

Area of LDU within AONB: 310.3 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 36%



Date surveyed: 26 February 2010

Survey points: SS468416, SS465425, SS466412, SS464412

Summary of landscape character

This is a rolling, downland landscape (including Pickwell and Woolacombe Downs) with a strong agricultural character. Large, open pasture and arable fields afford expansive views across the landscape, with the sea often featuring on western horizons. It is an exposed and largely unsettled landscape with high levels of tranquillity. A telecommunications mast forms a prominent vertical element on Challacombe Hill in the north of the LDU, visible from long distances, as is a structure related to a reservoir on the eastern slopes of Pickwell Down (just outside the AONB boundary).

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY			
Landform description	Rolling elevated downland with rounded hill summits.		
LAND USE AND PATTERNS			
Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Mixed – predominantly sheep-grazed improved pasture fields and arable.	N/A	
Field patterns and boundaries	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	The landscape is defined by a regular field pattern of post-medieval and modern fields with straight sided boundaries. The southern slopes of Pickwell Down include ‘Barton Fields’ with some curving boundaries following earlier	Large, with smaller medium scale fields on the slopes around Pickwell Manor,	High grassy Devon banks with patches of gorse scrub in parts, with some closely trimmed thorn hedges topping banks along roads. Stone-facing is often visible on banks.

	medieval lines.		Post-and-wire fencing often divides fields contributing to the landscape's open character.
Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	None – this is a strongly farmed landscape.		
WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS			
Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>		<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	Tree cover is very sparse due to the landscape's exposed character. Shelterbelts sit on the slopes above Pickwell Manor. Trees are also found within the manor estate.		There is a distinctive shelterbelt of Monterey cypress lining the road above Pickwell Manor. The grounds of the manor include mature parkland trees. A clump of Monterey pine and oak at Oxford Cross (just outside the AONB) form a prominent skyline feature visible from across the open landscape.
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>		
	The north-western edges of the LDU include land within Woolacombe Down County Wildlife Site, valued for its unimproved calcareous, neutral and acidic grassland communities. The majority of the landscape is intensively farmed.		
SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT			
Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	The nucleated cluster of buildings at Pickwell Manor, nestled into the slopes below Pickwell Down, is the main area of settlement within the LDU. There is also a farm at Broadway Corner on the AONB boundary in the north-east of the LDU.		
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	There are two straight narrow lanes crossing the landscape (Challacombe Hill and Down Lane) – enclosed by high Devon banks restricting views. The AONB boundary in the east is marked by the main Georgham to Morteheo road (which is also National Cycle Route 27).		
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	The 17 th century Grade II Listed Pickwell Manor is constructed of	N/A	Pickwell Manor includes a walled garden constructed of local stone.

	ironstone rubble with a slate roof. Outbuildings include another listed building of ironstone and brick with limestone dressings under a slate roof. Farm buildings at Broadway Corner are also of local stone and slate.		
Modern development styles / materials	Large corrugated iron livestock sheds at Broadway Corner are the only modern buildings within this very sparsely settled LDU.		
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT			
Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>		
	Pickwell Manor includes the remains of the original medieval buildings, two of which are Grade II Listed. Other historic features include evidence of former quarrying within the landscape. The Monterey Pine and oak stands at Oxford Cross, although falling just outside the AONB, are an important local landmark. They are believed to have been planted around 1900 by Henry Williamson (the author of Tarka the Otter), and surround his 'artists' cabin.		
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>
	<p>The elevated, open character of the downland affords long views where gaps in Devon banks / topography allow. Western views are often framed by the sea at Braunton Bay and Woolacombe, whilst views south include glimpses of the Taw & Torridge Estuary and the coastal headland of Hartland Point.</p> <p>Masts are features of the southern skyline crowning Long Lane (within LDU 403). Within the LDU, a mast on the higher slopes of Challacombe Hill is a prominent vertical element on an otherwise undeveloped skyline. A built structure relating to the reservoir on the slopes of Pickwell Down (just outside the AONB boundary) is visible from the</p>	<p>403 (downland to the south)</p> <p>385 (Woolacombe Sand)</p> <p>579 (slopes down to Woolacombe)</p> <p>386 (Woolacombe Warren)</p> <p>360 (Saunton Sands)</p> <p>693 (Clovelly coastal headland)</p>	<p>403</p> <p>385</p> <p>579</p> <p>386</p> <p>360</p> <p>693</p> <p>694</p> <p>384 (combe to the east of Croyde)</p> <p>896 (upper combe slopes as above)</p>

	higher ground of the LDU.	694 (Hartland Point)	
Perceptual qualities (description)	This is a highly tranquil landscape owing to its overall absence of settlement and sparse road network. Views of masts intrude into uninterrupted skylines where they are located on hill summits.		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
NATURE CONSERVATION		
County Wildlife Sites	2	2.82%
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT		
Listed Buildings	2 (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	88.92	28.66%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	The landscape's high levels of tranquillity and ruralness are broken only by views of telecommunications masts (one in the north of the LDU)
Views	The elevated, expansive downland landscape affords long views where gaps in field boundaries / topography allow. Undeveloped skylines are interrupted only by the presence of telecommunications masts on downland hill summits.
Land use	This is an intensively farmed landscape, with arable fields intermixed with the traditional pastoral character of the downland.
Field patterns	The landscape is defined by large scale, post-medieval and modern fields – with previous medieval patterns erased.
Field boundaries	Devon banks have sparse or no hedgerows, with patches of gorse scrub contributing to an upland feel in parts. The use of fencing to divide fields contributes to a sense of openness, but detracts from traditional landscape character. Stone-facing on banks is frequent, though many sections are falling into disrepair.
Trees and woodland	The landscape is open in character with little tree cover. The Monterey cypress shelterbelt above Pickwell Manor is a conspicuous feature in the landscape.
Semi-natural habitats	Areas of unimproved grassland are confined to small locations on the fringes of Woolacombe Down. Agricultural intensification has led to a loss and fragmentation of downland habitats across much of the LDU.
Settlement and development	This landscape is largely unsettled aside from the historic cluster of buildings at Pickwell Manor, sheltered by trees at the base of Pickwell Down.
Local vernacular	Large agricultural sheds of corrugated iron emphasise the strongly agricultural character of the landscape around Broadway Corner.