

**Area of LDU within AONB:** 724.9 hectares

**% of LDU within AONB:** 79%



**Date surveyed:** 25 February 2010

**Survey Points:** SS465399, SS463397, SS450402, SS457399, SS470388, SS470387, SS464412 (from LDU 402)

**Summary of landscape character**

This is a gently undulating pastoral landscape to the north west of Braunton. Largely defined by topography, this LDU comprises two elevated ‘finger-like’ areas of rolling downland surrounding Croyde and lying above the combe valley which drains to the coast. Ridges extend west to the sea where they form part of the coastal headlands above Baggy Point and Chesil Cliff, resulting in a strong coastal influence in these locations. The smooth ridgelines of this LDU form the backdrop to adjoining landscapes - with masts at Long Lane forming prominent skyline features visible from afar.

**LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION**

**LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY**

<b>Landform description</b>	A gently undulating downland landscape, with ridgelines forming elevated hilltops sloping towards the coast in the west.
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**LAND USE AND PATTERNS**

<b>Agriculture</b>	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Predominantly pasture with some rough and unimproved grassland.	Occasional arable fields, particularly in the north.	
<b>Field patterns and boundaries</b>	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	Strong field pattern – regular and geometric on higher slopes (modern fields enclosed from the downland interspersed with regular 15 <sup>th</sup> and 16 <sup>th</sup> century ‘Barton’	Medium to large scale on higher ground and in the west towards the coast; smaller	A mixture of boundary types including stone faced, grass covered Devon banks, often topped by intensively flailed

	fields), with irregular medieval fields surviving around settlements within dips in the landform.  Area of unenclosed heath / downland at Saunton Down.	fields are found around settlements, often forming narrow strips.	hedgerows with few hedgerow trees. Some lengths of post and wire fencing (e.g. south of Darracott).
<b>Other land uses (e.g. recreation)</b>	N/A		
<b>WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS</b>			
<b>Trees / woodland cover</b>	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>		<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	Largely a treeless landscape with patches of woodland mainly associated with settlements forming shelter belts within the folded landform.  Scots and Monterey Pine stands are features, often associated with buildings.  Occasional tree clumps form vertical elements on smooth skylines.		Broadleaved with some conifer stands (Scots and Monterey Pine) interspersed around small settlements.
<b>Semi-natural habitats</b>	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>		
	Patches of scrub and gorse are found throughout the area. Middleborough Hill (an area of unimproved maritime grassland and scrub) is a County Wildlife Site, crossing through the LDU boundary in the north west. Part of the LDU's coastline in the north-west falls within the Saunton to Baggy Point SSSI. These locations are particularly valued for their gorse, maritime heath and unimproved grassland habitats.		
<b>SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT</b>			
<b>Settlement pattern</b>	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	Georgeham is a small nucleated village centred around a square located in the north east of the LDU, forming the most significant settlement dating back to the 11 <sup>th</sup> century. The small hamlets of Darracott and Putsborough alongside occasional scattered farmsteads are also located in the north. Settlements are often nestled in the undulating landscape, sheltered by small pockets of woodland.  Modern development at Georgeham extends along rural lanes and up valley slopes resulting in a suburban character which is visually prominent on skylines when viewed from the west. Similarly, the white and cream modern houses of Darracott stand out in the landscape in views from the south.		
<b>Transport pattern</b>	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		

	<p>Narrow winding rural lanes throughout link elevated areas to adjacent valley sides and bottoms. Roads are often enclosed by high Devon hedgebanks restricting views.</p> <p>An extensive network of footpaths crosses the area (particularly in the south), including the South West Coast Path. Long Lane, running along the LDU's southern ridgeline, is classified as a Byeway Open to All Traffic (BOAT).</p>		
<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>
	Whitewashed local stone buildings with slate, reddish-brown ridged tiles and some thatch. Painted window and door frames, particularly black, are features of many traditional buildings.	N/A	Slate walls are unifying features of the local vernacular.
<b>Modern development styles / materials</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> century houses (particularly bungalows) are characterised by white and cream painted walls with grey/brown tiled roofs. These buildings stand out against the muted pastoral backdrop of the landscape.		

### HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

<b>Key historic features visible in the landscape</b>	<i>Description</i>
	The traditional cores of Georgeham and Putsborough are Conservation Areas and include several listed buildings. The square towered church at Georgeham dates back to the 13 <sup>th</sup> century <sup>1</sup> and is a Grade I listed building. Its tower forms a prominent landmark feature in many views. A chain of dummy pill boxes are found in fields close to the coast, used for practice during the Second World War.

### VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

<b>Views</b>	<i>Key views / landmark features</i>	<i>Intervisibility with LDUs</i>	
		<i>From this LDU</i>	<i>To this LDU</i>
	Extensive views where gaps in hedgerows permit, strongly influenced by the coast in the west. Skylines to the north east (outside the AONB) are dotted by masts, telegraph poles and small woodlands. Masts on Long Lane are visually	<b>360</b> (Saunton Sands, to the south) <b>088</b> (Braunton Marsh) <b>358</b> (Braunton	360 088 358 852

<sup>1</sup>A brief History of the church in Georgeham available from:

<http://genuki.cs.ncl.ac.uk/DEV/Georgeham/GeorgehamChurch.html> accessed on 8th March 2010

	<p>prominent from surrounding areas and the LDU's smooth ridgelines form the backdrop to many views from adjoining LDUs in the south.</p> <p>The square church tower at Georgeham is a distinctive local landmark in local views.</p>	<p>Burrows)</p> <p><b>852</b> (to the north east)</p> <p><b>402</b> (to the north and east)</p> <p><b>362, 364, 361</b> (Northam coastline to the south)</p> <p><b>397, 383, 384, 896</b> (Croyde and surrounds)</p>	<p>402</p> <p>362</p> <p>364</p> <p>361</p> <p>397</p> <p>383</p> <p>384</p> <p>896</p>
<p><b>Perceptual qualities (description)</b></p>	<p>This is a tranquil landscape owing to its sparsely settled character. Elevated ridgetops allow far reaching panoramic views and add to a sense of exposure, particularly in the west where there is a strong maritime influence.</p>		

## LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
<b>NATURE CONSERVATION</b>		
SSSI	1	1.08%
County Wildlife Sites	1	1.05%
<b>HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT</b>		
Listed Buildings	22 (1 grade I, 21 grade II)	

## UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
Maritime cliff and slope	82.7	5.7%
Traditional Orchards	0.23	0.02%

## KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	Despite some locations of more recent development, the LDU retains an overall sense of tranquillity.
Views	<p>The expansion of small villages such as Georgeham and Darracott has resulted in development spreading up valleys sides - prominent on skylines.</p> <p>The elevated character of this area means that ridgelines are highly visible when viewed from adjacent LDUs. Masts at Long Lane and Ora Hill are visible features within a largely undeveloped, exposed and open ridgeline.</p> <p>Westward Ho! and Northam (outside the AONB) are also visible in southerly views. Modern development on the western fringes of Braunton is also prominent in views to the south.</p>
Land use	Within the north of the LDU fields are more intensively farmed, characterised by arable fields diluting the landscape's traditional pastoral character. Arable fields are also found on parts of Saunton Down.
Field patterns	Enlarged fields are found along ridge-tops – contrasting with the smaller, historic patterns around settlements.
Field boundaries	Roadside hedgebanks are low cut with few hedgerow trees. Field boundaries vary in composition and condition, including some lengths of post and wire fencing.
Trees and woodland	Tree cover is generally sparse within this open and exposed landscape.
Semi-natural habitats	Fragmented areas of scrub, gorse, maritime heath and unimproved grasslands are important semi-natural habitats, particularly on the coast. Natural England assesses the SSSI designated land along the coast as in favourable condition.
Settlement and development	20 <sup>th</sup> century development at Georgeham extends along rural lanes and up valley sides detracting from its traditional sheltered and nucleated character.

Local vernacular	Modern development includes bungalows and family homes introducing a suburban feel to the edges of the main settlements. However, the general unifying use of whitewashing and cream colours in modern development, with brown or grey tiled roofs, does not detract overtly from local character.
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