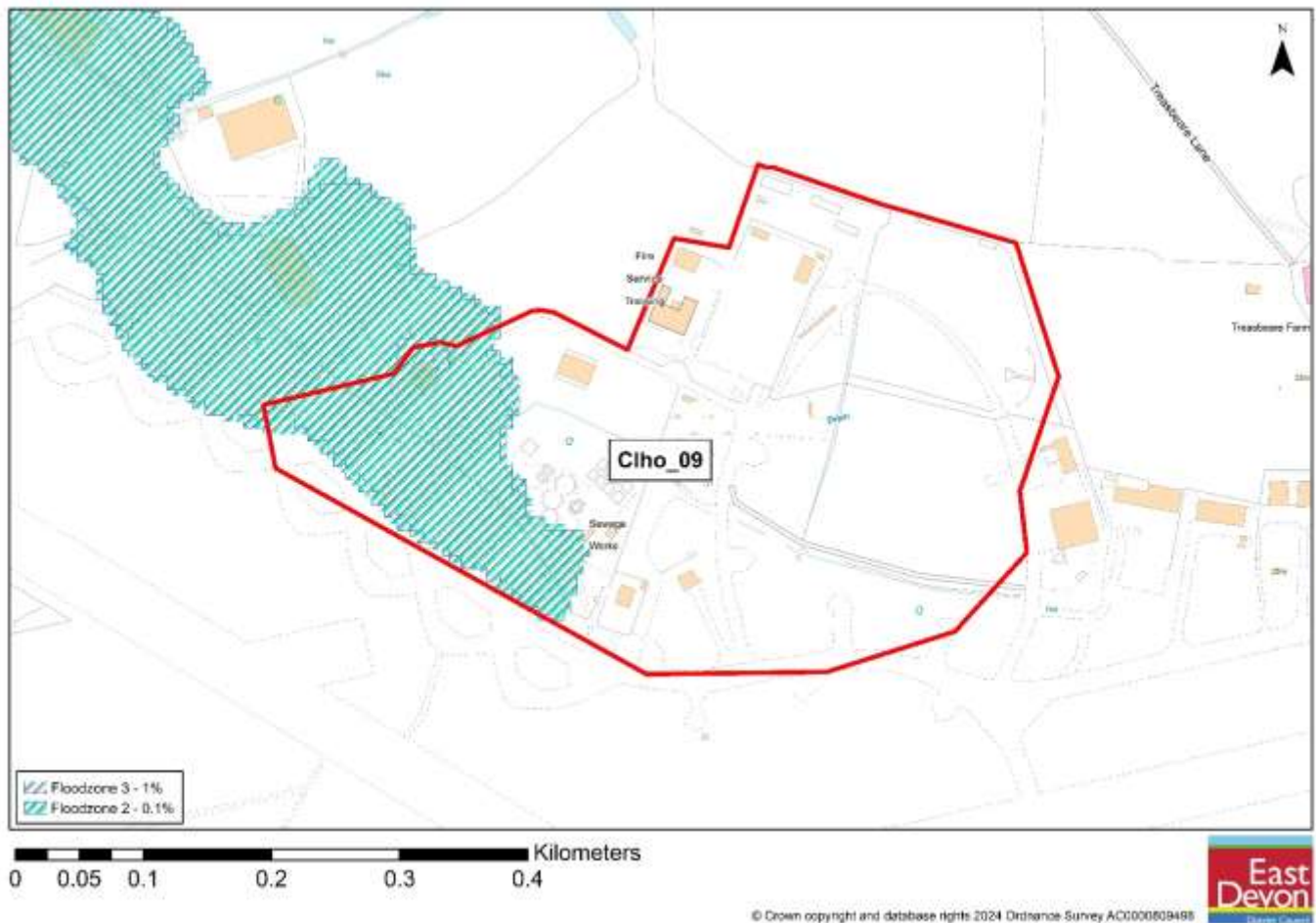
**Site area (ha):** 15.3ha

**Address:** Land to north (Phase 1) of Exeter International Airport

**Proposed use:** Employment

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## Site map



## Photos

No photos available.

## Site Assessment Summary and Conclusion

### Infrastructure

Poor access, very close to airport

### Landscape

Low- the landscape is previously developed/degraded

### Historic environment

Moderate - Change affecting the special character of assets, where elements which contribute to their significance and their setting are harmed. The site was formerly farmland but was built as an RAF airfield in the 1940's. The site contains infrastructure on the HER associated with the airfield use

## **Ecology**

No concerns identified

## **Accessibility**

The site lies close to Cranbrook and employment uses, within the airfield, although these are not easily accessible. It will adjoin the Treasbeare expansion area but that is not yet developed. It is understood that an upgraded access can be provided and, during the plan period, further development will take place around the site.

## **Other constraints**

Within the airport safeguarding and noise zones

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

No

## **Opportunities**

### **Yield (number of dwellings or hectares of employment land)**

15.3ha of employment land

### **Contribution to spatial strategy**

The site is not at a tiered settlement, although it will be in future.

### **Should the site be allocated?**

Yes, However, this part of the site is subject to flooding and further work will be required to understand the extent and nature of the flood risk (through a Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment).

### **Reasons for allocating or not allocating**

This site performs reasonably well in terms of location and accessibility to existing development. This will improve during the plan period as further development takes place around the site, particularly at Treasbeare. Employment development is appropriate in this location due to proximity of the airport and likely noise impacts on other uses. A new access is required to be provided and archaeological assessment and safeguarding of any heritage assets on site.

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

No

# Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

## Context

### Landscape designation context

Outside National Landscape, degraded farmland former airport site

### For sites within National Landscape, applicable special qualities

Outside of National Landscape

### Other relevant biodiversity, historic environment and/or geological designations

Fields and commercial uses, part of Exeter airport

### Landscape Character Type and relevant key characteristics

3E Lowland Plains

### Local landscape character of site and immediate surrounds

**Does the local landscape character of the site and immediate surrounds conform to published assessments?**

Yes

### General and site-specific affects that could arise from development

## Analysis

<b>Physical and natural characteristics</b>	
Low-medium	The site makes a minimal contribution to local landscape character due to being flat, with few notable features, and the dominance of the airport and utilitarian infrastructure
<b>Cultural and historic associations</b>	
Low	Limited remaining historic boundary hedgerows, present on 1890 OS map. Airport was established in the 1940's and some of the structures within the site warrant further investigation due to their RAF association
<b>Relationship to existing settlement edge</b>	
High	The site was in historic agricultural use but this has largely been superceded by the airport expansion and reuse of the utilitarian buildings

	for fire rescue training and a sewage treatment plant. No relationship to nearby settlements but potential historic importance which requires further assessment
<b>Experiential landscape character</b>	
Low	The site is level and feels fairly remote due to the distance between it and other development and the expanse associated with the airport use. It is quiet except for bursts of intense aircraft noise
<b>Views</b>	
Low	The site already contains older utilitarian buildings which would presumably be replaced. New development would be seen in the context of other business park/commercial development around the airport, a trunk road, the sewage works infrastructure and the airport itself.
<b>Overall landscape susceptibility</b>	
Medium	Visually the site is nondescript and does not contribute significantly to local landscape character. It's historical association with the RAF and wider airport use may be significant and warrant further investigation
<b>Within nationally designated landscape? No</b>	
<b>Degree of intervisibility with designated landscape</b>	<b>If outside designated landscape, factors which may raise or lower value from moderate</b>
None	Value is reduced by nearby urban form and presence of existing utilitarian structures (although these warrant further investigation due to potential historic significance)
<b>Landscape value</b>	
Low – Despoiled or degraded landscape with little or no evidence of being valued by the local community	
<b>Overall landscape sensitivity</b>	
Medium / Low	
<b>Landscape guidance: opportunities in relation to development</b>	
This site would be suitable for commercial development provided further investigation demonstrates that the existing buildings are not historically significant	

## Historic Environment Site Assessment

### Notes on history of area

The site was formerly farmland but was built as an RAF airfield in the 1940's. The site contains infrastructure on the HER associated with the airfield use

### Overall conclusion

Moderate - Change affecting the special character of assets, where elements which contribute to their significance and their setting are harmed.

<b>Step 1. Identify any heritage assets potentially affected</b>	
Is the site within 100 metres of a designated heritage asset?	No
Could development of the site affect any heritage asset (designated or non-designated) or its setting?	Yes
List any heritage assets potentially affected.	Exeter Airfield and associated RAF infrastructure

<b>Step 2. Existing contribution of site to significance of heritage asset</b>	
Heritage asset 1	
Description of asset	Former RAF Exeter, established in 1940 by RAF Fighter Command's No. 10 Group. Runways were laid and new buildings and structures, including hangars, a control tower, administrative offices, the station sick quarters, aircraft dispersal pens, living accomm. Of concern to this assessment are the sewage works, machine gun range, midden and fighter pen
Significance of asset and setting	Further assessment is required but, as the airfield comprises the whole site, it is potentially significant
Relationship of site with heritage asset	Further assessment is required but, as the airfield comprises the whole site, it is potentially very significant
Level of contribution (site to heritage asset)	Significant
Further assessment required?	Yes if site is to be allocated

<b>Step 3. Identifying potential impact on significance of heritage asset</b>	
Heritage asset 1	
What impact would development have on the heritage asset and its setting?	The site would need to be cleared in order to be comprehensively redeveloped. A layout could be drawn to retain the buildings but this would not leave a large area for new development
Could the site be developed in a way that minimised potential impact?	Potentially through considered design and layout appropriate to the asset.
Would the development affect the heritage asset in other ways?	Yes, the site would need to be cleared if it is comprehensively redeveloped. In any case there would be increased urbanisation, traffic, light pollution.

<b>Step 4. How to maximise enhancements and avoid harm</b>	
Heritage asset 1 maximising enhancement	
Could the development improve public access to and interpretation of the heritage asset?	No
Would development enable further research and recording of the heritage asset?	No
Would development enable better revealing of the significance of the heritage asset?	No
Would development enable the asset to be removed from the at risk register?	No
Heritage asset 1 avoiding harm	
Are there reasonable alternative sites?	Yes
Could the site boundary be changed to avoid harm?	Yes
Could the amount of development be reduced to avoid harm?	Yes
Would a different type of development (use) avoid harm?	No
Could design avoid harm?	See notes
Notes	Potentially a smaller part of the site could be developed to avoid individual structures (although noting that the whole airfield is on the HER), however this would lead to piecemeal development and is unlikely to be an acceptable solution. A comprehensive scheme which safeguards or mitigates harm to assets is preferred.

## Ecological assessment

### Context – Sites and features (desk study)

Site / feature name	Geographic value	Distance from site / feature (metres)	Predicted impact
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	International	5400	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Special Protection Area (SPA)	International	5400	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Ramsar site	International	7100	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)

Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)	National	24000	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	National	5000	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	National	5900	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Regional	10900	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Ancient Woodland Inventory Site (AWSI)	Regional	4100	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
County Wildlife Site (CWS)	County	2300	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Unconfirmed Wildlife Site (UWS)	County	1600	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Draft Nature Recovery Network areas (NRN)	County	195	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Section 41 Habitat of Principle Importance (including rivers and streams, excluding hedgerow)	County	513	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)

**Comments**

None

**Within River Axe SAC Nutrient catchment zone?**

**No**

**Within Beer Quarry and Caves SAC bat consultation zone?**

**No**

**Within East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC HRA mitigation zone?**

**Yes**

**Within Exe Estuary SPA HRA mitigation zone?**

**Yes**

**Within East Devon Pebblebed Heaths 400m exclusion zone?**

**No**

**Number of European sites potentially impacted by site:**

**2**

## **On site assessment**

**Does the site consist of any habitats other than agriculturally improved grassland or arable (excluding small/negligible areas of habitat)?**

Commercial airport use with car parking, sewage works and Fire rescue training building.  
Groundcover is a mix of scrub, concrete/tarmac and grass

**Presence of veteran or ancient trees**

There are a few mature trees and a hedgerow bisecting the site

**Large numbers of mature trees within hedgerows or otherwise**

No

**Presence of ponds not identified on aerial imagery**

No

**Networks of small field parcel and hedgerows (any areas where allocation is likely to require removal of substantial areas of hedgerow to facilitate a suitable development footprint)**

No

**Any other incidental features of ecological interest (protected/notable species incidentally recorded)**

No

**Is there any evidence which contradicts the desk study results?**

No

## **Conclusion**

Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)