

Urban Capacity Study Part 1

Exeter Report

July 2020



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 National planning policy is supportive of development on suitable previously developed 'brownfield' land and encourages local planning authorities to support the development of suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.
- 1.2 The Local Authorities of Teignbridge, East Devon, Exeter and Mid Devon have worked together to prepare an agreed methodology for preparing an Urban Capacity Study (UCS). This will allow each authority to prepare consistent studies and undertake a comprehensive assessment of the brownfield land opportunities within existing main settlements in each district.
- 1.3 Originally as part of the evidence base for the former Greater Exeter Strategic Plan which is no longer being prepared, the Local Planning Authorities have undertaken a UCS which assesses further potential opportunities for growth within existing main settlements in the area. This is in addition to the existing identified urban brownfield sites already identified through existing allocations, approvals and in the Brownfield Registers.
- 1.4 The UCS part 1 identifies and seeks to maximise opportunities within the current built up area in line with national planning policy. However it makes no judgement on which sites are likely to be allocated or obtain planning permission. The development potential of individual sites may also be affected by constraints such as the presence of heritage assets, biodiversity, conservation etc. The UCS instead forms part of the evidence base to inform plan-making such as Local Plans. If taken forward they will be subject to Strategic Plan preparation process.
- 1.5 An additional assessment (Part 2) was commissioned by Exeter City Council to further assess Exeter's capacity which will take into account Exeter City Council's urban brownfield agenda.

2. Approach

- 2.1 The following steps were undertaken in each of the Council areas to enable a consistent approach in identifying potential opportunities for development and growth. The approach includes desk based research and expert input from specialists in the Local Authorities and Devon County Council which have fed into the assessment.

Step 1A – Consistent approach agreed by the Authorities (approach as follows in steps below)

Step 1B – Selecting the Study Area; Mapping boundaries

Study area

Defined boundaries of settlements with a population of more than 4,000 are included in the UCS using 2011 census built up area data. For Exeter due to the lack of defined settlement boundary, a study area was created for the built up area using the OS Basemap and broadly based on existing Middle Super Output Areas. The following areas have been included in the UCS for Exeter.

Exeter City Council: Alphington, Clifton Hill and Polsloe, Cowick, Digby Sowton and Newcourt, Exeter City Centre, Exwick, Pinhoe, St James, St Leonards, St Thomas, Stoke Hill and Mincinglake, Topsham and Countess Wear, University and Pennsylvania, Whipton, Wonford.

Site Size Threshold

Sites with a minimum site capacity threshold of 5 is applied. As a guide this is generally a site with an area greater than 0.15ha although there will likely be exceptions where higher densities exist. This is also consistent with the agreed HELAA methodology (2017).

Step 1C – Exclusion areas

The following statutory areas are identified as exclusion areas for potential development as part of the UCS:

- SACs, SPAs, Ramsar sites (Habitats Regulation Sites)
- Ancient woodlands
- SSSI

Step 1D – Institutional Constraints

The following institutional constraints are considered in this step: Local Green Space, Valley Parks, Local Plan Open Space and Green Infrastructure Designations, OS Open Greenspace.

The above institutional constraints are mapped but no blanket exclusions are applied at this point. A judgement is made at stage 3a whether a potential sites is taken through to stage 3b which amongst other considerations will consider the relevance of the institutional constraint identified.

Step 1E – Map areas of constraint

There are a number of constraints which do not preclude development but may impact the consideration of sites. Various constraints are mapped and are considered for potential development sites, they include but not limited to: Flood Zones 2 and 3¹, Conservation Areas, Waste Consultation Zones, TPOs, AQMA, Public Rights of Way, Listed Buildings and Structures, Steep slopes etc.

Step 1F – Identifying Density Profiles

Housing density maps are created for each study area. This offers opportunities for urban intensification of areas and provides an indication as to what constitutes an acceptable density for all opportunity sites that are identified in the study.

Step 2A – Planning and Monitoring Inputs

The following sites have been excluded from further consideration given their planning status: Approved Planning Applications, Site Allocations, Brownfield Land Register.

The following categories may offer potential for development and therefore are considered as potential sites: recently withdrawn and refused applications, applications yet to be determined, Housing Economic Land Availability Assessment/Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment sites.

Step 2B – Council Assets and Opportunities

All assets barring schools are considered as potential opportunity sites.

Step 2C – Institutional Assets and Opportunities

Institutions who may own assets in the UCS Study areas were approached to consider any redundant assets which could contribute to development or regeneration. These institutions include but are not limited to: Church Commissioners, Crown Estate, MoD, National Trust, Royal Mail etc.

Step 2D – Targeted NNDR Potential Sites

The National Non-Domestic Ratings (NNDR) list identifies the following business units which were considered as potential sites for the UCS: Beyond Economic Repair, Land Used for Storage and Premises, Fire Damaged, Demolition in Progress, In Disrepair.

Step 2E – Vacant Residential Properties

Very large (Council Tax banding F/G/H) long-term vacant (2+ years) are identified as potential sites.

¹ Flood zone 3 represents a significant constraint and is often suggested as an area of exclusion. However, flood zone 3 covers large areas of the urban areas including Newton Abbot and Exeter. The Environment Agency provides specific advice to Councils about flood response and defence in major regeneration projects and therefore Flood Zone 3 is identified as a constraint in this step rather than exclusion.

Step 2F – Additional Potential UCS Sites

A visual view (GIS/Aerial) of the study area is undertaken to identify any other potential additional sites.

Step 3A – Survey

Local policy is considered.

Step 3B – Internal Consultations

Sites not discounted at Step 3A are sent to internal experts for comment including but not limited to: Heritage and Conservation, Environmental Health, Economic Development, Highways Development Management, Green Space and Recreation, Minerals and Waste Planning Teams.

Step 3C – Site review

Sites are reviewed for potential delivery.

3. Summary of Findings

- 3.1 By following the approach set out in Chapter 2 of this report, a total of 16 sites are considered as potential sites for development within Exeter. A summary of the potential supply in Exeter is set out in Table 1 below. For full details please refer to the Exeter Appendix which accompanies this report.
- 3.2 Please note the housing figures provided are only indicative of the potential supply of achievable housing land available, it makes no judgement on which sites are likely to be allocated or obtain planning permission. The development potential of individual sites may be affected by constraints such as biodiversity, conservation, protected trees, the presence of heritage assets etc. The UCS instead forms part of the evidence base to inform plan-making such as Local Plans.

Table 1: Summary of Exeter Total Potential UCS Supply		
	Total potential sites	Total potential supply
Exeter City		
Alphington	2	13
Clifton Hill and Polsloe	2	14
Cowick	0	0
Digby, Sowton & Newcourt	2	24
Exeter City Centre	2	49
Exwick	0	0
Pinhoe	0	0
St James	0	0
St Leonards	1	18
St Thomas	3	19
Stoke Hill & Mincinglake	0	0
Topsham & Countess Wear	0	0
University & Pennsylvania	0	0
Whipton	3	134
Wonford	1	9
Total	16	280

4. Implications for strategic planning

- 4.1 This UCS identifies a potential supply of 280 dwellings in Exeter. The housing figures provided are only indicative of the potential supply of achievable housing land available, it makes no judgement of which sites are likely to be allocated or obtain planning permission. The development potential of individual sites may be affected by constraints such as biodiversity, conservation, protected trees, the presence of heritage assets etc. This report will be published as background evidence to support plan making. Each individual Local Authority will decide how to use the outputs of this study in their own subsequent strategic plan-making including Local Plans.