

Area of LDU within AONB: 258.22 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 100%



Date surveyed: 2 March 2010

Survey points: SS285259, SS289259, SS296259, SS298261, SS298263

Summary of landscape character

This landscape comprises the steep slopes and bottom of a wooded combe, drained by a series of fast-flowing streams on their course to meet the sea at Blackchurch Rock. The combe streams and slopes are lined by dense woodland cover with a carpet of ferns and bluebells, surrounded by pastoral farmland. The woodland provides shelter to the landscape – contrasting with the open combe mouth as the landform meets the sea at Mouth Mill. This is an unsettled landscape with high levels of peace and tranquillity – often the only sounds to be heard are the running water of the streams, birds singing, and the distant sounds of the sea.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY			
Landform description	Steep-sided, branching combe valley which opens out at the coast.		
LAND USE AND PATTERNS			
Agriculture	Main agricultural land use	Other agricultural land use(s)	
	The LDU is primarily under woodland / forestry. Pasture fields (including unimproved Culm grasslands) are mainly found on the higher combe slopes.	Very occasional arable fields, mainly in the south of the LDU.	
Field patterns and boundaries	Field patterns and origins	Size (note variations)	Boundary type / description
	Fields are largely of modern or post-medieval origin, with some sinuous boundaries surviving in places.	Medium-scale	Devon hedgebanks often with thick hedgerows. Some lengths have frequent

			hedgerow trees, providing ecological links with the area's woodlands.
Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	Forestry and pheasant keeping – there is a large pheasant pen within Brownsham Wood.		
WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS			
Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>		<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	Extensive woodland cover with a close canopy covers much of the LDU.		The lower slopes and combe bottoms comprise a mixture of beech/sycamore/ash woodland with a hazel and holly understorey, whilst higher slopes are clothed in ancient semi-natural oak woodland. Stream sides include alder and willow. Brownsham Wood includes an area of conifer plantation.
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>		
	Much of the combe's woodland is nationally and internationally valued for its nature conservation interest, falling within the Marsland to Clovelly Coast SSSI and SAC. Trees within the designated land include sessile oak and the rare Devon whitebeam, often supporting lichens and a rich ground flora with species such as woodrush, bluebells, primroses and ferns present.		
SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT			
Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	The only building within this LDU is the secluded historic mill house at the combe's northern tip, sheltered within woodland.		
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	The woodlands include forest tracks and a bridleway linking Brownsham in the west with Clovelly to the east. A National Trust car park provides access to the bridleway from Brownsham.		
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	The mill house is constructed of exposed local stone with a slate roof.	N/A	N/A
Modern development	N/A		

styles / materials			
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT			
Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>		
	Mouth Mill sits at the northern tip of the LDU, associated with the importing of coal and limestone from Wales. There are the remains of limekilns on the coast immediately beyond to the north (previously within LDU 693).		
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>
	Views are limited by dense woodland cover and the steep slopes of the combe. In the north, views open up around Mouth Mill – featuring the sea and the geological feature of Blackchurch Rock.	693 (north coast) 684 (surrounding countryside)	693 684
Perceptual qualities (description)	This is a very peaceful and tranquil landscape, owing to the absence of settlement or roads and its secluded, sheltered location. The peacefulness is only broken by the sounds of birds singing (including pheasants calling), the rushing water of the streams and the distant roar of the sea. Forestry operations and pheasant shoots can disrupt the peace of the area at certain times of the year.		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
NATURE CONSERVATION		
SAC	1	58.26%
SSSI	1	58.26%
Listed Buildings	2 (2 grade II)	

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area
Lowland beech and yew woodland	51.55	19.97%
Maritime cliff and slope	6.65	2.58%
Purple moor grass and rush pasture	10.08	3.9%
Traditional Orchards	2.34	0.91%
Upland oakwoods	85	32.92%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	Forestry operations and pheasant shoots can disrupt the overriding peacefulness of the area at certain times of the year. Otherwise it is a highly tranquil landscape.
Views	Views are confined due to dense woodland cover and the areas steep topography. Seaward views are afforded from the higher ground and north of the LDU. There are no views of development from this landscape.
Land use	Occasional arable fields in the south of the LDU detract from the pastoral character of the agricultural landscape.
Field patterns	Post-medieval and modern enclosures retain the curving boundaries and overall scale of their medieval predecessors.
Field boundaries	Devon hedgebanks often contain frequent hedgerow trees, providing valued ecological links with the area's woodland.
Trees and woodland	Some parts of the woodland SSSI are currently assessed as in unfavourable condition, owing to the spread of rhododendron, brambles and turkey oak impacting on the diversity of the woodland understorey. The past planting of conifers on former ancient woodland sites is also a negative factor influencing condition. NE has an aim to replant the conifers with native broadleaves.
Semi-natural habitats	See above.
Settlement and development	No issues – the LDU is unsettled
Local vernacular	No issues noted in the field, as above.

COMMENTS ON LDU / LCT BOUNDARIES

The original LDU boundary has been tweaked to more closely follow the combe landform and include all buildings relating to Mouth Mill (including the limekilns at the top of Mouthmill beach).