

Area of LDU within AONB: 78.0 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 84%



Date surveyed: 25 February 2010

Survey points: SS439380. SS448375

Summary of landscape character

This LDU forms a south-facing, roughly vegetated cliff side, looking over the expansive beach of Saunton Sands and the dunes of Braunton Burrows. A linear cluster of development lines the winding coastal road of the B3231 which runs along a cliff ridgeline, including the white-painted art deco style building of the Saunton Sands Hotel – a prominent landmark visible in views from many miles away. The elevated character of the landscape affords panoramic views south along the western coast of the AONB to as far as Hartland Point.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY

Landform description	Steep, south-facing cliff side topped by rolling downland.
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LAND USE AND PATTERNS

Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>		<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
		Rough grazing	N/A	
Field patterns and boundaries	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>		<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	The steep upper cliff slopes are unenclosed heath/ downland. Lower slopes are generally regular post-medieval fields with some earlier 'Barton Fields' in the east of the LDU.		Medium to large scale reflecting more recent enclosure.	Sparse, stone-faced hedgebanks and post-and-wire fencing.
Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	Residential / tourism development and ornamental private gardens associated with properties along the B3231.			

WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS

Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>	<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	This is an exposed, windswept landscape with little tree cover apart from those providing shelter to dwellings in the east of the LDU.	Conifer / pine shelterbelts and mature pine specimens in private gardens – conspicuous features on the open cliff side.
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>	
	The upper cliff slopes are defined by maritime heath, gorse scrub and rough grassland providing wildlife interest. The lower cliff slopes fall within the Saunton to Baggy Point SSSI, noted for its geological exposures including erratic boulders originally from Scotland.	

SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	Linear detached properties strung out along the B3231 coastal road, forming the settlement of Saunton. These are well spaced giving the settlement an open character.		
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	The LDU is traversed along its central ridgeline by the gently winding coastal road which links Croyde and Braunton. A lay-by provides a spectacular viewpoint looking south across the AONB coastline. The Tarka Trail and South West Coast Path cross the length of the LDU.		
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	Whitewash with grey slate roofs.	The Art Deco-style of the white painted Saunton Sands Hotel is visually prominent and distinctive.	N/A
Modern development styles / materials	Range of 20 th century building styles (particularly large detached properties, including some with swimming pools) – the use of whitewash and grey slate/red tiled roofs is common. An increasing use of wood, wood-effect materials and glass is associated with sustainable builds.		

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>
	The church house in Saunton is a Grade II* Listed Building. Ancient cultivation terraces above the Saunton Sands Hotel are traceable historic features in the landscape.

VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

Views	Key views / landmark features	Intervisibility with LDUs	
		From this LDU	To this LDU
	<p>The elevated cliff side affords extensive southward views along the coast to as far as Hartland Point. The beach at Saunton Sands, sand dunes of Braunton Burrows and wet marshland of Braunton Marsh dominate views in the foreground, extending to the dunes and intertidal habitats backing the Taw / Torridge Estuary (including Northam Country Park).</p> <p>Views of development at Braunton (to the south-east), Instow, Appledore and Westward Ho! intrude into southern skylines.</p> <p>The white, imposing building of the Saunton Sands Hotel is prominent in views to this landscape from many miles away.</p>	<p>358 (Braunton Burrows)</p> <p>360 (Saunton Sands)</p> <p>088 (Braunton Marsh)</p> <p>398 (Braunton Great Field)</p> <p>399 (sloping farmland to the east)</p> <p>526 (ridgeline around Lobb)</p> <p>361, 362, 364 (coastal areas around Northam)</p> <p>693 (Clovelly Coast)</p> <p>694 (Hartland Point)</p> <p>835/836 (Westward Ho!)</p>	<p>358</p> <p>360</p> <p>088</p> <p>398</p> <p>399</p> <p>526</p> <p>361</p> <p>362</p> <p>364</p> <p>693</p> <p>694</p> <p>835</p> <p>836</p> <p>403 (downland above)</p>
Perceptual qualities (description)	<p>This is a windswept, exposed cliffside with spectacular views along the coast giving it a strong maritime character. Perceptions of tranquillity are affected by the presence of development along the coastal road, as well as clear views of settlement and development along the coast.</p>		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
NATURE CONSERVATION		
SSSI	1	18.9%
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT		
Listed Buildings	1 (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	8.15	10.5%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	Perceptions of tranquillity are affected by the presence of development along the coastal road, as well as traffic on the popular route (particularly at peak tourist times). Clear views of settlement and development along the coast and inland (including Braunton, Instow, Appledore, Northam and Westward Ho!) also reduce feelings of remoteness inherently associated with this landscape.
Views	The LDU is defined by its long-ranging coastal views framed by Saunton Sands and Braunton Burrows. As above, these spectacular views are affected by development which is strongly visible from the LDU.
Land use	Agricultural land use is traditional rough grazing. Some tourism-related development, including car parking, intrudes into the landscape in parts.
Field patterns	No issues noted in the field.
Field boundaries	Some boundaries are composed of post-and-wire fencing, rather than traditional Devon hedgebanks. However, these emphasise the open character of the landscape.
Trees and woodland	No issues noted in the field – trees are mainly confined to properties to provide shelter from coastal winds.
Semi-natural habitats	No issues were noted in the field. The lower SSSI-designated maritime cliff and slope habitats are currently assessed by Natural England as in favourable condition.
Settlement and development	Linear development is strung along the coastal road in the east of the LDU. Its prominent ridgeline location means it is visible in views to this LDU from other landscapes. However, the space between individual properties means that the settlement is of an open character.
Local vernacular	The large properties along the coastal road mainly utilise a unifying local vernacular of whitewashed walls and grey slate/red tiled roofs. New materials including wood and glass are becoming a trend, particularly associated with sustainable builds.

