

REPORT TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE - 22 NOVEMBER 2007

WORK OF THE EMPLOYMENT LAND TASK AND FINISH FORUM

This report highlights key issues and themes that have been addressed and examined to date by the Employment Land Task and Finish Forum (TAFF). The TAFF will help set an agenda to inform future employment land provision in respect to future planning policy and development decisions (particularly in respect to meeting land supply shortfalls).

1 Role of the Employment Land Task and Finish Forum

1.1 The Task and Finish Forum was established to:

- Review the Atkins Employment Land Study (particularly in respect to site evaluation work) and propose changes appropriate to ensure the Atkins report could be signed off as complete.
- Undertake an objective review of currently available employment sites.

1.2 This work is being undertaken with the help of the East Devon Business Forum and other partners.

2 Atkins Review of Employment Land and Completion of the Atkins Report

2.1 There were two chief concerns expressed about the employment land review work undertaken by Atkins. The first of these related to factual inaccuracies in the way sites were recorded in the study and the second was with respect to the site assessment exercise not being sufficiently rigorous and objective. At the first meeting of the TAFF proposed amendments to the Atkins Employment Study were tabled and the forum endorsed the changes recommended by Officers.

2.2 Changes have been sent back to Atkins to address anomalies and inaccuracies in their report. To date we have not received the revised Atkins report though if received a verbal update will be provided to the Overview Committee.

3 Local Plan Land Availability Assessment

3.1 It needs to be recognised that 'availability' can be subject to differing interpretations. For the purposes of the preparation of the East Devon Local Plan availability was taken to mean that a site or land area was undeveloped

and could physically accommodate employment generating uses. Local Plan policy was formulated in the early part of this decade (2000s) to conform to (the then) Structure Plan Policy for the 1995 to 2011 period. The East Devon Local Plan provides for 40 hectares of employment land inside what was defined as the Exeter Area of Economic Activity and 40 hectares elsewhere in East Devon. Monitoring data for the period from 1 April 1995 to 31 March 2007 indicates land supply data for B Use Class uses:

Land Inside the Exeter Area of Economic Activity	Hectares
Under Construction at 31/03/2007	0.52
Planning Permission at 31/03/2007	3.23
Built 1995-2007	8.65
Local Plan Allocation at 31/03/2007	30.30
Total	42.70

Land Outside Exeter Area of Economic Activity	Hectares
Under Construction at 31/03/2007	0.81
Planning Permission at 31/03/2007	2.04
Built 1995-2007	22.12
Local Plan Allocation at 31/03/2007	15.43
Total	40.40

- 3.2 The tables above indicate that whilst there has been a significant amount of land developed outside of the Exeter AEA development levels inside the AEA have been very much lower. Development inside the AEA has occurred at Hill Barton and Greendale Barton and at Exeter Airport Business Park; but not at Skypark, the Science Park (which was first identified in the 2001 – 2016 Structure Plan), the Intermodal facility or Cranbrook. It should be noted that specific employment land allocations were not made in the Local Plan for the Science Park and the Intermodal.
- 3.3 The fact that development of the major strategic sites inside the Exeter AEA has not yet started accounts for the low development rates at these locations. Aside from these major strategic sites there are nil additional available land areas identified in the Exeter AEA area. It should be noted that the Exeter AEA policy area definition was superseded by the far more tightly defined Exeter Principal Urban Area in the 2001 to 2016 Structure Plan. The Structure Plan key diagram shows a boundary that does not extend to include Greendale Barton and Hill Barton as being at (in) the Exeter Principal Urban Area.

4 TAFF Considerations of Available Employment Land

- 4.1 In their assessment of available employment land Atkins considered not just Local Plan allocated employment sites but also other land areas that although not allocated would be appropriate for employment uses (and compatible with Local Plan policy). Whilst most of the key findings of Atkins were not challenged (albeit there were a number of concerns raised) it was considered that the Atkins work fell short of being sufficiently detailed and most importantly did not draw on local knowledge and expertise.

- 4.2 The TAFF group have re-examined the 'available' sites identified by Atkins particularly in the light of the following themes which were either not examined by Atkins or were not deemed to be subject to sufficiently robust assessment.
- Relevant Planning History.
 - Highway Access Constraints.
 - Site Aspect/ Slope/ Technical Constraints on Development.
 - Land Owners Aspirations.
 - Potential Suitable Site Uses.
- 4.3 It is important to stress that in undertaking their work the TAFF assessment of availability went further than Local Plan considerations. The TAFF group took the view that to be 'available' a site should actually be reasonably able to accommodate an employment generating use and the site owners are prepared to release/sell/lease the site to a firm or business seeking land or premises and that it is technically possible for a site to be developed. These are critical considerations as many of the Local Plan 'available' sites are in the ownership or control of owners who are understood to be reserving land for a future specific use, typically for their own business expansion, or they have alternative aspirations for their land or the land may be under options for a specific use or users. Where this is the case sites are not considered to be available.
- 4.4 The table below identifies sites included in the Atkins study and a limited number of additional sites identified as available through the Local Plan and also a summary of the TAFF considerations. The final column indicates what the TAFF have identified as available. The information in the table provides an overview of land supply issues, however precise site details have not been fully verified and the sites will need to be subject to detailed scrutiny.

Industrial Site Name	Unit Name/ Road Name	Town/ Village	EDDC Emp Area Number	EDDC Emp Site Code	Atkins Site No Code	Availability under Atkins study/Local Plan Policy in Sq M	TAFF Site Consideration	TAFF Revised Available Area in Sq M
Millwey Rise	Weycroft Avenue	Axminster	1	1A	37	3,140	This Site is understood to be owned by Devon County Council and is understood to be available.	3,140
Millwey Rise	Weycroft Avenue	Axminster	1	1Cii	37	6,840	This site is understood to be in the same ownership as site 1Di and is understood to be reserved for this companies future uses. It is not, therefore, considered to be available.	0
Millwey Rise	Weycroft Avenue	Axminster	1	1Ciii	37	0	This site is now in use/under-construction (it appears as part of the holdings of the adjacent company/business) and therefore is not identified as available.	0
Millwey Rise	Weycroft Avenue	Axminster	1	1Dii	37	6,750	This site is understood to be owned by Axminster Carpets and retained for their own future use and would be needed to provide highway access to Site 1H. It is not, therefore, considered to be available.	0
Millwey Rise	Weycroft Avenue	Axminster	1	1G	37	5,920	This site is being marketed for employment uses and is identified as available.	5,920
Land South Millwey Rise	Off Weycroft Avenue	Axminster	1	1H	37	43,820	This site is understood to be owned by Axminster Carpets and retained for their own future use. It is not, therefore, considered to be available.	0
Old Coal Yard	Off Castle Hill	Axminster	2	2B	36	500	It was considered that this site was not 'fit for purpose' for future employment use and therefore should not be identified as available. It should be noted that at the Local Plan inquiry the Inspector considered that the site was appropriate for future employment uses.	0
Old Coal Yard	Off Castle Hill	Axminster	2	2A	36	2,620	It was considered that this site was not 'fit for purpose' for future employment use and therefore should not be identified as available. It should be noted that at the Local Plan inquiry the Inspector considered that the site was appropriate for future employment uses.	0

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Land at Axminster Carpets Site	Woodmead Road	Axminster	3	3A	35	4,890	This site is understood to be owned by Axminster Carpets and falls in the carpet company operational land holdings. It is considered that it would only be available for the carpet company's future use and therefore should not be identified as available.	0
Land at Axminster Carpets Site	Woodmead Road	Axminster	3	3B	35	1,940	This site is understood to be owned by Axminster Carpets and falls in the carpet company operational land holdings. It is considered that it would only be available for the carpet company's future use and therefore should not be identified as available.	0
Land south of Redgate	Salterton Road	Exmouth	4	4C	14	5,000	The site is understood to have planning permission for small business unit development and should be identified as available.	5,000
Liverton Business Pk	Salterton Road	Exmouth	5	5Bii	17	0	This site has planning permission for a retail use and should not be identified as available for 'B' Use Class employment.	0
Liverton Business Pk	Salterton Road	Exmouth	5	5Biii	17	4,436	This site is allocated in the Local Plan for employment uses however it is understood that the site owner/prospective occupiers are unlikely to bring the site forward for employment purposes in the plan period and therefore it is not considered to be available.	0
Pound Lane Trading Estate		Exmouth	6	6A	13	21,450	This site is currently partially used for low key open air storage uses and there are land reclamation/de-contamination issues that could be relevant in respect to its re-use potential. Whilst recognising that redevelopment might occur in the future on the basis of current site use and possible development constraints this site is not considered to be available.	0
Heathpark	Devonshire Road	Honiton	7	7Fiii	23	1,770	This site would be required to provide access to Site 7G and is, therefore, not regarded as available.	0

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Heathpark	Devonshire Rd	Honiton	7	7Fiv	23	1,920	This site would be required to provide access to Site 7G and is, therefore, not regarded as available. Also a large part of the site is laid out and used as a car park.	0
Heathpark	Devonshire Road	Honiton	7	7G	23	12,620	This site is understood to be the subject of an options agreement that would allow for the relocation of businesses from the Ottery Moor Lane site (Site 10) should the proposed Tesco store be developed. The site is not, therefore, considered to be available.	0
Heathpark	Devonshire Road	Honiton	7	7Hii	23	5,660	This site is understood to be subject to an option agreement subject to the prospective purchaser securing planning permission for development. It was not, therefore considered to be available.	0
Heathpark	Devonshire Road	Honiton	7	7Hiv	23	4,190	This site is understood to be subject to developer proposals as part of the ongoing development works that have built out sites 7Hvi and 7Hv to the north. The site is not, therefore, considered to be available. (Further to this observation, however, as there is developer interest and it is understood that the developer will be building units to release onto the market and it might be that in this instance the site should be regarded as available.	0
Heathpark	Devonshire Road	Honiton	7	7Hvii	23	3,730	This site is understood to be in the ownership of the company occupying site 7Hiii and it would appear that this site would only be credibly available to this company in respect to offering future development potential. It should also be noted that it is an irregularly shaped land area that would limit scope for development. The site is not, therefore, considered to be available.	0

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Heathpark	Devonshire Road	Honiton	7	7Jii	23	9,445	This site is understood to be owned by Coastguard Road Ltd who also own/occupy site 7Ji. The site is understood to be retained for potential company expansion and as such is not regarded as available.	0
Heathpark	Park Court	Honiton	7	7Jiv	23	7,820	This site is understood to be owned by Coastguard Road Ltd who also own/occupy site 7Ji. The site is understood to be retained for potential company expansion and as such is not regarded as available.	0
Heathpark	Devonshire Road	Honiton	7	7L	23	4,800	This site is owned by Claybrook developments and is the subject of a current planning application for a retail/Country Store use. On the basis of the fact that a current non B Use class employment planning application exists (still to be determined) the site is not regarded as available.	0
Heathpark	Devonshire Road	Honiton	7	7M	23	470	This site is understood to currently be used for low key open air storage uses. The site is very small and on the basis of current use/site size it is regarded as inappropriate to incorporate it in to land availability assessments.	0
Heathpark	Devonshire Road	Honiton	7	7N	23	7,580	This site is currently owned by East Devon District Council and occupied by/let to SITA. Should the SITA operations be relocated the site would be available in the future. However as matters stand the site is not considered to be currently available.	0
Exeter Airport Business Park	Site of B3185	Exeter Airport	8	8A	5	0	This site has recently been developed and is therefore not identified as available.	0
Hill Barton Business Pk	Mushroom Road	Farringdon	9	9D	8	32,300	This site is being developed/under-proposals for a recycling centre development and is not, therefore, identified as available.	0

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Greendale Barton Business Park		Woodbury Salterton	10	10Ai	20	4,839	This site is understood to subject to proposals for future development and is currently used for car parking. On the basis of current uses and potential future uses it is not identified as available.	0
Greendale Barton Business Park		Woodbury Salterton	10	10Aii	20	584	This site is very small and whilst it could perhaps accommodate a limited scale future development it is not regarded as appropriate for inclusion in the land availability assessment calculations.	0
Greendale Barton Business Park		Woodbury Salterton	10	10Avi	20	8,720	This site is understood to currently be used for the open air storage and maintenance of caravans. Whilst it may, perhaps, offer potential for more intensive future use it is not currently regarded as available.	0
Wheelers Yard	Wheelers Yard	Colyton	11	11A	30	4,480	This site has been acquired by a developer for small-scale business uses subject to gaining planning permission. It is, therefore, regarded as available.	4,480
Dunkeswell Industrial Estate		Dunkeswell	12	12Bix	21	7,030	This site is currently occupied by a range of low key users/uses. On the basis of existing site use it is not considered that the site is available.	0
Mill Park Industrial Estate		Woodbury Salterton	14	14Aiv	38	1,040	This site is small and irregularly shaped. It would also appear to be occupied by an existing building. It is not, therefore, regarded as available.	0
Mill Park Industrial Estate		Woodbury Salterton	14	14v	38	950	This site would appear to comprise of hard standing associated with the units to the north. A small part of the site, in the south-eastern corner, might offer some development potential but it would be of a very small scale. On this basis the site is not regarded as appropriate for inclusion in land availability assessment.	0

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Finnimore Trading Estate		Ottery St Mary	15	15A	15	15,990	This site is identified in the Local Plan as having planning permission for employment uses and as such proposals for this use would be compatible with Local Plan policy. However the TAFF felt that the south westerly portion of the site was not suited for employment uses and should not therefore be regarded as available. It should be noted that this land area was considered by the Inspector at the Local Plan inquiry and the Inspector did not recommend any changes to the status in the Local Plan. The eastern two thirds (measuring around 11,400 Sq M) of the site was however considered by the TAFF as suitable for employment uses.	11,400
Finnimore Trading Estate		Ottery St Mary	15	15B	15	3,540	This site is used by Graham Hudson motor engineers, who have premises to the west of the site, for the storage of vehicles. On account of this use the site is not considered as available for employment uses.	0
Finnimore Trading Estate		Ottery St Mary	15	15C	15	3,040	The TAFF considered this site alongside site 15B (above) and considered it unsuitable for development on the basis of it being in the same use as 15B. However on the basis of assessment of 2005/06 aerial photographs the site would appear to be vacant and it is therefore identified in this report as being available. It should be noted that this land area was considered by the Inspector at the Local Plan inquiry and the Inspector did not recommend any changes to the status in the Local Plan.	3,040
Finnimore Trading Estate		Ottery St Mary	15	15E	15	3,560	It is understood that planning permission at this site for employment uses has previously been refused on the basis of highway access considerations/grounds. Given that previous applications have been refused it is considered that highway access considerations render this site unavailable.	0

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Harepath Road Industrial Estate		Seaton	16	16Bi	32	3,450	This site is currently in low key storage use and development potential is understood to be constrained by landscaping requirements that have been deemed to be appropriate should an employment development be proposed. On the basis of these considerations it is not considered that the site is available for employment uses. However it might be that landscaping considerations and requirements are overly onerous as the site is bounded along its southern edge by extensive and established vegetation.	0
Harepath Road Industrial Estate		Seaton	16	16B	32	3,530	This site is currently undeveloped but it is understood that development potential is constrained by landscaping requirements that have been deemed to be appropriate should an employment development be proposed. On the basis of this consideration the site was not considered to be available for employment uses. However it might be that landscaping considerations and requirements are overly onerous as the site is bounded along its southern edge by extensive and established vegetation.	0
Harepath Road Industrial Estate		Seaton	16	16C	32	22,000	This site comprises of two fields which occupy a combined area of 4.45 hectares. However Local Plan policy provides for a mixed use employment/recreation development and specifies that no more than 2.2 hectares of the overall site should be used for employment purposes. The TAFF considered that the westerly of the two fields had the greatest potential for accommodating employment uses.	22,000
Alexandria Industrial Estate		Sidmouth	17	17A	28	3,850	Land/sites at Alexandra Road have previously failed to get planning permission on the basis of inadequate highway access and this was felt to be a sufficiently significant constraint to warrant this site being regarded as unavailable for development.	0

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Alexandria Industrial Estate		Sidmouth	17	17B	28	4,360	Land/sites at Alexandra Road have previously failed to get planning permission on the basis of inadequate highway access and this was felt to be a sufficiently significant constraint to warrant this site being regarded as unavailable for development.	0
Alexandria Industrial Estate		Sidmouth	17	17C	28	2,060	Land/sites at Alexandra Road have previously failed to get planning permission on the basis of inadequate highway access and this was felt to be a sufficiently significant constraint to warrant this site being regarded as unavailable for development.	0
Sites at Cranbrook	Land at New Community	Cranbrook	18	18A	39	50,000	Due to the fact that a start date for development of Cranbrook is not currently identified and that it may take some time for employment uses to 'come on stream' it was not felt to be appropriate to identify land as available.	0
Skypark	Land at Skypark	Skypark	19	19A	42	253,000	Due to the fact that a start date for development of Skypark is not currently identified and that it may take some time for employment uses to 'come on stream' it was not felt to be appropriate to identify land as available.	0
Bramble Hill/ Ottery Moor Lane	Moor Lane	Honiton	20	20A	24	10,825	It was understood by the TAFF that if the Tesco proposal gains planning permission the overall development might have used a part of this site which is currently partially vacant and partially used for outdoor low key storage purposes. On the basis of the uncertainty over future site use the TAFF considered that the site should not be identified as available.	0
Bramble Hill/ Ottery Moor Lane	Moor Lane	Honiton	20	20B	24	3,540	It is understood that if the Tesco proposal gains planning permission the overall development may use this site. On the basis of the uncertainty over future site use it is not considered that the site should be identified as available.	0

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Former Cutler Hammer Factory		Ottery St Mary	21	21A	10	10,435	It is understood that this site, which current houses a listed mill building and adjoining industrial building, is subject to a proposal for a mixed use redevelopment proposal that includes limited employment space. On this basis it was considered that the site should not be identified as offering scope for accommodating future employment land availability, albeit that the Council may seek to secure an element of employment use in any overall scheme.	0
West of Dinan Way	Salterton Road	Exmouth	25	25A	15	3,700	This site, although comparatively small, is identified as offering scope for employment development.	3,700
West of Dinan Way	Salterton Road	Exmouth	25	25B	15	1,850	This site, although comparatively small, is identified as offering scope for employment development.	1,850
East Devon Business Park	Land at East Devon Business Park	Offwell/ Wilmington	26	26A	26	3,340	This site is currently used for low key open air storage purposes and is steeply sloping. On the basis of these considerations it is not identified as available.	0
Manstone Workshops	Manstone Lane	Sidmouth	31	31A	29	5,030	This site is currently used as a Council Depot and has poor highway access. On the basis of these considerations it is not considered as available.	0
Harbour Road Industrial Area		Seaton	33	33A	33	4,550	This site forms part of the Seaton regeneration Area and has been subject to redevelopment proposals. On the basis of these considerations it is not considered as available albeit that it should be noted that as part of the overall regeneration area proposals the intent is that employment uses 'losing sites' would be relocated to alternative locations.	0

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Harbour Road Industrial Area		Seaton	33	33B	33	1,810	This site forms part of the Seaton regeneration Area and has been subject to redevelopment proposals. On the basis of these considerations it is not considered as available albeit that it should be noted that as part of the overall regeneration area proposals the intent is that employment uses 'losing sites' would be relocated to alternative locations.	0
Exeter University Science Park	Land at Science Park	Redhayes	39	39A	40	250,000	Due to the fact that a start date for development of the Science Park is not currently identified and that it may take some time for employment uses to 'come on stream' it was not felt to be appropriate to identify land as available.	0
Totals in Square Metres						890,714		60,530
Totals in Hectares						89.07		6.053

- 4.5 The TAFF site reassessment process indicates that land availability under Local Plan Policy adds up to a total of 89.07 hectares. This total land area may be developed in the longer term. However with respect to immediate availability the 'revised' TAFF total indicates 6.05 hectares of land that is immediately available. All of this land falls outside of what is identified in the Local Plan, under previous Structure plan policy, as the Exeter Area of Economic Activity.
- 4.6 The immediately available land with approximate total site areas is located at:
- Axminster – 0.9 hectares
 - Exmouth – 1.0 hectares
 - Colyton – 0.5 hectares
 - Ottery St Mary – 1.4 hectares
 - Seaton – 2.2 hectares
- 4.7 What the TAFF assessment has not done is to look at available vacant buildings and vacant building floorspace. It is recognised that some firms will be interested in actual built premises rather than vacant sites. It should also be noted that some of the sites excluded from the TAFF assessment are proposed or currently under-development for employment buildings and will therefore be providing floorspace for building occupation.
- 4.8 Under the TAFF reassessment the closest available sites to Junctions 29 and 30 of the M5 Motorway are in Exmouth and Ottery St Mary. These settlements lie 11 or 12 kilometres from these motorway junctions. However the TAFF assessment also shows only very limited immediate land availability across the District and none in some towns of the District.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The work of the TAFF has clearly shown a shortfall of immediately available employment land across East Devon. Over the medium term work on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy will address land demand and supply issues and the distribution of employment land. The intent is that the Issues and Option report for the Core Strategy will be issued in early 2008. It will set a new and emerging policy framework and reflect the findings of this on-going employment land review work.
- 5.2 In the short term the need will exist to consider meeting potential immediate requirements for employment land. This may necessitate the Council going down the departures route in respect to determining specific applications for immediate business needs. Such consideration will need to rest on a demonstration that there is a clear local employment benefit that would otherwise be frustrated and that any proposal would not run contrary to other strategic objectives.

Recommendation

That the Council use this report and more detailed evidence to:

- **help inform production of the Issues and Options report for the East Devon Core Strategy and also**
- **that the Development Control Committee take full account of employment land availability issues in consideration of planning applications.**