

Area of LDU within AONB: 62.0 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 28%



Date surveyed: 1 March 2010

Survey points: SS510471

Summary of landscape character

This is the northern part of a larger LDU that wraps around the southern boundary of Ilfracombe and extends further inland (outside the AONB). The main body of the area lies by the coast to the west of Ilfracombe, and is comprised of a very distinctive parallel ridge-lined landform defining narrow adjacent valleys that run east to west. This northern area is covered by rough sheep-grazed grassland with scrub on the ridges, and mostly forms the eastern extension of the Torrs Park County Wildlife Site and is owned by the National Trust. To the south, broadleaved woodland covers the north- and east-facing slope as it wraps around the edges of Ilfracombe towards the village of Higher Slade. Here there is a notable presence of pony paddocks amongst the pasture fields. Perceptions of relative tranquillity and a feeling of escapism are high around the northern ridges, with expansive views over Ilfracombe and the sea.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY

Landform description	A very distinctive landform in the main northern body comprised of three parallel ridges; the southern ridge curving southwards to form a combe-side above Ilfracombe. There are distinctive rocky outcrops in the north-west, and a series of small hills on the ridgeline are known locally as the 'Seven Sisters'.
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LAND USE AND PATTERNS

Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Sheep-grazed rough grassland	Horsiculture is a localised feature around Higher Slade in the south.	
Field patterns and boundaries	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	Large areas of open grazing characterise the ridges to the	Predominantly medium in the	Mainly post-and-wire fronting remnant

	north, with areas of post-medieval enclosure further south and around Higher Slade.	south, with large areas of open grazing in the north.	hedgebanks topped with scrubby trees and gorse, with traditional stone-facing often visible (often in a herring-bone pattern).
Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	Recreation – Torrs Park is a popular space for informal recreation (particularly walking). Its viewpoint affords panoramic views across Ilfracombe and the rocky northern coast of the AONB.		

WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS

Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>	<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>
	Woodland covers the southern slope of the LDU (both its north- and east-facing sides as it wraps around the ridgeline of the adjoining area – LDU 387). Part of the woodland falls within the wider Torrs Park County Wildlife Site.	Broadleaved
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>	
	The northern half of the LDU falls within the wider Torrs Park County Wildlife Site, valued for its areas of unimproved and semi-improved neutral and acidic grasslands with patches of bracken and blackthorn scrub.	

SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>		
	The village of Higher Slade is nestled into the hillside in the very south of the LDU, whilst the rest of the area is devoid of settlement – although Ilfracombe has a strong visual influence.		
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>		
	The road into Ilfracombe from the west loops around the southern LDU boundary below Higher Slade, forming the only road in the area. The South West Coast Path and the Tarka Trail skirt the northern boundary, whilst access is provided across the open grazed fields of Torrs Park in the north (owned by the National Trust). Langleigh Lane stretches towards the coast from Langleigh (reflecting the old coast road to Lee).		
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>	<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	Whitewash or exposed stone walls with slate roofs.	Some terracotta detailing on chimney pots.	

Modern development styles / materials	White render with stylistically exposed brickwork beneath; occasional bungalows.		
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT			
Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>		
	A cottage and farmhouse within the village of Higher Slade are Grade II Listed buildings. There are no other visible historic features within the LDU.		
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>
	Long views from ridgelines: north across the sea to Wales, west to Lundy, and east over Ilfracombe. A telecommunications mast on higher land above Higher Slade (within LDU 852), forms a prominent vertical element on southern skylines	852 (downland to the south and west) 578 (north coast) 387, 388 (Ilfracombe) 580 (combe side east of Ilfracombe)	852 578 387 388 580
Perceptual qualities (description)	There is a strong sense of relative tranquillity and escapism associated with this landscape, with panoramic views over Ilfracombe below and the sea to the north.		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
NATURE CONSERVATION		
County Wildlife Sites	1	63.77%
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	39.86	64.27%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	Tranquillity may be affected by the proximity of Ilfracombe, but the town's presence also contributes to the character of the views from the LDU and a strong sense of relative tranquillity and remoteness.
Views	A mast is visible on elevated land to the south (LDU 852), whilst the modern housing development at Langleigh (LDU 387) has encroached into the LDU and is visible from the southern-most ridge.
Land use	Fields are being used for horsiculture around Higher Slade.
Field patterns	Remnant hedgebanks occur across the open grazing land in Torrs Park, suggesting past boundary removal or neglect.
Field boundaries	Hedgerows are gappy around Higher Slade, along with the characteristic white tape associated with horsiculture. Post-and-wire fences fronting remnant hedgebanks form the predominant boundary further within Torrs Park.
Trees and woodland	The main woodland block in the south was not accessed for fieldwork. The majority falls within CWS designation, so favourable management can be assumed.
Semi-natural habitats	A large proportion of the LDU (Torrs Park) is covered by County Wildlife Site designation and managed by the National Trust, suggesting that this semi-natural grassland and scrub habitat is being appropriately managed (including through grazing).
Settlement and development	Modern housing at Langleigh has encroached into the LDU along its eastern edge, forming a notable intrusion into the rough pastoral landscape.
Local vernacular	Modern bungalows and vernacular styles are a feature of Higher Slade, detracting from traditional buildings in the village.