



**Guidance on Equestrian Development in East Devon  
AONB**

**Supporting Evidence Report**

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## Introduction

This report contains evidence to support the Equestrian Development Guidelines. It is intended to add context to and support to this guidance and evidence to our understanding of equestrian development in East Devon. It contains information on the following areas:

- Existing Local Plan strategy/policies and how they relate to equine development.
- The context of the landscape of East Devon
- Information and data on equestrian related planning activity in East Devon

## Local Plan references

The following section outlines some of most relevant strategies/policies to which the Equestrian Development Guidelines relate. They are not in order of significance and some will relate to general points which equestrian development must meet, whilst others are more specific.

Local Plan strategy/policy		Explanation
<b>Strategies</b>		
	<b>Strategy 3</b> Sustainable Development	The objective of ensuring sustainable development is central to the Local Plan. Development would need to address conservation & enhancement of the environment, prudent use of natural resources, promoting social well-being, encouraging sustainable economic development and take a long-term view on actions.
	<b>Strategy 7</b> Development in the Countryside	Equestrian activity and development must not harm the distinctive landscape, amenity and environmental qualities within the area which it is located.
	<b>Strategy 27</b> Development at the Small Towns and Larger Villages	Riding schools in particular might put a strain on local services, be incompatible with the character of the area and impair highway safety or traffic flows. These effects must be shown to be mitigated justifying how and why, in a local context, the development will promote the objectives of sustainable development.
	<b>Strategy 33</b> Promotion of Tourism in East Devon	Tourism growth should be sustainable and should not damage the natural assets of the District but aim to attract new tourism related businesses that can complement the high quality environment of East Devon.
	<b>Strategy 38</b> Sustainable design and construction	Encouragement is given for proposals for new development and for refurbishment of, conversion or extensions to, existing buildings that show sustainable design/construction, resilience to climate change, reduced adverse impacts and mitigation/integration for improving biodiversity
	<b>Strategy 44</b> Undeveloped coast & coastal preservation area	Development or any change of use will not be allowed if it would damage the undeveloped/open status of the designated area or where visually connected to any adjoining areas.

Local Plan strategy/policy		Explanation
<b>Strategies</b>		
	<b>Strategy 46</b> Landscape Conservation and Enhancement and AONBs	Development will need to be undertaken in a manner that is sympathetic to, and helps conserve and enhance the quality and local distinctiveness of, the natural and historic landscape character of East Devon, in particular in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
	<b>Strategy 47</b> Nature Conservation and geology	Development will need to take biodiversity and geological features into consideration and consider opportunities incorporating biodiversity features. Habitat regulations and mitigation may apply to development proposals in proximity to Natura 2000 sites assessed as leading to adverse impacts.
	<b>Strategy 48</b> Local Distinctiveness and the built environment	Use of local materials and local forms and styles will be essential to maintaining the local distinctiveness of East Devon.
<b>Development Management Policies</b>		
	<b>Design Standards Policies</b>	There are a range of design standard policies detailed in the Local Plan that seek to promote high quality and locally distinctive development that will have a relevance to many areas of equestrian development.
	<b>Policy RC4</b> Recreation Facilities in the Countryside and on the Coast	The character, scale and accessibility of any recreation facilities will need to be in keeping with existing character and access provision.

### Landscape context

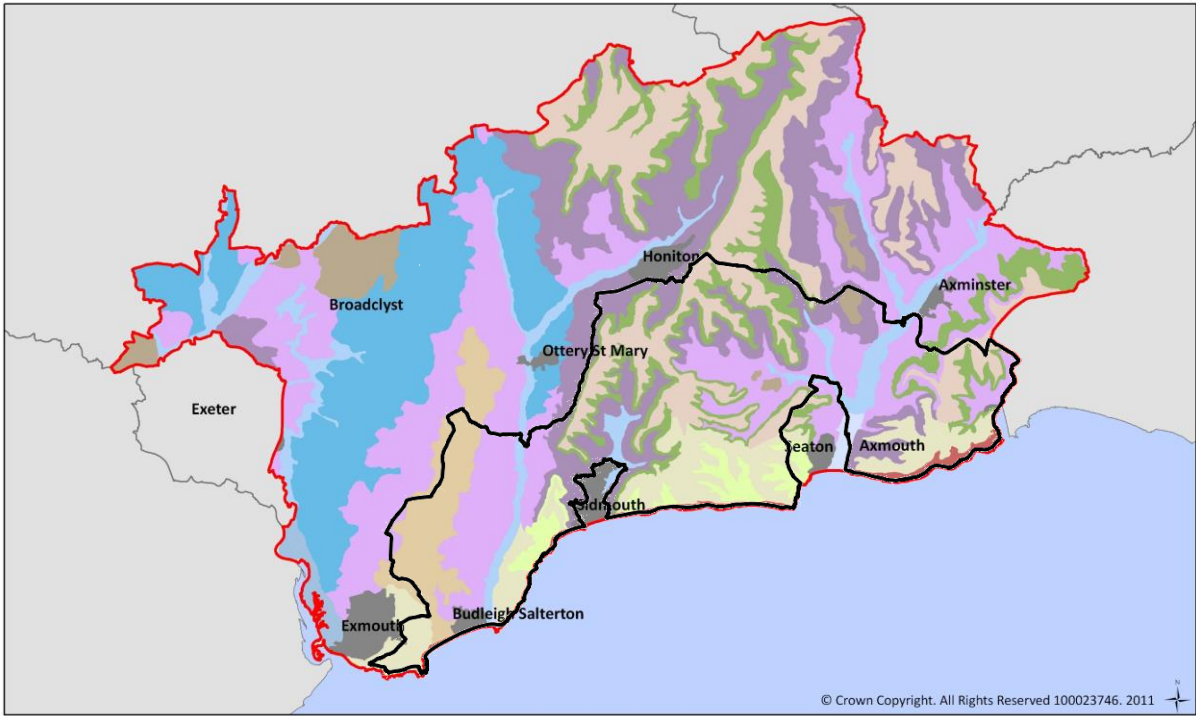
East Devon District covers an area of around 315 square miles. From the River Exe and the outskirts of Exeter in the west, it stretches 30 miles to Dorset in the east, and 15 miles from the coast to Somerset in the north.

The quality and diversity of the East Devon landscape is one of its greatest assets. As the landscape character map below demonstrates, the district’s landscape is extremely diverse. It ranges from the sheer, high cliffs of red sandstone or chalk to steep wooded combes; from the high flat topped plateaux reaching from the coastal hinterland to the Blackdown Hills, to salt marshes, river estuaries, heaths and rolling farmland.

Our coastline forms part of England’s first World Heritage Site designated for its natural environment. The East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies wholly within the District and together with the greater part of the Blackdown Hills AONB, these areas cover about 66% of the district.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty enjoy, with National Parks, the highest level of landscape protection in Britain. This means that national, as well as local planning policies will be applied in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of these important landscape areas.

Map 1 - The landscape character of East Devon



**Landscape Character Types**

1A Open inland planned plateaux	1C Pebble bed heaths	2B Coastal scarp slopes and combes	4A Unsettled farmed valley floors	4D Lowland plains
1B Open coastal plateaux	1E Wooded ridges and hilltops	3A Upper undulating farmed and wooded slopes	4B Unsettled marine levels	5 Coastal cliffs
	2A Steep wooded scarp slopes	3B Lower rolling farmed and settled slopes	4C Estuaries	Urban

— EDDC boundary

## Equestrian Context

The horse industry is a significant economic force in England and Wales. Estimates suggest that its gross output is £3.4 billion; it employs up to 250,000 people directly and indirectly; 2.4 million people ride; 11 million people have some interest in the horse industry and 5 million an active interest. The horse population is at least 600,000 and could total nearly 1 million. <sup>1</sup>

Horse owning and riding is an increasingly popular activity that is growing across the south west of England. How horses are cared for and the developments associated with keeping a horse have a significant impact on the character and quality of East Devon's landscapes.

Owners of horses have an important role to play in keeping East Devon a beautiful place. In this document you will find helpful guidance to ensure your proposals make a positive contribution to the landscape.

## Equestrian activity in East Devon

Due largely to its rural nature and relative quality of life, East Devon has a high level of equestrian interest and activity.

## Major facilities

In 1977 Bicton Arena hosted the British Eventing Horse Trials for the first time; the Bicton Horse Trials, as they became known, were traditionally held pre-Badminton, to help boost fitness and polish technique.

After a brief absence, the Trials returned to Bicton in August 2010 and the centre was designated an official pre-Olympic training centre for international teams and individuals in the run up to the London 2012 Games. A variety of licensed riding schools supplement this major facility catering for a range of skills and interests. Of the schools shown in Table 2, one is part of an adventure park, one attached to a college, one is for beach donkeys; five are privately owned.

Table 2 - Riding schools in East Devon (2011)

Location	Number of users registered
Whimble	7
Exmouth	5
Sidmouth	18
Colyton	25
Budleigh Salterton	47
Clyst St Mary	8
East Budleigh	17
Sheldon	9

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<sup>1</sup> *Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales*; Prepared by the British Horse Industry Federation in partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs the Department for Culture, Media and Sport the Welsh Assembly Government.

Complementing these riding centres, there are a large number of formal and informal unlicensed livery facilities across the district of varying size. A number of Pony Clubs serve the area; Axe Vale, East Devon Hunt, Cotley Hunt, Taunton Vale, Tiverton Hunt in addition to a range of Saddle Clubs and informal networks providing opportunities for a broad range of ages and interests.

Table 3 - Number of Horses in East Devon<sup>2</sup>

Year	Horses owned by occupier		Horses not owned by occupier	
	<i>Holdings</i>	<i>Horses</i>	<i>Holdings</i>	<i>Horses</i>
1998	292	983	174	410
1999	256	886	152	407
2000	295	1178	129	474
2001	288	1165	111	474
2002	322	1272	117	471
2003	289	1261	104	484
2004	344	1401	135	631
2005	313	1294	154	899

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Although somewhat dated now, available data in Table 3 indicate that the number of ‘owner occupier’ holdings for horses in East Devon has risen only marginally since 1998. However, the number of horses per holding has risen from 3.36 horses per holding to 4.13.

This increase is also reflected in the ‘non-owner occupier’ category which shows that whilst the number of holdings has actually reduced, the number of horses on these holdings has almost doubled; the change here being from 2.36 horses per holding to 5.84 between 1998 and 2005; a higher level than that of the owner-occupier holdings.

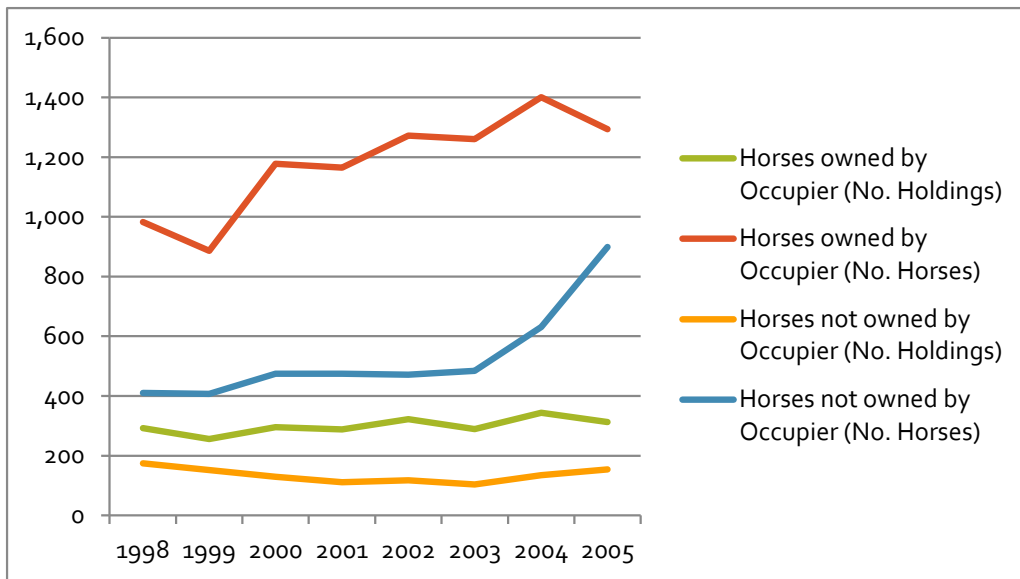
Whilst some of these increases may be attributed to improved survey information, it is clear that horse ownership and associated activity has increased in East Devon across this period and that the number of horses on livery or rented land has significantly increased.

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<sup>2</sup> Data source: Results are from the Defra June Survey of Agriculture, a large sample survey sent to a representative sample of holdings across England. As the results are based on a sample survey, they are subject to a degree of sampling error and do not take into account other sources of survey errors, such as non-response bias or administrative data errors. Data notes: Results relate to all holdings, apart from in 1998 and 1999 when Minor Holdings were excluded. For details of the survey methodology, please go to:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/foodfarm/landuselivestock/junesurvey/documents/JuneMethod.pdf>

Chart 1 – Trend in horse ownership 1998-2005



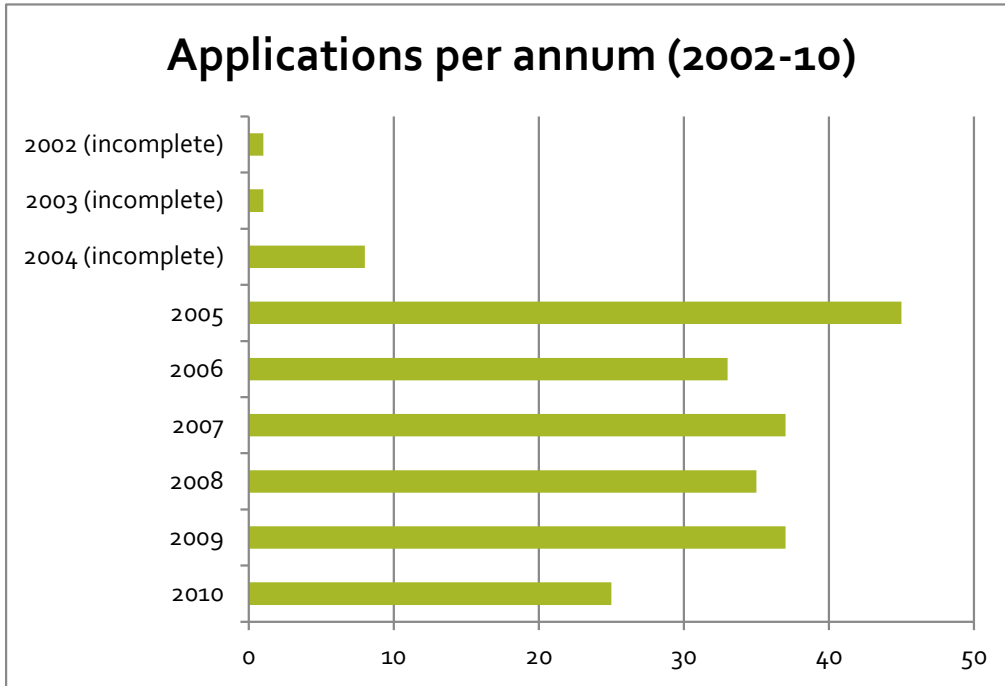
It is worth noting that these ownership figures come from returns on Defra surveys of registered landowners. As such, this data does not fully represent all horse ownership/activity in the district.



### Planning and development activity

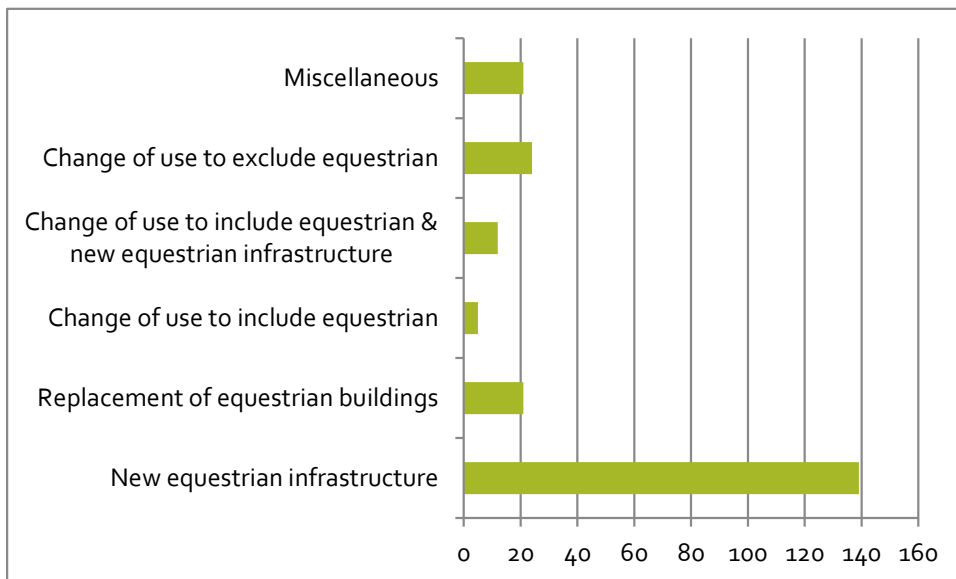
Chart 2 shows the number of equestrian related planning applications between 2002 and 2010. From a peak in 2005, there has been a relatively steady level of development across the district, ranging between 25-35 applications per year.

Chart 2 – Planning applications (2002-10)



The above table only shows developments requiring planning permission. Associated activities not requiring permissions, such as sub-division of fields and the erection of temporary field shelters, may also impact on landscape character but the cumulative effect of such 'development' may become increasingly significant over time.

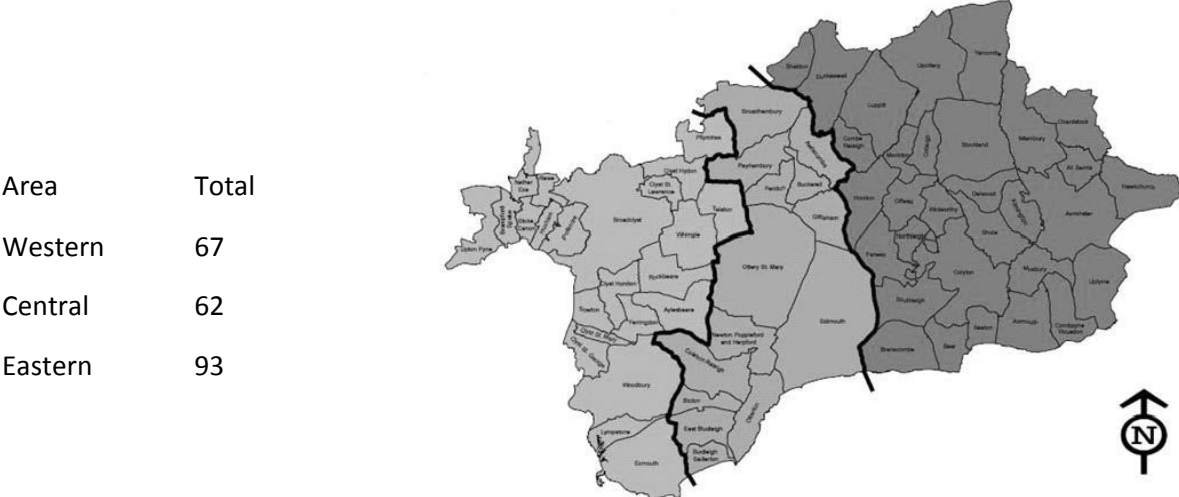
Chart 3 – Applications by type (2002-10)



The dominant development type is new equestrian infrastructure suggesting a gradual increase in new structures in the countryside and a justification for producing guidelines. However, there is also a trend towards change of use from or replacement of redundant and/or historic equestrian development for other purposes.

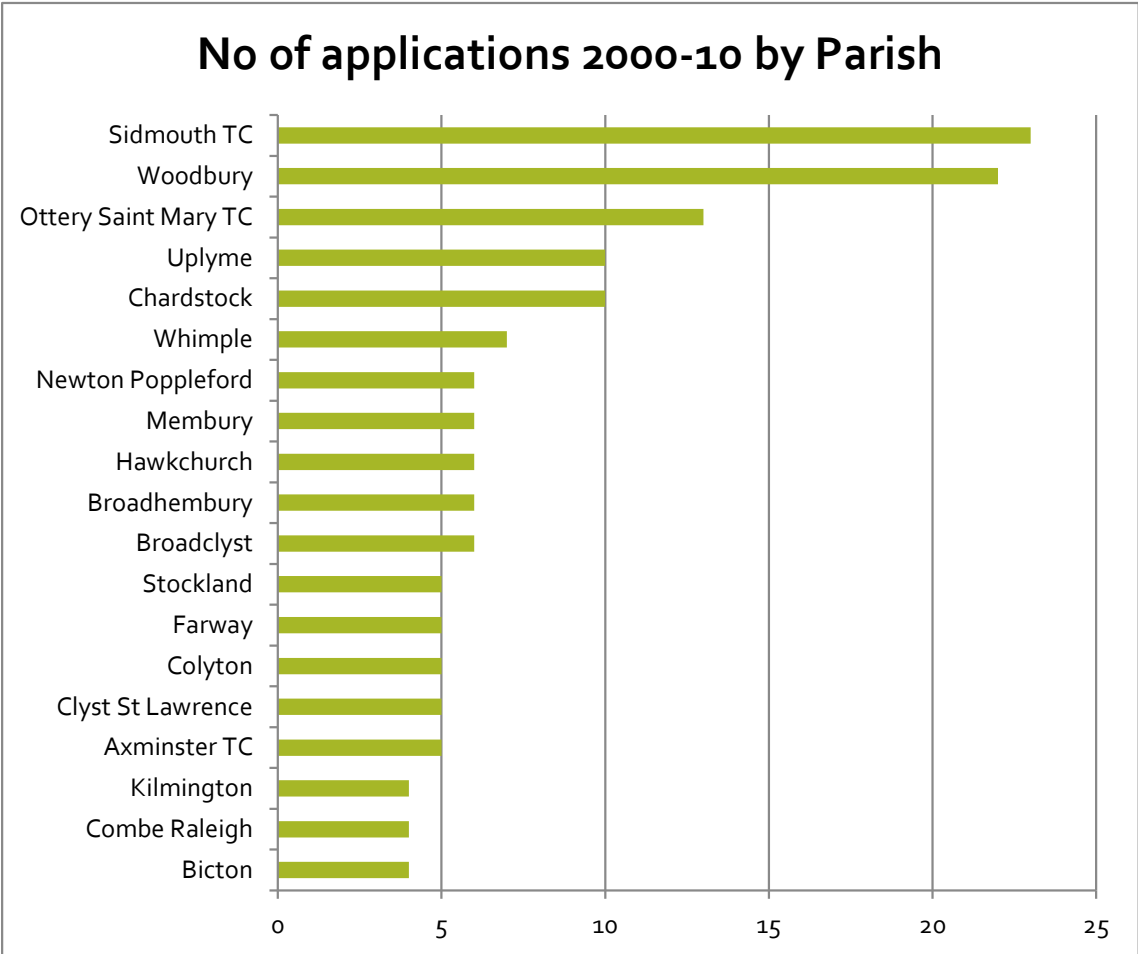
In respect of geographic spread, most equestrian development has taken place in the eastern side of the district.

Map 2 – Equestrian Development by planning areas in East Devon (2000-2010)



However, it is the large parishes of Sidmouth, Ottery St Mary and Woodbury, in the central and western planning areas, which have the highest levels of equestrian development in the period recorded.

Chart 4 – Equestrian development by Parish



Process

Records show most applications for equestrian development in East Devon are approved but with conditions. Many of the conditions used will be relevant to the guidance detailed in this document and for that reason it is hoped this will be of benefit to all parties. It is interesting to note that there are very few appeals recorded but a significant number of withdrawals. It is hoped that this guidance will help to reduce the likelihood of proposals reaching this stage in future.

Chart 5 – Record of Applications (2002-10)

