

Area of LDU within AONB: 812.6 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 35%



Date surveyed: 1 March 2010

Survey points: SS546472, SS546464, SS544456, SS538444, SS499458, SS495450

Summary of landscape character

This LDU is an elevated gently undulating downland landscape forming two discrete areas of land to the east and west of Ilfracombe (part of a wider LDU which extends southwards outside the AONB). It includes distinctive hilly landforms in the east (Trayne Hills). The LDU is a pastoral landscape with occasional arable fields in a regular pattern, interspersed with patches of gorse scrub and rough grassland contributing to landscape diversity. Its open, exposed character is reinforced through a general lack of tree and woodland cover and reflected in the wind-sculpted nature of hedgerow trees. Long views are afforded across the landscape and beyond – with clear weather conditions allowing views north across the sea to the south Wales coast. Telecommunications masts are prominent vertical elements in this sparsely settled landscape (the only village being at Lincombe in the west of the LDU).

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY

Landform description	Elevated, gently undulating downland landscape with distinctive landform features in the east (Trayne Hills).
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LAND USE AND PATTERNS

Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Pasture	Some arable fields	
Field patterns and boundaries	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	Regular pattern of fields of medieval origin, often with curving boundaries. There is a particularly strong pattern of medieval strip fields on the	Medium to large scale. Small to medium scale	A mixture of Devon hedgebanks with a variety of topping hedgerows – some low cut beech hedges,

	<p>slopes to the north of the village of Lincombe in the west of the LDU.</p> <p>Areas of post-medieval and more recent straight-sided fields are found in places (e.g. south of Gratton Plantation in the east of the LDU), including modern fields around Higher Slade and north-west of Lincombe (in the west of the LDU).</p> <p>The summits of the Trayne Hills are unenclosed.</p>	surrounding Lincombe.	<p>gorse nearer the coast, whilst others lengths are grown out forming wind-sculpted tree lines.</p> <p>Hedgebanks on the elevated slopes above Lincombe are particularly wide and low cut.</p> <p>Some fields are bounded by post-and-wire fencing – particularly in areas of arable cultivation.</p>
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Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	Quad biking centre at Keypitts Farm in the east of the LDU – shielded from many views due to its location on sloping land above Chambercombe. Widmouth Hill includes the fringes of Ilfracombe Golf Course.
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WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS

Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>	<i>Type and species (broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	Woodland cover is generally sparse throughout – with the exception of the broadleaved Gratton Plantation and grown-out hedgebanks forming tree lines.	Broadleaved (including Gratton Plantation and the edge of Northfield Wood). Hedgerow trees are frequently beech.

Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>
	Patches of heathy vegetation, rough grassland and gorse scrub on hill summits (particularly the Trayne Hills in the eastern section of the LDU). The County Wildlife Sites of Northfield Wood (broadleaved woodland/plantation on an ancient woodland site); the Trayne Hills (unimproved neutral/acid grassland); Middle Cockhill (unimproved acid grassland) and Torrs Park (maritime heath and grassland) include land on the fringes of the LDU boundary, contributing to wildlife interest.

SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>
	Lincombe is the only village within the LDU (in its western section) – stretching in linear form across a ridge side including 20 th century bungalows and houses. Elsewhere is a sparse, dispersed pattern of isolated farmstead groups set into slight depressions in the landform – some including large modern livestock sheds.

Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	The eastern section of the LDU is crossed along its ridgeline by the straight minor Oxenpark Lane – joined at right angles by tracks linking dispersed farms. In the west, minor lanes wrap around the landform linking with farms and the village of Lincombe. These are complemented by network of public footpaths crossing the farmland.		
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	White washed cottages and farm houses with slate roofs. Older farm buildings are constructed of local stone (Morte slate).	N/A	Morte slate walls with quartz boulders and coping stones, particularly associated with the western part of the LDU around Lincombe.
Modern development styles / materials	Lincombe contains modern bungalows and individual properties – with white/cream painted walls and grey/brown tiled roofs.		

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>
	A cluster of prehistoric barrows crown a hill summit north-west of Ettiford (one of which is designated as a Scheduled Monument). Whitestone standing stone is an important historic feature on the hillside west of Lincombe. Small historic quarries are also found scattered across the landscape, and traditional cottages and farm houses strengthen the landscape's sense of history (e.g. Lincombe Farmhouse is Grade II listed).

VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

Views	<i>Key views / landmark features</i>	<i>Intervisibility with LDUs</i>	
		<i>From this LDU</i>	<i>To this LDU</i>
	The open landform and elevation allow views over adjacent combes, the north coast of the AONB and the fringes of Ilfracombe. The sea is a common feature on northward horizons, with views of the south coast of Wales possible during clear conditions. Telecommunications masts above Higher Slade (in the west of the LDU) and adjacent to Oxenpark Lane (in the east) are visible skyline features from a long distance.	580 (combe lying below) 532 (Slade combe) 895 (Borough Valley) 583 (north east coast) 578 (north west coast) 387	580 532 895 583 578 387

		(Ilfracombe)	
Perceptual qualities (description)	<p>This LDU is generally of a tranquil and unspoilt character, broken only by the presence of modern linear development at Lincombe, in the western part of the LDU, and views to the fringes of Ilfracombe. Tourism-related development, including two quad biking centres (one on the boundary of the LDU's eastern section, the other outside the AONB) and views to holiday parks/caravan sites adjacent to the A361 (also outside the AONB) impact on overriding feelings of remoteness, particularly in the summer months.</p>		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
NATURE CONSERVATION		
County Wildlife Sites	6	2.93%
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT		
Scheduled Monuments	2	0.02%
Listed Buildings	2 (grade II)	

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	1.38	0.17%
Maritime cliff and slope	14.41	1.77%
Upland oakwoods	0.03	< 0.01%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	The unsettled, open and exposed character of this landscape reinforces feelings of tranquillity and remoteness – affected only by glimpses of development and tourism facilities on the edges of Ilfracombe and the presence of a quad biking attraction on the edge of the LDU in the east.
Views	The landscape's strong coastal views are important aspects of landscape character. Masts within the LDU introduce prominent vertical elements visible from adjacent landscapes.
Land use	The LDU's land use is predominantly pastoral, reflecting its traditional downland character. Pockets of intensive arable cultivation and crops under polythene detract from this character.
Field patterns	Traditional medieval field patterns have been diluted by the spread of regular, more recent enclosures – with the use of post and wire fencing also reducing the strength of the LDU's field patterns, particularly in the more intensively farmed areas.
Field boundaries	Variable levels of field boundary management – some sections of hedgebank are closely trimmed with no hedgerow trees (particularly on elevated land), whilst other sections are suffering from a lack of active management and have grown out – forming wind-sculpted tree lines.
Trees and woodland	Tree cover is generally sparse to reinforce the landscape's open and exposed character. No management issues were noted in the fields.
Semi-natural habitats	Patchy areas of gorse scrub and rough grassland on higher slopes, including the open Trayne Hills, contribute to landscape variety. Areas of unimproved grassland, maritime heath and small patches of woodland include County Wildlife Sites – assumed to be under appropriate management regimes.
Settlement and development	Lincombe has experienced a linear spread of recent development from its historic core – prominent due to its ridge-side position

	<p>when viewed from the south (e.g. from Lower and Middle Campscott Farms in the western section of the LDU). Some farms include large, modern livestock sheds out of scale with traditional farm buildings (e.g. Oxenpark Farm in the eastern part of the LDU).</p>
Local vernacular	<p>Lincombe contains modern bungalows and individual properties – many of which generally reflect the local vernacular of white/cream painted walls and grey/brown tiled roofs. Ornamental garden plantings and suburban boundary features detract from traditional settlement character.</p> <p>Old stone farm buildings, which have fallen into disrepair, are frequently ‘patched up’ using corrugated iron and other non-vernacular materials.</p>

COMMENTS ON LDU / LCT BOUNDARIES

The AONB could consider splitting the LDU into its separate east and west sections (currently the LDU falls in two parts either side of Ilfracombe, which lies outside the AONB).