



Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2026

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) is to identify the potential future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing, economic and other development uses over a development plan period. It is an important source of evidence to inform plan-making and decision-taking. However, the assessment itself does not determine whether a site should be allocated for development or whether a site should receive planning permission.
- 1.2 The role of the assessment is to provide information on the range of sites that are available to meet the Mid Devon District Council's requirements, but it is for the development plan itself to determine which of those sites are most suitable to meet those requirements. Any sites deemed suitable, available and achievable by the HELAA process, if they are taken forward through the Local Plan preparation process, will be subject to public consultation. The HELAA may be a material consideration in the determination of planning proposals however it does not amount to planning permission for development.
- 1.3 This HELAA considers the availability, suitability and achievability of sites submitted to Mid Devon District Council and follows the Exeter Housing Market Area HELAA Methodology (2021) with stages set out in Chapter 2 (below). For the purposes of this HELAA windfall sites and a development plan trajectory are not considered.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 This assessment follows the Exeter Housing Market Area HELAA Methodology (2021)¹, in which the local authorities of Mid Devon, East Devon, Exeter and Dartmoor National Park Authority have worked together since 2007 to produce a methodology for HELAA.

Availability

Stage 1: Sites and broad locations with potential for development

2.2 Two Call for Sites were launched by the Council to run from February to March 2021 and February to March 2025. The Call for Sites provided individuals and organisations with the opportunity to suggest sites to the Council that they thought had the potential to be developed for housing, economic or other uses.

2.3 All sites identified as available through the Call for Sites were considered available for the purposes of the HELAA. Sites were considered in this HELAA process where they met the following criteria:

- Within Mid Devon District planning authority area.
- For housing: Could accommodate at least 5 homes or measured at least 0.15 hectares.
- For economic development: Could accommodate at least 500m² floorspace or measured at least 0.25 hectares. For the purposes of this HELAA mixed use was considered under a commercial use.
- For renewable and habitat uses: all sites were considered, provided they were within the Mid Devon District planning authority area.

Suitability

Stage 2: Assess their development potential, suitability for development and likelihood of development coming forward

2.4 The HELAA 2021 Methodology sets out a Stage A and Stage B process to follow in considering the suitability of sites.

Stage A

2.5 Stage A sets out locations that are considered unsuitable for development. Where sites were wholly comprised of or had an unacceptable impact on any of the following, they were considered unsuitable for development as part of this HELAA:

¹ [Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment)

- Designated Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Designated or possible Special Area of Conservation (SACs)
- Designated listed or proposed Ramsar site (wetlands of international importance)
- Designated or potential Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Sites identified or required as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites, potential SPAs, possible SACs and listed or proposed Ramsar sites
- Flood Zone 3b (Where there was no information to distinguish Flood Zone 3b from Flood Zone 3a, Flood Zone 3 was considered to be Flood Zone 3b as a precautionary approach).

2.6 As this HELAA will be used to support the development of a new development plan, the accordance with the current development plan was not a criterion considered at Stage A to identify sites unsuitable for development.

Stage B

2.7 Sites deemed suitable under Stage A were then considered against further criteria within Stage B. As this HELAA will be used to support the development of a new development plan, accordance with the current development plan was not a criterion considered at Stage B. The following topic headings were considered as part of the assessment criteria for Stage B:

- Access
- Natural Environment
- Flood Risk, Water Quality and Drainage
- Heritage and Archaeology
- Education Infrastructure
- Landscape
- Health and Safety related constraints
- Soils and Contamination
- Topography
- Open Space and Recreation
- Economic Development (for commercial sites)

2.8 An initial assessment of sites was undertaken by Mid Devon District Council. This was then followed by the provision of specialist advice on topic areas from within the Council and external organisations, for example, heritage and conservation, local lead flood authority, highways officers etc.

Achievability

- 2.9 HELAA Panels were held to assess the achievability of sites. These were divided into Panels for housing and commercial sites, renewables and habitat creation/enhancement. It was the role of the Panels to advise on the achievability of each site supported by the information supplied by the local authority collated through the earlier stages of the process (Stage A and Stage B). For the purposes of this HELAA, accordance with the current development plan was not considered to identify costs associated with existing policy requirements as this HELAA will be used to support the development of a new development plan.
- 2.10 Membership of each Panel was a representative of the broad section of sectors for housing, employment, renewable or habitat creation which included housebuilders (volume and small and medium scale schemes), local property agents, local community representatives (elected members), related professions (e.g. highways authority, economic development officers etc).
- 2.11 The Panels operated in an advisory capacity, making use of their specialist knowledge on achievability. Panel members were not precluded from commenting on sites they had an interest in, however, they were required to declare an interest if they had a site under consideration. Further information and detail on how the Panel operates including its constitution and terms of reference can be found on the Council's website².
- 2.12 The HELAA Panel using their specialist knowledge advised on whether a potential site can be determined to be achievable by there being a reasonable prospect that the site could be developed.
- 2.13 Sites allocated within an existing development plan or with planning permission were regarded as available, suitable and achievable as part of this HELAA.

HELAA Yields

- 2.14 To determine the potential development yields of each site the Exeter Housing Market Area HELAA Methodology (2021) was followed. For housing sites, the Gross development area was taken to be the whole area of the site submitted excluding any unsuitable land identified at STAGE A of the HELAA assessment. For commercial development, areas of Flood Zone 3 were not excluded from the Gross area as this may have been Flood Zone 3a which may be compatible for commercial development. Further flood risk assessment will be required to determine the areas that fall within FZ3a and

² [Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk)

FZ3b. For renewable energy development, FZ3 was not excluded from the Gross area as this may meet the exception test. For habitat creation/enhancement FZ3 was not excluded from the Gross area as this is considered to be water-compatible development.

- 2.15 For housing and commercial development, the Net developable area was taken to be the site area which remains for the delivery of the development submitted, excluding space for the provision of aspects such as highways infrastructure, sustainable urban drainage and other infrastructure requirements. To reflect realistic developable site areas, indicative Gross to Net ratios were applied by following the Exeter Housing Market Area HELAA Methodology (2021).
- 2.16 Yields were applied using standard densities as set out in the Exeter Housing Market Area HELAA Methodology (2021) and local evidence. The Panel also adjusted the yield for sites due to constraints or advised on the likely level of development they considered the site could accommodate (Appendix 3).
- 2.17 For Commercial development yields, a range of yields were provided based on the types of commercial development proposed for the site. However, it is noted that for commercial options, particularly for mixed use options it is likely the yields would be much lower should the site move forward as mixed use is likely to include different types of development.
- 2.18 For Renewable energy, yields were not provided, as following a Renewable energy HELAA Panel it was advised that the yield would be dependent on the type of renewables technology on site which can be wide ranging. When considering whether a site was achievable for renewables, for the purposes of the HELAA, all sites were considered achievable, however further work would be required to understand the potential to be achievable for different types of renewable technology.
- 2.19 For Habitat creation/enhancement sites, yields were not provided as following a Habitat creation/enhancement HELAA Panel it was advised that yields would only be appropriate in the context of Biodiversity Net Gain sites and it would not be accurate at this stage to advise on yields as this would require an establishment of the current quality of biodiversity on site and would depend on the proposed habitat to be established.

Delivery rate

- 2.20 A build out rate has been applied to all sites considered suitable, available and achievable within the HELAA assessments (Appendix 3). For housing, two calculation models have been previously agreed by the joint local

authorities and the HELAA panel members for the timescales within which sites are anticipated to be delivered, a ‘standard model’ and a ‘market conditions model’. The market conditions model reduces the build out rate for all dwellings to reflect economic conditions which would reduce the ability for developers to develop and complete dwellings. For the purposes of this HELAA, the market conditions model has been applied. The HELAA Panel advised they considered this build out rate methodology to be appropriate for this HELAA.

2.21 For commercial, renewable and habitat sites the build out rate was considered to be between 1-5 years unless advice from specialists and the HELAA Panel suggested an alternative build out rate.

3.0 HELAA Assessment Findings

3.1 The HELAA Assessment Findings are presented in this report. Appendix 1 provides a list of all sites by location with a summary of the outcome of the HELAA Assessment. Appendix 2 sets out the acronyms, units and glossary of selected terms used in the HELAA Assessment. Appendix 3 sets out the Assessment of Sites divided between the Central, West and East of the District and categorised by geographical locations indicated by settlement names. Appendix 3 includes the following within the assessments:

- Site Name and reference
- Location e.g. Settlement, Parish
- Maps identifying the site area
- Land Status
- Land Uses Proposed
- Site description including the conclusion of the HELAA process
- Site size (Whole, Gross, Net)
- Development Potential (Max Yield and Min Yield, by following the HELAA Methodology. Promoter Yield if indicated. HELAA Yield, as assessed following the HELAA process and advice from the HELAA Panel)
- STAGE A Assessment
- STAGE B Assessment – including potential constraints to delivery, potential mitigation recommended, site availability and build out rate.