

Area of LDU within AONB: 247.4 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 100%



Date surveyed: 3 March 2010

Survey Points: SS217177, SS223178, SS227180, SS229180, SS234179, SS228183

Summary of landscape character

A relatively small, gently undulating coastal plateau near Welcombe contained between two wooded combes in the south of the AONB, stretching out to coastal cliffs in the west. Medium-to-large sized pasture fields comprise the predominant land cover, though there is also a notable arable presence, while ridgeline villages, hamlets and farmsteads form prominent features within the open landscape. Though largely an open landscape, the concentration of settlement inland can lead to a more sheltered perception, while tranquillity is generally high throughout.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY

Landform description	Gently undulating coastal plateaux, comprised in the main of two broad ridges that roll down into the surrounding combes.
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LAND USE AND PATTERNS

Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Pasture	Arable	
Field patterns and boundaries	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	Regular modern fields expanded from earlier medieval enclosures predominate throughout, though some medieval patterns remain in the north-west, along with a distinct collection of large regular fields in the north-	Generally medium to large, with some smaller fields around settlements e.g. Welcombe.	Predominantly Devon hedgebanks topped with mixed, thorny hedges. Mainly intensively flailed, hedgerows are also often bushy or occasionally grown out into lines of mature trees e.g. the

	western tip probably laid out between 15 th and 18 th centuries (known in Cornwall as Barton Fields).		fields northeast of Mead. Hedgebanks/hedgerows are gappy or absent near the coast, where failing post-and-wire forms an untidy boundary.
Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	N/A		

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 limited to settlements and occasional outgrown hedgerows, though the Welcombe Millenium Wood is a new area of woodland established in 2000 in a field surrounding the town hall in the centre of the LDU. The concentration of settlement and the surrounding wooded combs can lend the area a greater perception of woodland than actually occurs.	Woodland is predominantly broadleaved (including oak and beech), with distinctive individual stands of Scots Pine scattered around settlement (especially prominent in winter). Rhododendron is also encroaching in places.
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>	
	Scattered patches of unimproved grassland occur around settlements (e.g. below the chalets at Darracott), while the wooded combe to the south (outside the LDU) has SAC and SSSI designations, a very small part of which overlaps onto the south-west of the area where around 3ha of lowland heathland occurs.	

SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>
	Small nucleated hamlets (e.g. Mead, Darracott and those comprising Welcome) and scattered farmsteads occur at a relatively high density, sitting just below ridgelines and prominent in the open landscape. Historical in origin and character (with a thatched pub at Darracott and a medieval church at Welcombe), modern development is also a general feature (with wooden holiday chalets at Darracott, modern yellow-render bungalows and large modern farm buildings throughout).
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>
	A relatively dense network of rural lanes enclosed by hedgebanks covers most of the LDU, connecting hamlets and farmsteads to the eastern plateau

	and descending down into the wooded combe to the north.		
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	White render with grey slate roofs (or occasional thatch e.g. pub at Darracott), sometimes with black window frames and red brick or white render chimney stacks.	Exposed stone buildings are also a prominent traditional feature, especially at Welcombe and Mead.	Exposed stone walls and the medieval church (St Nectan's) at Welcombe contribute to the traditional vernacular.
Modern development styles / materials	Creamy-yellow render occurs on bungalows and modern houses/renovations throughout, while large modern farm buildings are a feature at most farmsteads. The wooden chalets at Darracott are a unusual contrast.		
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT			
Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>		
	St. Nectan's Well and the church relate to the Irish missionary who is associated with this area of the North Devon coast.		
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>
	There are coastal views from the western edge of the LDU (which are otherwise generally absent), with views down into the surrounding combes from the LDU boundary. Settlement is prominent throughout the area, often viewed across ridges and over combes, with distinctive associated features in the landscape that include pine trees (e.g. at Mead) and the medieval stone church at Welcombe.	689 (combe to the south) 688 (combe to the north) 694 (western coastline) 686 (inland plateau) 684 (coastal plateau north)	689 688 694 686 684
Perceptual qualities (description)	Exposed and windswept near the coast, the concentration of settlement (with woodland) inland leads to a more sheltered perception, even though it is still a predominantly open landscape. Given the small scale of settlement, perceptions of tranquillity are generally high throughout.		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
NATURE CONSERVATION		
SAC	1	1.27%
SSSI	1	1.27%
County Wildlife Sites	3	0.12%
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT		
Listed Buildings	10 (1 grade II* and 9 grade II)	

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
Lowland heathland	2.7	1.09%
Maritime cliff and slope	0.87	0.35%
Purple moor grass and rush pasture	0.03	0.01%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	An unkempt, desolate quality occurs on the western edge due to neglected fencing and bare fields along the windswept coast. Perceptions of tranquillity are mildly affected by the presence of modern buildings within the area (e.g. chalets at Darracott).
Views	Modern creamy-yellow rendered houses can detract from views of villages (e.g. those below the church at Welcombe), as do the holiday chalets at Darracott and occasionally the larger farm buildings.
Land use	While still predominantly under pasture, the spread of arable land is a notable feature within the landscape, with bare winter fields often prominent (e.g. south of Welcombe and near the coast).
Field patterns	Fields patterns are predominantly modern, and have been further diluted in places (i.e. the west) with the spread of post-and-wire fencing.
Field boundaries	Gappy or missing to the west of Mead (with replacement post-and-wire), hedgerows are otherwise often intensively flailed or bushy in places, and occasionally grown out into tree-lines (e.g. northeast of Mead).
Trees and woodland	Woodland is generally around settlement and can lack traditional management, with scrubby areas of bramble occurring (e.g. at Darracott). Outgrown hedgerow trees also occur (e.g. northeast of Mead), while the new planting at Welcombe will eventually grow into a prominent woodland (with ongoing management required).
Semi-natural habitats	Patches of unimproved grassland occur in a few isolated locations (e.g. below the chalets at Darracott), while a very small area of lowland heathland associated with the southern combe falls within the LDU. Hedgerows that are less intensively managed will provide a richer habitat.
Settlement and development	Settlement is generally historic, although modern development occurs in much of it, including the holiday chalets at Darracott and modern yellow rendered houses

	throughout.
Local vernacular	Wooden holiday chalets (at Darracott), modern yellow-render houses and large modern farm buildings impact on the traditional character of the local vernacular.