

**Area of LDU within AONB:** 187.2 hectares

**% of LDU within AONB:** 100%



**Date surveyed:** 25 February 2010

**Survey points:** SS451391, SS449389, SS448389, SS447390, SS445391, SS435394

**Summary of landscape character**

This LDU forms the lower slopes and bottom of a combe valley stretching from Forda westwards to expand around and include the settlement of Croyde. It meets the coast at Downend and Chesil Cliff, showcasing dramatic cliffs of national importance. The LDU includes the lower stretches of combe valley fingers spreading out from the main combe – following Combas Lane, Frogsteet Hill and cutting through the landform south of the village of Cross. The eastern part of the LDU has a strong historic and rural feel, including the historic core of Croyde and village of Cross, with a peaceful stream flowing through the combe bottom. This area particularly contrasts with the sprawling resort of Croyde in the west of the LDU – which includes a range of leisure and tourism related development as well as recent housing.

**LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION**

**LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY / VIEWS**

<b>Landform description</b>	Lower gently sloping combe slopes and fingers, along with the flat valley bottoms stretching westwards to encompass the coastal resort of Croyde. The LDU extends along the southern edge of Croyde to meet the coast at Chesil Cliff.
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**LAND USE AND PATTERNS**

<b>Agriculture</b>	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Pasture, including rushy wet pasture in combe bottoms and rough grassland on lower combe slopes.	Smallholdings and allotments on the southern fringes of Croyde.	
<b>Field patterns and boundaries</b>	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	Long, rectangular fields are a	Medium scale	Devon hedgebanks,

	feature of the combe slopes, opening out in valley bottoms (mainly of medieval origin). The southern and northern fringes of Croyde retain a distinctive pattern of long and narrow medieval strip fields.	throughout the LDU.	with lengths in the east containing more frequent hedgerow trees, whilst hedges bounding fields around Croyde are more closely cut.
<b>Other land uses (e.g. recreation)</b>	This is a settled landscape with a large proportion of the LDU covering development at Croyde (mixture of domestic, tourism and recreational uses – including car parking, holiday parks, camp sites and golf course).		

### **WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS**

<b>Trees / woodland cover</b>	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>	<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	Bands of woodland follow the stream bottoms in the eastern combe valleys. Within the settled areas woodland is limited to domestic scale plantings and shelterbelts closer to the coast.	Broadleaved trees fringe stream courses in the east and provide a sense of enclosure where present as hedgerow trees.  Evergreen shelterbelts stand out within the developed core of Croyde.
<b>Semi-natural habitats</b>	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>	
	Development dominates the west of the LDU, whilst rushy pasture and wet woodland provide nature conservation interest in the eastern combe bottoms. The coastal section of the LDU towards Chesil Cliff includes nationally important maritime heath and grassland habitats.	

### **SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

<b>Settlement pattern</b>	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	Croyde is a sprawling settlement extending outwards from its nucleated, historic core within the main combe bottom to occupy a flat basin-like coastal location. The historic linear village of Cross, and hamlet of Forda are located along the valley bottom in the eastern half of the LDU.		
<b>Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)</b>	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	A main B-road follows the main combe bottom, forking upon entrance into Croyde to meet minor lanes and cul-de-sacs. Bridleways follow minor tracks extending along combe fingers. The South West Coast Path crosses the coastal headland at the south-western extent of the LDU.		
<b>Local vernacular styles and materials</b>	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	White-washed cob and stone cottages with slate or thatch roofs, with black painted	N/A	Stone-built chapels are a particular feature of 'old' Croyde and Cross.

	details (door and window frames).		Numerous stone bridges and walls reinforce the local vernacular.
<b>Modern development styles / materials</b>	Range of 20th century and recent development at Croyde including suburban housing estates, white painted bungalows and holiday chalets. A large holiday park, with green painted chalets, dominates the northern edge of the settlement. Forda, in the far east of the LDU, also includes recent housing.		
<b>HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT</b>			
<b>Key historic features visible in the landscape</b>	<i>Description</i>		
	The old core of Croyde is a Conservation Area containing a high concentration of Listed Buildings. Medieval strip fields around Croyde are notable features of the historic environment.		
<b>VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES</b>			
<b>Views</b>	<i>Key views / landmark features</i>	<i>Intervisibility with LDUs</i>	
		<i>From this LDU</i>	<i>To this LDU</i>
	This LDU is framed by steep combe slopes providing a sheltered feel to much of the landscape, with limited views. The open coastal location of Croyde affords more extensive views to higher ground, including the surrounding elevated downland (and mast on Ora Hill), as well as the coast backing Croyde Bay. At the LDU's south-western extent (Chesil Cliff) extensive southward views are afforded along the coastline – likely to be to as far as Hartland Point in clear conditions.	<b>896</b> (upper combe slopes) <b>383</b> (Croyde Burrows) <b>397</b> (Croyde Sand) <b>403</b> (elevated downland) <b>842, 693</b> (distant coastline around Westward Ho!)	896 383 397 403 693 842
<b>Perceptual qualities (description)</b>	This is a landscape of contrasts – with the heads of the combe valley being peaceful and lightly settled, whilst the coast is dominated by extensive resort development at Croyde. Perceptual qualities also vary depending on the time of year – e.g. traffic levels on the main B road into Croyde will have a significant impact on levels of tranquillity in the east during the summer months, when visitor numbers to the coast are at their peak.		

## LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
<b>NATURE CONSERVATION</b>		
SSSI	1	3.71%
County Wildlife Sites	3	3.13%
<b>HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT</b>		
Listed Buildings	31 (1 grade II*, 30 grade II)	

## UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
Coastal sand dunes	1.1	0.59%
Maritime cliff and slope	6.4	3.42%
Traditional Orchards	0.32	0.17%

## KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	Perceptual qualities across the LDU vary depending on the time of year, with peak summer months seeing an influx in traffic and visitors to the area, significantly reducing feelings of tranquillity.
Views	Views in the west are dominated by development, although the higher elevation of surrounding land allows views to coastal headlands and the elevated downland –the mast on Ora Hill is a prominent vertical element. Views from the coastal section of the LDU are dramatic and long-ranging, with development at Westward Ho! and Northam likely to feature on the distant skyline.
Land use	Modern tourism and recreational development dominates the western part of the LDU, whilst traditional pastoral land uses along combe bottoms and lower slopes reinforce landscape character in the east.
Field patterns	Medieval strip fields around Croyde are valued features of the historic environment – retaining their strong patterns despite the close proximity of modern development.
Field boundaries	No issues noted in the field.
Trees and woodland	No issues noted in the field.
Semi-natural habitats	The section of SSSI coastline is currently assessed as in favourable condition by Natural England. No issues were noted in the field.
Settlement and development	Extensive spread of post-war and recent development relating to Croyde’s popularity as a tourist resort (particularly for surfing). The old core of the town retains its historic character, as does the nearby village of Cross.
Local vernacular	Croyde Conservation Area and Cross contain fine examples of the local vernacular in traditional cottages and barns. Western Croyde is dominated by modern development and land uses utilising a range of building styles and materials.

## **COMMENTS ON LDU / LCT BOUNDARIES**

In the Joint North Devon & Torridge LCA (November 2011) this LDU has been combined with the upper combe slopes (896) to form part of the 4C: Coastal Slopes & Combes with Settlement Landscape Character Type. It was previously classified as falling within another LCT (3B: Lower Rolling Farmed & Settled Slopes).