

Area of LDU within AONB: 160.3 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 100%



Date surveyed: 25 February 2010

Viewpoints: SS464390, SS451391, SS450389, SS449389, SS447390

Summary of landscape character

This LDU forms the steep upper slopes of a combe valley which extends from the western fringes of Darracott to form two separate fingers wrapping around the coastal settlement of Croyde to meet the sea in the west. The peaceful, generally unsettled combe slopes are characterised by rough pasture and patches of heathy vegetation, with mixed woodland crowning Robber’s Hill and stream-side trees a feature of the east of the combe. There is a strong physical and visual relationship with the lower slopes of the combe valley, including the coastal settlement of Croyde, the old historic core of the town, and historic village of Cross.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY

Landform description	The steep upper slopes of a combe valley, stretching east to west and branching out around Croyde where the landform meets the sea.
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LAND USE AND PATTERNS

Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Predominantly rough sheep and cattle-grazed pasture	N/A	
Field patterns and boundaries	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	Fields are mainly of medieval origin, with curving boundaries often following the contours. Some of the higher combe slopes are characterised by more regular fields of recent enclosure, particularly where	Small to medium scale	Low, scrubby Devon hedgebanks – topping vegetation sparse on higher slopes, with the occasional hedgerow tree in more sheltered

	they form the transition with the surrounding downland. Some unenclosed land on higher slopes and as the combes get closer to the coast where heathy/scrubby vegetation predominates.		locations (including Scots Pine). Some fields are bounded by post-and-wire fencing.
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 sparse throughout – with the exception of Robber’s Hill which is crowned by mixed woodland. Deciduous trees follow the stream course in the east of the LDU, whilst elsewhere Scots Pine and scrubby trees are found in patches, particularly in more sheltered locations within folds of the combe.		Mixed woodland on the slopes surrounding Robber’s Hall. Occasional Scots Pine specimens are found throughout.
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>		
	Patches of heathy vegetation and gorse scrub on steeper slopes and nearer to the coast. The north-western extent of the LDU includes part of the County Wildlife Site of Middleborough Hill (mosaic of unimproved maritime grassland, rush pasture and scrub).		
SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT			
Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	The LDU is mainly unsettled, with only the occasional farmstead. However, the landscape has a strong relationship with the linear settlement of Cross and ‘old town’ of Croyde in the bottom of the combe, as well as the sprawling coastal resort of Croyde – featuring strongly in views from this LDU.		
Transport pattern	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	Occasional small, steep lanes traversing up from the combe bottom to link Croyde and Cross with outlying hamlets beyond the LDU. The southern combe branch is crossed along its ridgeline by a bridleway (Milkway Lane).		
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	Cream render and whitewash with	N/A	N/A

	thatched or slate roofs. Farm outbuildings of local stone.		
Modern development styles / materials	N/A		
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT			
Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>		
	South Hole Farm and its outbuildings (on the southern combe slope) are Grade II listed. The LDU includes the western fringes of the medieval village of Georham, which is a Conservation Area.		
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 the combe valley below, including to the traditional village of Cross and the mixed housing and tourism development of Croyde (white and pale colourwashed housing with brown/grey slate roofs standing out in the landscape). Westward views of the sea. The holiday park in the north of Croyde – with green coloured chalets, is prominent in views from the west of this LDU. North-eastern views include the prominent local landmark of Georgeham Parish church tower.	384 (strong physical and visual relationship as part of the wider combe landform) 403 (surrounding downland) 383, 397 (Croyde Burrows and Sand) 402	384 383 397 403 402
Perceptual qualities (description)	This is a peaceful landscape owing to its limited access and general absence of settlement. Levels of relative/contrasting tranquillity are reinforced due to the close proximity of the popular seaside resort of Croyde.		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area
NATURE CONSERVATION		
SSSI	1	0.22%
County Wildlife Sites	1	0.01%
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT		
Listed Buildings	5 (grade II)	

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area
Maritime cliff and slope	0.01	0.01%
Traditional Orchards	< 0.01	< 0.01%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	The peaceful and tranquil qualities of this landscape are perceptually affected by the proximity of the popular coastal resort of Croyde – dominating views from the west of the LDU.
Views	Modern tourism-related development at Croyde – particularly the large holiday park on the northern fringes of the settlement – dominates views in the west. The telecommunications mast on Ora Hill above Croyde is a prominent vertical skyline feature (within LDU 403).
Land use	The LDU's land use is predominantly rough pasture – consistent with traditional landscape character.
Field patterns	Some field patterns have been diluted by the use of post-and-wire fencing and removal of sections of Devon bank (particularly on upper slopes).
Field boundaries	As above – the area's Devon banks, where not replaced or removed, are generally stock proof and in good condition.
Trees and woodland	Tree cover is generally sparse and reinforces the landscape's open character. No issues were noted in the field in relation to woodland management. More woodland planting might be desirable on the combe-side north of Cross.
Semi-natural habitats	Patchy areas of gorse scrub on higher combe slopes contribute to landscape variety. The part of Middleborough Hill CWS within the LDU is assumed to be under a favourable management regime owing to its designation.
Settlement and development	No issues noted for land within this LDU.
Local vernacular	As above – the strength and importance of the landscape's few historic buildings is reflected in the high proportion of Listed Buildings.