

**East Devon Local Plan 2020-2042**

# Site Selection report

## Branscombe



February 2025

**Contact details**

Planning Policy  
East Devon District Council  
Blackdown House, Border Road, Heathpark Industrial Estate, HONITON,  
EX14 1EJ

Phone: 01404 515616

Email: [planningpolicy@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@eastdevon.gov.uk)

[www.eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/)  
[@eastdevon](https://www.instagram.com/eastdevon)

To request this information in an  
alternative format or language  
please phone 01404 515616 or  
email [csc@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:csc@eastdevon.gov.uk)

---

## Contents

1	Introduction.....	4
2	Site Reference Bran_01.....	6
3	Site Reference Bran_02.....	19

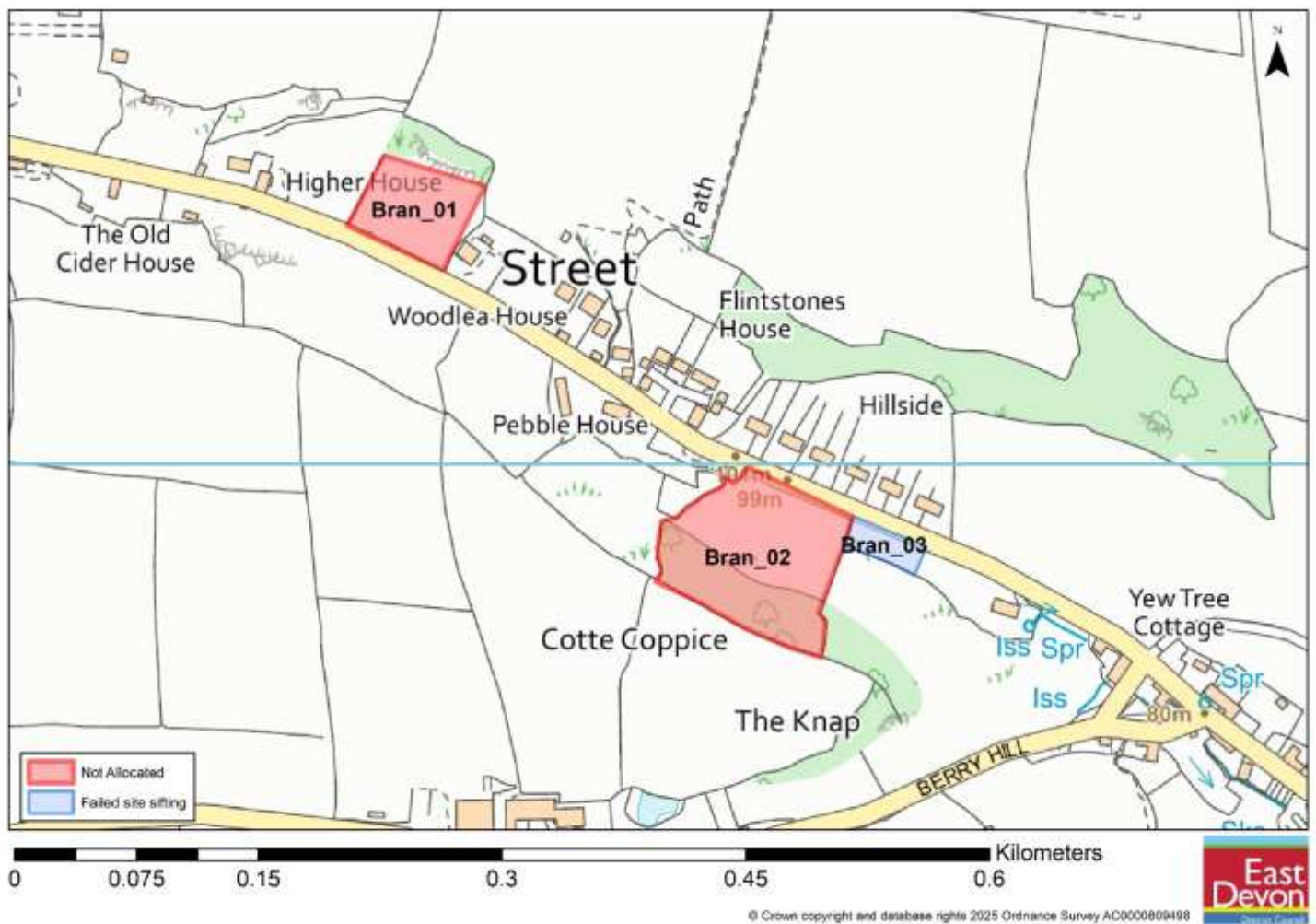
# 1 Introduction

- 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 sites at Branscombe. A map of all the sites which have 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 Branscombe:
  - Bran\_03 is below site size threshold so not suitable in the HELAA.

---

<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 at Branscombe**

Site reference	Number of dwellings / hectares of employment land	Allocate?
Bran_01	10	No
Bran_02	21	No

## 2 Site Reference Bran\_01

### Site details

**Settlement:** Branscombe

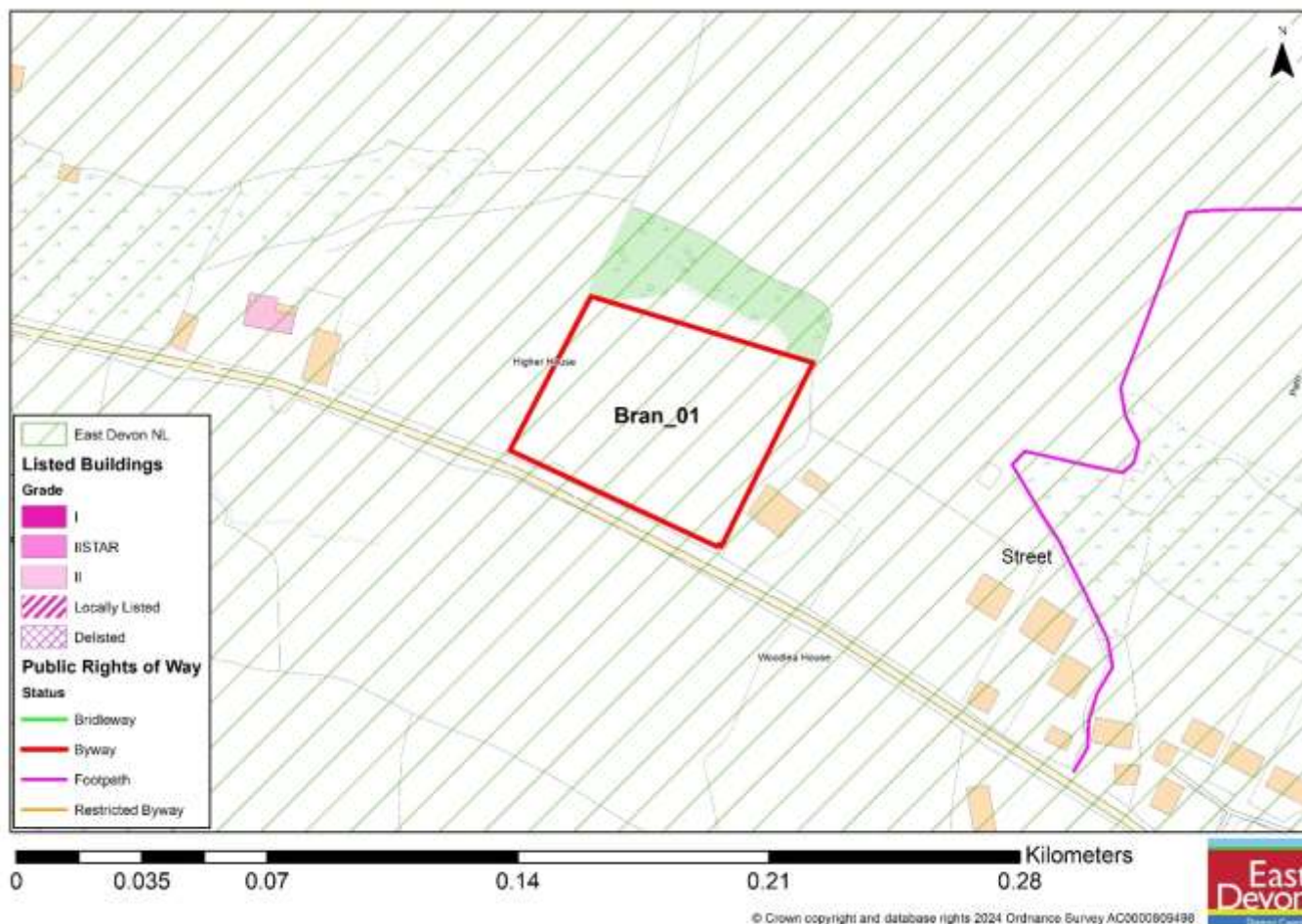
**Reference number:** Bran\_01

**Site area (ha):** 0.34

**Address:** Land to the west of Cott Mead, north side of the road, EX12 3BH

**Proposed use:** Residential

### Site map



## Photos



View across and into the site in a north-westerly direction



View at start of site from the lane looking east.



View of approach towards site from adjacent to Higher House farmhouse (arrow shows approx. site location)

## **Site Assessment Summary and Conclusion**

### **Infrastructure**

DCC Highways - although it may be technically possible to access this site for development it is very remote from services and facilities and the site has quite a steep gradient.

DCC Education - notes that Branscombe Primary has capacity to support development, home to school transport costs implications for secondary. Secondary capacity limited and would need to be looked at in combination with other sites.

### **Landscape**

The site lies entirely within the East Devon National Landscape (NL) on the lower slopes of a steep coombe valley side. Overall landscape sensitivity is assessed to be high. The site has some intervisibility from across the valley side and through the valley in both directions and stands apart from the sporadic ribbon development beyond.

### **Historic environment**

Assessed as an overall medium impact due to the relationship/intervisibility with the setting of the nearest identified heritage asset - a Grade II listed farmhouse. The land provides a countryside/agricultural context to the farmhouse, lying between it and the start of the more modern ribbon development of housing beyond that marks the start of the outskirts of Branscombe.

### **Ecology**

Assessed as overall significant moderate adverse effect. The site is across the lane from an area of grassland which is s41 Priority Habitat, and is bounded by hedgerow with mature trees. It is an area of unimproved pasture and site lies within the Beer Quarry Caves consultation zone.

### **Accessibility**

The site is recorded as having up to 7 community facilities and services within 1600m (primary school, children's play area, convenience store, post office, community hall, pub, open space/allotment). However, the shop has in fact now closed and the PO is only open for a few hours a week. Moreover, the site lies at the western extremity of the linear settlement of Branscombe, beyond a cluster of almost entirely residential /holiday accommodation uses. It is only the pub (Fountain Head) which is in the immediate vicinity. With a less than hourly bus service and narrow winding lanes with no pavement (and no opportunities to provide any), for the route to the majority of the facilities, which are clustered in the vicinity of the village hall over 1700m away, it is not considered an accessible/sustainable location and would be reasonable to assume the vast majority of services would be accessed by car, via the narrow network of lanes.

### **Other constraints**

Potentially part Grade 3 agricultural land. Band of surface water flooding (1 in 100 years) along road boundary.

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

No

**Opportunities**

Potential to support Branscombe Primary school which has capacity.

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

10 dwellings

**Contribution to spatial strategy**

Branscombe is a service village in the emerging Local Plan settlement hierarchy and therefore allocation would support the strategy to allow limited development to meet local needs.

**Should the site be allocated?**

No

**Reasons for allocating or not allocating**

Primarily for reasons of landscape and heritage impact and the poor accessibility of the location by sustainable modes of transport to facilities and services, which also have declined since the Role and Function Study assessment was undertaken.

**If the site as a whole is not considered suitable for allocation, could a smaller part of the site be allocated?**

Landscape impact would be lessened by developing only the lower, flatter part of the site but this would not overcome the accessibility issues linked to development in this location.

# Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

## Context

### Landscape designation context

East Devon AONB (National Landscape)

### For sites within AONB, applicable special qualities

Site lies entirely in the East Devon AONB (NL). Inland valley side, sloping area of pastoral land, with hedgerow along narrow lane and set below banding of mature trees/woodland.

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

None within 100m of site. Lies within Beer Quarry & Caves SAC Consultation Zone. Site lies outside but in close proximity to the heritage coast designation.

Grade II listed farmhouse 70m away within adjacent field boundary.

No geological designations recorded on RIGS.

### Landscape Character Type and relevant key characteristics

4D Coastal Slopes and Coombes: Within Devon Character Area 'Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau'.

Key relevant characteristics are: narrow and steep valleys; broadleaved woodland dominant in places; occasional remnant orchards; mix of unenclosed woodland and small to medium irregular fields, mainly pasture with pockets of wet pasture and scrub; long history of settlement with surviving historic buildings, lanes and field patterns; settlement pattern including dispersed villages; narrow winding roads; sense of timelessness in parts, although awareness of traffic & tourist influences; intimate and enclosed views in lower valleys.

### Local landscape character of site and immediate surrounds

Very closely relates to the published assessment. Site is a rough pasture field which looks formerly to have been an orchard, located on the slope of a steep coombe valley side. Views to and from the opposite side, and along the valley in both directions, restricted in varying degrees by intervening trees, hedgerows & houses. Winding lane adjoins the site to the south and a band of large/mature trees to the north.

### 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

Introduction of housing and associated infrastructure here would be partially screened when arriving in Branscombe from the west by the vegetation along the western boundary of the site, but would form the visual gateway at the start of this scattered linear village from this direction, extending the ribbon residential development that exists beyond. At present the undeveloped nature of the site contributes to the rural / tranquil feel and setting as part of the approach to Branscombe.

The topography slopes upwards and development on the slopes would be particularly prominent in the immediately locality and as part of the wider setting. Loss of an extent of the front boundary hedgerow, which contributes to the character of the winding rural lane, would presumably be needed here to create site access.

Although not immediately adjacent, the open pastoral nature of the site can be seen as part of the wider setting of Higher House Farm (including the Grade II listed farmhouse) which currently occupies a largely isolated location, which would be reduced by development of this site.

Generally development here would also increase activity with traffic movements on to the narrow lane, which suffers from traffic issues particularly in peak tourist season, as well as impact on the tranquillity and dark skies.

## Analysis

<b>Physical and natural characteristics</b>	
Medium-high	Small field, on the valley side, agricultural in nature, as part of an intricate and intimate landscape bounded by thick hedgerow along the winding narrow lane on the southern boundary, and generally small and irregular fields, some very steep. Boundary trees to the west and north which would provide some screening of development. In the wider landscape, there are swathes of woodland visible in the combe valleys. Removed from the site by approx 100m, the residential housing to the east is mainly detached post/inter-war housing, and several more modern dwellings, all with off-road parking area and managed gardens. Some of these are reasonably prominent in the landscape due to being part-way up the valley side. The flatter part of site is more sheltered, and bounded by dense hedgerow, but visibility splay would be needed resulting in partial hedgerow loss.
<b>Cultural and historic associations</b>	
Medium-high	Hedgebanks, traditional orchard remnant, small field patterns, nearby commencement of sporadic, ribbon and dispersed housing, proximity of historic farmhouse (grade II listed) , with traditional stone barn. Overall very varied local vernacular in the vicinity.

<b>Relationship to existing settlement edge</b>	
Medium-high	The site lies in proximity to the sporadic linear edge of Branscombe, which is characteristic of this village. However, it lies some 100m west from the start of this (beyond an intervening paddock/garden) and forms part of the setting in its current undeveloped state. Development to the east is 'loose knit', mainly detached, and set back from above the road making it more visible, whilst to the south and west it is more sporadic and well screened.
<b>Experiential landscape character</b>	
Medium-high	There is a sense of tranquility and a traditional rural feel in all directions from the site, along the winding rural lane. Minimal development is visible and the nearby modern housing appears sporadic and well screened/with a backdrop of countryside. The landscape of which the site forms part is intricate - the lower slopes/floor of the valley coombe in particular feel sheltered and intimate. There is a high scenic quality as part of the approach to Branscombe and through the valley, with the site contributing to a transition from residential to the east, to agricultural to the north and south. The site feels most visible to passers by from the east, and dropping down into Branscombe from Higher House Farm, with immediate views into the site along the road boundary largely blocked by the high and dense hedgerow.
<b>Views</b>	
Medium-high	The site is part enclosed, although boundary trees appear mainly deciduous. There are attractive views to and from the site in all directions, although partly obscured by vegetation and the boundary hedge along the lane is high and thick. This screens much of the site from motorists and walkers when directly passing by, but the site and views beyond are more visible when approaching down the valley from the west as the land drops down to the village. Similarly there are views into and through the site when leaving Branscombe, which mark the start of more scattered and isolated development. There was limited intervisibility noted from PROW in the area, and intervisibility with the surrounding AONB (NL) is partial with framed views up and down the valley. Development would be less visible if it were located on the flatter southern section of the site, but cumulatively this would be read with the existing housing set back and up from the road beyond to the east. From the opposite side of the valley development would be visible against trees/sky but again this would increase the further up the valley slope development was built.

<b>Overall landscape susceptibility</b>	
Medium-high	This is an undeveloped agricultural/possible former orchard site, which contributes to the rural setting on approach to and exit from Bransombe, separated from nearby dwellings and beyond the extreme edge of the ribbon development which makes is characteristic of this village. Due to the topography of the site there are views to the opposite valley side and partial intervisibility with the surrounding AONB (NL) that would be more apparent outside the summer season when screening from vegetation would be reduced.
<b>Within nationally designated landscape? Yes</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/slight/moderate/major	
<b>Landscape value</b>	
Very High – Nationally or internationally designated for landscape value (AONB (NL) / WHS)	
<b>Overall landscape sensitivity</b>	
High	
<b>Landscape guidance: opportunities in relation to development</b>	
If this site was to be allocated, development of the lower flatter part of the site would reduce impact, and if use of adjoining existing access point was an option.	

## Historic Environment Site Assessment

### Notes on history of area

The name of the parish is probably Celtic in origin, with the first settlers around 2700-2000BC. From the 17th to the 19th centuries, Branscombe was a source of hand-made lace. Fishing was also a traditional industry. The current Church of Saint Winifred was built between 1133 and 1160 in the Norman era and enlarged in stages over the following 200 years, but there is some archaeological evidence suggesting there may have been a former Saxon church or building on the site.

### Overall conclusion

Medium: no significant effects which cannot be mitigated. An impact is predicted, but would not compromise the asset(s) cultural heritage value to the extent that the attributes that led to its designation, or ability to understand or appreciate its value, are diminished or compromised. Mitigation may make the impact acceptable. The overall significance of the asset would not therefore be materially changed.

<b>Step 1. Identify any heritage assets potentially affected</b>	
Is the site within 100 metres of a designated heritage asset?	Yes 70m from Grade II Listed Building (Higher House Farm). Also 127m from Grade II listed building (further down on opposite side of the road) of Cotte Barton. Also further south west c.210-310m down the lane, but not in view of the site, lies a cluster of Grade II listed buildings around the junction with Berry Hill.
Could development of the site affect any heritage asset (designated or non-designated) or its setting?	Yes Grade II listed Higher House Farm lies in adjacent field. The site also only lies 127m from a second Grade II listed farmhouse, Cotte Barton on the approach to the site from the east on the other side of the road. There are also 2 SAM's to the S/SE, both over 750m away, but on higher ground. The closest is the Prehistoric Field System on the cliffs above Littlecombe Shoot, and the other is Berry Camp Fort. Intervisibility unlikely and however a holiday park lies between. The HER shows that the site also lies about 75m north of a monument known as 'Quarry west of Cotte Barton'. At its nearest point, the site lies approx 835m inland from the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site designation, but due to topography there is no intervisibiity, although it lies only just outside (approx. 150m from) the wider Heritage Coast designation.
List any heritage assets potentially affected.	1. Higher House Farmhouse (Grade II listed) (List Entry 1104132) 2. Cotte Barton (Grade II listed)

## 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	835	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Special Protection Area (SPA)	International	10840	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Ramsar site	International	18682	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)	National	6940	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	National	835	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	National	7287	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Regional	4780	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Ancient Woodland Inventory Site (AWSI)	Regional	431	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
County Wildlife Site (CWS)	County	432	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Unconfirmed Wildlife Site (UWS)	County	626	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Draft Nature Recovery Network areas (NRN)	County	12	Significant moderate adverse effect predicted
Section 41 Habitat of Principle Importance (including rivers and streams, excluding hedgerow)	County	100	Significant moderate adverse effect predicted

### Comments

Sidmouth to West Bay SAC/SSSI away to the south, and Beer Quarry and Caves SAC further to the east. Ancient woodland and County Wildlife Site (CWS) of Higher Bulstone Coppice to the north, and CWS's of Hole Coppice to the east and Church & Pits Coppices further to the south

east. Nearby Priority Habitat is a traditional orchard (there are two apple trees within the site itself indicating possible also a former use) adjacent to the far side of Higher House Farm. This is also recorded as 'Grassland' Core Nature Area under Nature Recovery Network dataset, as well as a larger area immediately opposite the site, across the lane.

**Within River Axe SAC Nutrient catchment zone? No**

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

**Within East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC HRA mitigation zone? No**

**Within Exe Estuary SPA HRA mitigation zone? No**

**Within East Devon Pebblebed Heaths 400m exclusion zone? No**

**Number of European sites potentially impacted by site: 1**

### **On site assessment**

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

Yes - possible remnant of orchard with 2 apple trees within the site. Predominantly grassland, better described as semi-improved.

**Presence of veteran or ancient trees**

Possible veteran tree (1 or 2) within northern boundary of site.

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

Yes - numerous mature trees around along the northern and western site boundaries. Presume these could be retained if the site was developed.

**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)**

None noted. The site is a single small field in itself, so no internal hedgerows would need to be removed. Substantial removal of hedgerow bounding the road may be necessary to create access (there is a field gate within this adjacent to a medium size tree), unless access can be via and shared with adjoining property.

**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**

Significant moderate adverse effect predicted.

### 3 Site Reference Bran\_02

#### Site details

**Settlement:** Branscombe

**Reference number:** Bran\_02

**Site area (ha):** 0.87

**Address:** Field forming part of Cotte Barton Farm, EX12 3BH

**Proposed use:** Residential

#### Site map



## Photos



View into site, looking south-east, showing boundary hedging and topography.



View from south-west corner of site, looking towards the lane and post-war housing opposite.



Internal view across the lower slopes of the site towards the south-east.

## **Site Assessment Summary and Conclusion**

### **Infrastructure**

DCC Highways - consider the site could be acceptable for possible frontage development, but the carriageway would be likely to require localised widening to accommodate the additional vehicle / pedestrian movements.

DCC Education - Notes Branscombe Primary has capacity to support development, home to school transport costs implications for secondary. Secondary capacity limited, and would need to be looked at in combination with other sites.

### **Landscape**

The site lies entirely within the East Devon National Landscape (NL) on the lower slopes of a steep coombe valley side. Overall landscape sensitivity is assessed to be high. The site has some intervisibility from across the valley side and through the valley in both directions and whilst it lies opposite existing housing, introducing further built form would intensify development here at odds with the existing character of sporadic, ribbon development, mainly on the opposite side / along one (or other) side of the lane.

## **Historic environment**

Assessed as an overall medium impact due to the limited direct relationship/intervisibility with the nearest (within 100m) identified heritage assets (2 Grade II listed buildings) and their setting.

## **Ecology**

Assessed as overall significant moderate adverse effect as the site lies within the Beer Quarry Caves consultation zone, includes and is adjoining an area of deciduous woodland identified as s41 priority habitat, and is considered also to have value as an unimproved pasture.

## **Accessibility**

The site is recorded as having up to 7 community facilities and services within 1600m (primary school, children's play area, convenience store, post office, community hall, pub, open space/allotment). However, the shop has in fact now closed and the PO is only open for a few hours a week. Moreover, the site lies at the western extremity of the linear settlement of Branscombe, beyond a cluster of almost entirely residential /holiday accommodation uses. It is only the pub (Fountain Head) which is in the immediate vicinity. With a less than hourly bus service and narrow winding lanes with no pavement (and no opportunities to provide any), for the route to the majority of the facilities, which are clustered in the vicinity of the village hall over 1700m away, it is not considered an accessible/sustainable location and would be reasonable to assume the vast majority of services would be accessed by car, via the narrow network of lanes.

## **Other constraints**

Band of surface water flooding (1 in 100 years) along road boundary.

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

No

## **Opportunities**

Potential to support Branscombe Primary school which has capacity. Potential if carriageway was widened to make some contribution to alleviate traffic issues due to narrow road, limited passing and off-road parking, but this would result in substantial removal of hedgerow which makes an important contribution to character of the approach into the village.

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

21 dwellings

## **Contribution to spatial strategy**

Branscombe is a service village in the emerging Local Plan settlement hierarchy and therefore allocation would support the strategy to allow limited development to meet local needs.

**Should the site be allocated?**

No

**Reasons for allocating or not allocating**

Primarily for reasons of landscape impact and the poor accessibility of the location by sustainable modes of transport to facilities and services.

**If the site as a whole is not considered suitable for allocation, could a smaller part of the site be allocated?**

Landscape impact would be lessened by developing only the lower, flatter part of the site but this would not overcome the accessibility issues linked to development in this location.

# Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

## Context

### Landscape designation context

East Devon AONB (National Landscape)

### For sites within AONB, applicable special qualities

Site lies entirely in East Devon AONB (National Landscape). Inland valley side, sloping area of pastoral land, with hedgerow along narrow lane and set below banding of mature trees/woodland.

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

None within 100m of site. Lies within Beer Quarry & Caves SAC Consultation Zone. Site lies outside but in close proximity to heritage coast designation.

Grade II listed farmhouse 68m away within adjacent plot. A second Grade II listed property to the other side of the site but with no intervisibility.

No geological designations recorded on RIGS.

### Landscape Character Type and relevant key characteristics

4D Coastal Slopes and Coombes: Within Devon Character Area 'Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau'.

Key relevant characteristics are: narrow and steep valleys; broadleaved woodland dominant in places; occasional remnant orchards; mix of unenclosed woodland and small to medium irregular fields, mainly pasture with pockets of wet pasture and scrub; long history of settlement with surviving historic buildings, lanes and field patterns; settlement pattern including dispersed villages; narrow winding roads; sense of timelessness in parts, although awareness of traffic & tourist influences; intimate and enclosed views in lower valleys.

### Local landscape character of site and immediate surrounds

Very closely relates to the published assessment.

The site is located on the lower southern slope of a steep coombe valley side. Mostly pastoral/scrub in nature, which currently appears unmanaged and has been allowed to grow, currently including a mixture of various wildflower species. A public footpath runs up the western boundary from the lane. The site is bounded by high hedgerows with some views to and from the opposite side, from the higher sections of the site and to a much lesser degree along the valley in both directions - at this time of year especially - but also will generally be

limited by intervening trees and hedgerows. A winding lane rejoins the northern site boundary, with a terrace of inter-post-war housing above the road level opposite and clearly visible from the site. There may be visibility of the site from the side of the steep valley opposite.

### **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**

Directly opposite the site lies a row of large (3 storey detached) post/inter-war houses which are already prominent here, and not typical of the local vernacular. At present the undeveloped nature of the site, with its sloping topography and mature treed boundaries, contributes to an attractive setting mitigating the rather overbearing nature of the existing development, and giving a sense of space and rural tranquillity. Introduction of housing and associated infrastructure here on this much less developed side of the lane, in addition to that on the opposite side would interrupt the more sporadic nature of development, and increase the intensity of built development.

The topography slopes upwards and development on the slopes would be particularly prominent in the immediately locality and as part of the wider setting. From the opposite side of the valley development would be visible against trees/sky and again this would increase the further up the valley slope development was built.

Development would be partially screened on the advance approaches from both directions due to mature vegetation on the eastern and western boundaries of the site down to the lane, and the thick boundary hedge (as far as it could be retained). Loss of the boundary hedge to create access would however alter the character (although there may be potential perhaps to utilise the existing field and lane access from the adjoining property).

Although not immediately adjacent, the undeveloped nature of the site can be seen as part of the wider setting of Cotte Barton Farmhouse (Grade II listed) in the adjacent plot, although there is low intervisibility. Generally development here would also increase activity with traffic movements on to the narrow lane, which suffers from traffic issues particularly in peak tourist season.

## Analysis

<b>Physical and natural characteristics</b>	
Medium-high	Small field, on the lower slope of a steep combe valley side, pastoral/scrub in nature, as part of varied, small scale landscape bounded by thick hedgerow along the winding narrow lane on the northern boundary. Mature boundary/belt of trees along the rear (south) of the site which would soften development, and to the east and, a lesser extent, to the west which provide some screening on the approaches. A number of the mature trees were however noted as being ash. From the lane adjoining the site, the site is partially screened by dense hedgerow. The flatter part of site obscured by the hedgerow is more sheltered, but substantial removal may be required for access (DCC comments suggest road widening required). In the wider landscape, there are swathes of woodland visible in the upper combe valleys. The site lies between 2 Grade II listed thatched cottages at some distance and opposite linear development of detached post/inter-war housing, and several more modern dwellings, all with off-road parking area and managed gardens. Those opposite are particularly prominent in the landscape due to being part-way up the valley side.
<b>Cultural and historic associations</b>	
Medium	Hedgebanks, small field patterns, site opposite/amongst sporadic, ribbon and dispersed housing, proximity of several thatched Grade II listed properties. Overall very varied local vernacular in the vicinity with residential development in immediate proximity from pre 20th century, inter/post war, and more recent, and in this light development here could be seen as the next addition to that organic growth. However, lying opposite the prominent inter/post-war housing, the site in its undeveloped state contributes to the local landscape character and a traditional rural feel in this part of the village.
<b>Relationship to existing settlement edge</b>	
Medium-high	Opposite a ribbon of housing – a characteristic of Branscombe, but housing on this southern side of lane is more sporadic, and development is not frequently found on both sides of the lanes in this part of the village.
<b>Experiential landscape character</b>	
Medium-high	Tranquil and remote, when looking to the south, east and west where minimal development is visible, busier and settled looking north. To the west, the footpath (currently quite overgrown) is quiet with far reaching views beyond the site. Site is sheltered but feels overlooked by houses opposite. Winding rural lane, barely visible as below site.

<b>Views</b>	
Medium-high	From the lane adjoining the site, the site is partially screened by the thick hedgerow. From the opposite side of the valley development would be visible against trees/sky and which would increase the further up the valley slope development was built. This is because the northern section adjacent to the lane feels enclosed due to the high boundary hedge but further into the site, as the topography rises, it becomes more exposed. In the wider landscape, there is a considerable woodland visible in the combe valleys, with shelterbelts of pine trees and some smaller groups of hedgerow trees on the exposed ridges and plateau tops. Most of the farmland is pastoral with small, irregular fields (some very steep). Attractive views of opposite valley side are limited by vegetation and views down to the village to the north, east and west are obscured/filtered by vegetation and buildings, particularly to the east where the trees at this time of year are providing an almost complete screen. Some intervisibility with surrounding AONB (NL), but this differs between the valley side and the flatter area of the site. There would be an impact on the views enjoyed by walkers on the PROW running along the western boundary, and also from bridleways on the opposite valley side.
<b>Overall landscape susceptibility</b>	
Medium-high	This is an undeveloped area of pastoral/scrub which contributes to the rural setting in this part of Bransombe, separated from adjacent dwellings by some distance and intervening vegetation. Although opposite and overlooked by a row of inter/post war housing, the site contributes to the immediate quality of the environment in landscape terms, and as part of the wider character of the valley. Due to the topography of the site there are views to the opposite valley side and partial intervisibility with the surrounding AONB (NL) that would be more apparent outside the summer season when screening from vegetation would be reduced. In comparative terms, development here may be considered slightly less intrusive (on the lower slopes) than the other site considered (Bran 01) as its marginally further down the valley and in closer proximity to the existing residential development.
<b>Within nationally designated landscape? Yes</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/slight/moderate/major	
<b>Landscape value</b>	
Very High – Nationally or internationally designated for landscape value (AONB (NL)/ WHS)	
<b>Overall landscape sensitivity</b>	
High	

**Landscape guidance: opportunities in relation to development**

If this site was to be allocated, development of the lower flatter part of the site would reduce impact, and if use of adjoining existing access point was an option.

## Historic Environment Site Assessment

### Notes on history of area

The name of the parish is probably Celtic in origin, with the first settlers around 2700-2000BC. From the 17th to the 19th centuries, Branscombe was a source of hand-made lace. Fishing was also a traditional industry. The current Church of Saint Winifred was built between 1133 and 1160 in the Norman era and enlarged in stages over the following 200 years, but there is some archaeological evidence suggesting there may have been a former Saxon church or building on the site.

### Overall conclusion

Medium: no significant effects which cannot be mitigated. An impact is predicted, but would not compromise the asset(s) cultural heritage value to the extent that the attributes that led to its designation, or ability to understand or appreciate its value, are diminished or compromised. Mitigation may make the impact acceptable. The overall significance of the asset would not therefore be materially changed.

<b>Step 1. Identify any heritage assets potentially affected</b>	
Is the site within 100 metres of a designated heritage asset?	Yes 68m from Grade II listed building of Cotte Barton to the north-west of the site and just under 100m to Grade II listed building, 'Deems', to the south west.
Could development of the site affect any heritage asset (designated or non-designated) or its setting?	Yes Grade II listed Cotte Barton. There are 2 SAM's to the S/SE, both over 500m away, but on higher ground. The closest is the Prehistoric Field System on the cliffs above Littlecombe Shoot, and the other is Berry Camp Fort. Intervisibility unlikely. The HER shows that the site also lies about 150m east of a monument known as 'Quarry west of Cotte Barton' but there is no direct relationship/intervisibility. At its nearest point, the site lies approx 570m inland from the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site designation, but due to topography there is no intervisibiity. However, it lies only just outside (within 100m of) the boundary of the Heritage Coast designation.
List any heritage assets potentially affected.	1. Cotte Barton, Grade II listed. 2. Deems, Grade II listed (although significant tree screening between the site and this second asset exists)

## 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	564	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Special Protection Area (SPA)	International	11046	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Ramsar site	International	18735	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)	National	6661	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	National	564	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	National	7078	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Regional	4715	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Ancient Woodland Inventory Site (AWSI)	Regional	527	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
County Wildlife Site (CWS)	County	180	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Unconfirmed Wildlife Site (UWS)	County	291	Minor adverse effect predicted (not significant)
Draft Nature Recovery Network areas (NRN)	County	0	Significant moderate adverse effect predicted
Section 41 Habitat of Principle Importance (including rivers and streams, excluding hedgerow)	County	0	Significant moderate adverse effect predicted

### Comments

Sidmouth to West Bay SAC/SSSI to south, and Beer Quarry and Caves SAC further to the east. Closest County Wildlife Site of Church and Pits Coppices to the south east, with adjacent areas of unconfirmed wildlife site (Culverhole Coppice) closer. Also Hole Coppice to the east and the ancient woodland and County Wildlife Site of Higher Bulstone Coppice further to the north. Priority Habitat within SW end of the site (& also area to the immediate west) is deciduous

woodland. There is a stretch of the same opposite the site, running along behind the houses. These areas of woodland are also all 'woodland and forest' Core Nature Area within the Nature Recovery Network dataset.

**Within River Axe SAC Nutrient catchment zone? No**

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

**Within East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC HRA mitigation zone? No**

**Within Exe Estuary SPA HRA mitigation zone? No**

**Within East Devon Pebblebed Heaths 400m exclusion zone? No**

**Number of European sites potentially impacted by site: 1**

### **On site assessment**

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

Yes - Overgrown grass including a mix of grasses and wildflowers, including thistles, cow parsley, nettles. Land does not appear to be improved, mown or grazed.

**Presence of veteran or ancient trees**

No – none noted.

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

Yes - Southern and eastern boundaries of the site in particular comprise substantial areas as mature trees, including ash.

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

No – none noted.

**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)**

The site is a single small field/parcel in itself, so no internal hedgerows would need to be removed. Substantial removal of hedgerow bounding the road may be necessary to create access, unless access can be via and shared with adjoining property access which has a field gate off it to the site on the eastern boundary.

**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**

Significant moderate adverse effect predicted.

