

East Devon and Blackdown Hills Landscape Character Assessment

March 2019

Prepared by **Fiona Fyfe Associates**
with Countryside & Robin Lines Landscape

on behalf of **Devon County Council; East Devon District Council; East Devon AONB**
and the **Blackdown Hills AONB**



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1.0 Introduction

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*The Axe Valley from Musbury Castle
Wootton Hills Devon Character Area*

1.1 Context

East Devon and the Blackdown Hills contain a rich diversity of landscapes within which people live, work and enjoy free time. This document facilitates the conservation and enhancement of these landscapes and their distinctive qualities, whilst accommodating people's needs, and responding to changes and pressures.

The Landscape Character Assessment forms an easily understood, comprehensive and widely endorsed framework which will help to shape landscape-based projects across the area. It is not intended to inhibit innovative planning or design, but should aid understanding of how and where positive change could take place without losing distinctive landscape character.

This document is intended to be used on an everyday basis by a wide range of people involved in landscape-related matters, including planners, developers, land managers, AONB staff, recreation and access officers, wildlife and conservation staff and community groups. It will also inform AONB Management Plans and other documents.

1.2 Document structure

This document contains four sections. Following this introduction, Section 2.0 explains what a Landscape Character Assessment is, how this document fits within the wider context of the Devon landscape framework, and which Landscape Character Types and Devon Character Areas are found within the Study Area. Section 3.0 describes the project methodology, and the stages of consultation undertaken. Section 4.0 presents a series of profiles which describe the various Landscape Character Types within the Study Area, and provides guidelines for their protection and enhancement.

1.3 The Study Area

The Study Area covers 984km² and is shown on Map 1. It comprises

the whole of East Devon District (which contains East Devon AONB), plus the entirety of the Blackdown Hills AONB including the parts within Taunton Deane, South Somerset and Mid Devon Districts.

1.4 Commissioning

This document was commissioned in April 2018 by East Devon District Council, Devon County Council and the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONB Teams. Representatives from these organisations formed the project Steering Group. The Consultant Team was led by Fiona Fyfe Associates, with mapping by Countryscape

1.5 Why an updated Assessment is needed

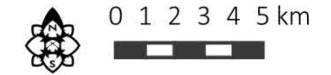
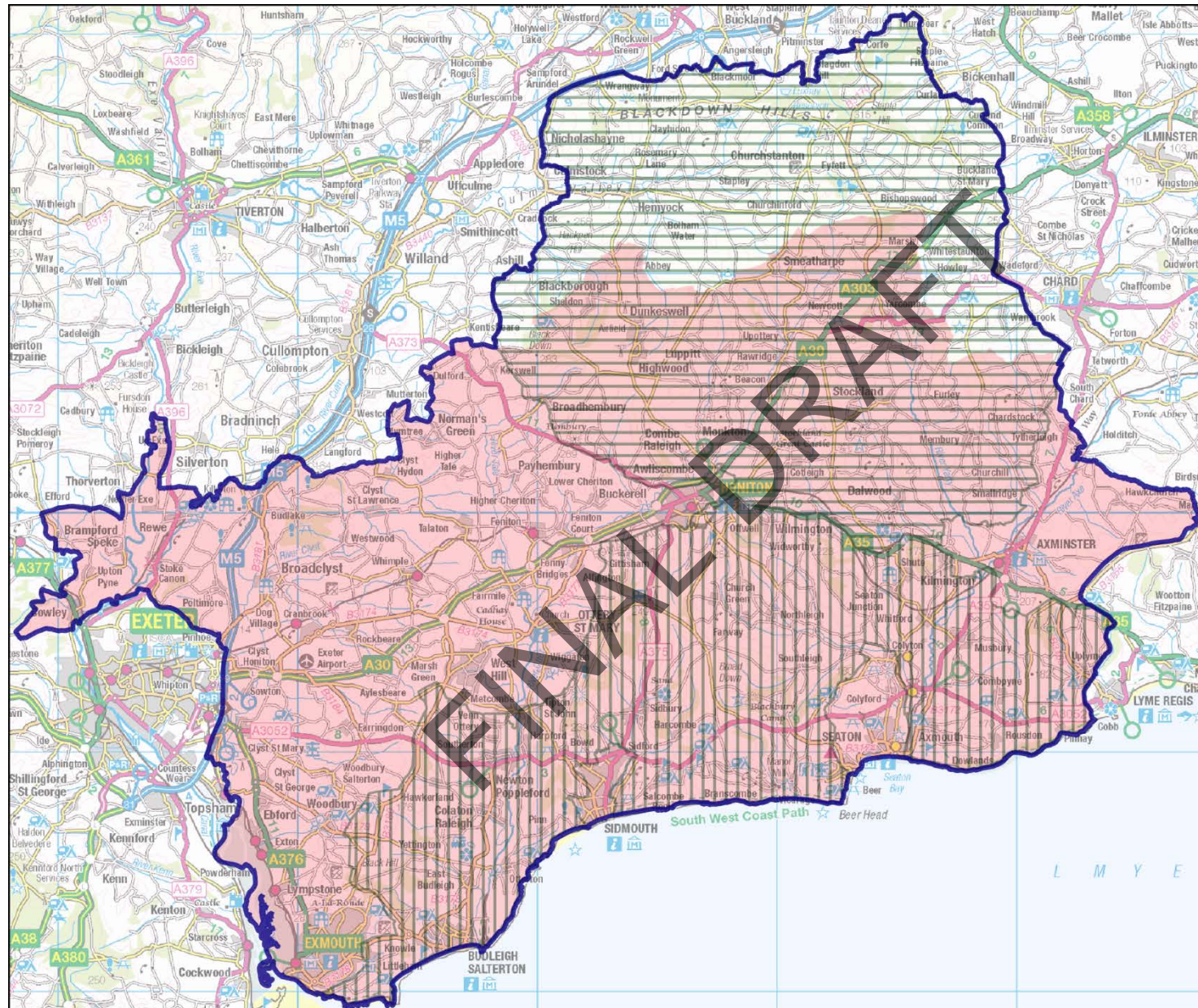
This Assessment updates the 2008 Landscape Character Assessment which covered the same area. The update was needed because:

- Some significant landscape changes have taken place since 2008 (e.g. development of Cranbrook, and construction of solar farms).
- The delivery mechanisms for landscape management have changed in the last 10 years.
- Concepts such as Green Infrastructure have become mainstream.
- After 10 years it is necessary to review the location, description and management guidelines for each Landscape Character Type. New visions and priorities are required for the area's landscapes reflecting current circumstances and threats (e.g. Ash Dieback).
- Some inconsistencies had been identified in the 2008 Assessment, which needed to be checked and corrected where necessary.
- New Landscape Character Types have been added to the Devon Menu (see Section 2.4) in the intervening years, and additional landscape character assessment work subsequently done in the Study Area (particularly associated with the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan) needed to be incorporated.

East Devon and AONBs Landscape Character Assessment Update

Map 1: The Study Area

March 2019



-  Study Area
-  East Devon District
-  Blackdown Hills AONB
-  East Devon AONB

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1.6 Forces for Change

There are many different forces for change acting on the landscape of East Devon and the Blackdown Hills. Some are natural processes whilst others are man-made. Some are single, large-scale changes, whilst others are smaller incremental changes which can add up to create a major alteration in the landscape. Forces for change may be negative or positive, and many are exacerbated by climate change and associated sea level rise. They may impact on the local economy, and on the health, safety and wellbeing of local people.

This section provides a general summary of the changes affecting the landscape of the area. Landscape Character Type (LCT) profiles in Part 4 describe specific landscape changes associated with particular LCTs.

Development pressure

Like much of the rest of the country, East Devon is facing high pressure for new housing, particularly around Exeter. Cranbrook New Town, in the Clyst Valley, is currently under construction. As well as housing, there is demand for land for employment and infrastructure (such as the Skypark), and new/ upgraded roads to service new developments. New housing developments also incorporate associated green spaces and Green Infrastructure, which may result in land use change from agriculture to recreation and nature conservation. New developments and their associated infrastructure can also impact on dark skies and increase air, water, noise and light pollution.

Renewable Energy

Reducing the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity results in increased demand for alternative renewable energy sources. Within the study area there are a number of solar farms, and a small number of domestic-scale wind turbines. Biocrops such as miscanthus, grown as fuel for bio-fuel power plants, are becoming more apparent in the

landscape. The area is crossed by a number of National Grid powerlines, with additional overhead or buried lines required to connect new electricity generating sites.

Recreation Pressure

East Devon and the Blackdown Hills are a popular tourist destination. However, there is a risk that recreation pressure destroys the qualities which people come to enjoy. Popular paths, including long-distance routes and those close to settlements, may suffer from erosion and widening. Litter and anti-social behaviour can be a problem, particularly at 'honeypot' sites. Increased numbers of visitors, including those from the rising local population, increases the recreation pressure on the area. Recreation patterns and activities may be affected by future changes in vegetation, particularly loss of shade.

Rural Lanes

Narrow lanes, often running between high banks, are a distinctive feature of many parts of East Devon and the Blackdown Hills. However, verges, hedgebanks and bridges are vulnerable to damage by wide vehicles, particularly farm vehicles which are increasing in width. The character (and safety) of lanes is affected by increased traffic, especially vehicles driving at speed. Following heavy rain, some lanes channel water run-off from surrounding fields, resulting in damage to verges, banks and tarmac, and the creation of pot-holes.

Declining water and soil quality

Pollution of water courses, particularly as a result of farming practices, is a major problem. In addition, increased areas of land ploughed or developed (particularly in flood plains) results in faster discharge into rivers, and greater flood risk. Run-off of soil into rivers not only reduces water quality and causes silting; it also reduces the fertility of the land to grow crops in the future.

Agricultural management and habitat connectivity

Increasing intensity of agricultural production has resulted in a loss of wildlife habitats such as field margins, scrub and parkland. Changing farming practices, particularly reduced numbers of outdoor livestock, means that fewer hedgerows are now required to be stockproof, and may therefore become gappy and dilapidated. Loss of field margins and hedgerows results in reduced connectivity of wildlife habitats such as woodlands and grasslands, impacting on species diversity and numbers of insects, birds and mammals.

Natural processes

Coastal erosion is a natural process, driven in part by surface water and groundwater patterns, as well as erosion by the sea. As cliffs retreat inland 'coastal squeeze' of clifftop habitats such as grassland may occur. Away from the coast, other natural processes include regeneration of scrub and woodland, and the spread of a wide range of pests and diseases affecting trees, plants and animals. Ash dieback is a particular current cause for concern, and over coming years will impact on woodland composition, habitats and views across the wider landscape.

Climate change

Several of these natural processes will be exacerbated by climate change. Associated sea level rise will increase rates of coastal erosion and flood risk. Cliff erosion will displace coastal land uses, and impact on archaeology. Resulting increased demand for sea defences will have visual impacts, and will also affect natural coastal processes and designated sites. Changing weather patterns and increased storm events will impact on crop choices (e.g. apples need cold winters), and also on tree species (e.g. beech trees are drought intolerant). Wildfires are likely to become more frequent. Landscape changes may also occur from mitigation measures such as new woodlands or wetlands.

Positive changes and interventions

Throughout East Devon and the Blackdown Hills there are many positive landscape changes taking place. Natural Flood Management (NFM) schemes are addressing issues of flooding, water pollution and soil loss. The AONBs, World Heritage Site, estuaries and other designated sites have Management Plans in place to guide positive landscape change. The Clyst Valley is being enhanced through Green Infrastructure measures associated with new development, and Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG) sites are being provided to mitigate adverse impacts that would otherwise occur from recreational pressure on the Peblebed Heaths and Exe Estuary protected sites.

1.7 Use of the Landscape Character Assessment in decision-making

The LCA provides a robust evidential landscape baseline to inform future decisions and does not set out policy. It should be considered as one of a number of material planning considerations when considering any planning matter. It will need to be seen and set alongside wider matters including other environmental, social and economic considerations in the decision making process. In this context [Natural England Guidance](#) advises: *"The results of a Landscape Character Assessment often form part of an evidence base, for example for a development plan and its policies and allocations, or the baseline for a Landscape Impact and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of a proposed development. The information is therefore used in circumstances where the results are subject to public scrutiny and debate, such as at public inquiries or examinations in public"*.

References to the sub-heading "Plan" under the heading of "Landscape Management Guidelines" for each landscape character type in the LCA should therefore be read in this context.

1.8 Relationship to other documents

This Landscape Character Assessment gathers together key information from a wide variety of sources into a single manageable document. If more detailed information is required on any topic, then the original source documents should be consulted. The Landscape Character Assessment should therefore be read in conjunction with the following documents:

[Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan](#)

[East Devon AONB Management Plan](#)

[East Devon Local Plan](#)

[Greater Exeter Strategic Plan](#)

[Neighbourhood Plans](#)

[Blackdown Hills Building Design Guidance](#)

[Green Infrastructure Strategies](#)

[Axe Estuary Marine Conservation Zone Factsheet](#)

[Otter Estuary Marine Conservation Zone Factsheet](#)

[Exe Estuary Management Plan and Guidance Notes](#)

[Devon Biodiversity Action Plan](#)

[Devon trees, hedgerows and woodland guidance](#)

[East Devon AONB Historic Environment Action Plan](#)

[Devon Historic Environment Record](#)

[Blackdown Hills 'What Makes a View?'](#)

[National Character Area Profile 147: Blackdowns](#)

[National Character Area Profile 148: Devon Redlands](#)

[Jurassic Coast WHS Management Plan](#)

[Devon Minerals Plan](#)

[Devon Waste Plan](#)

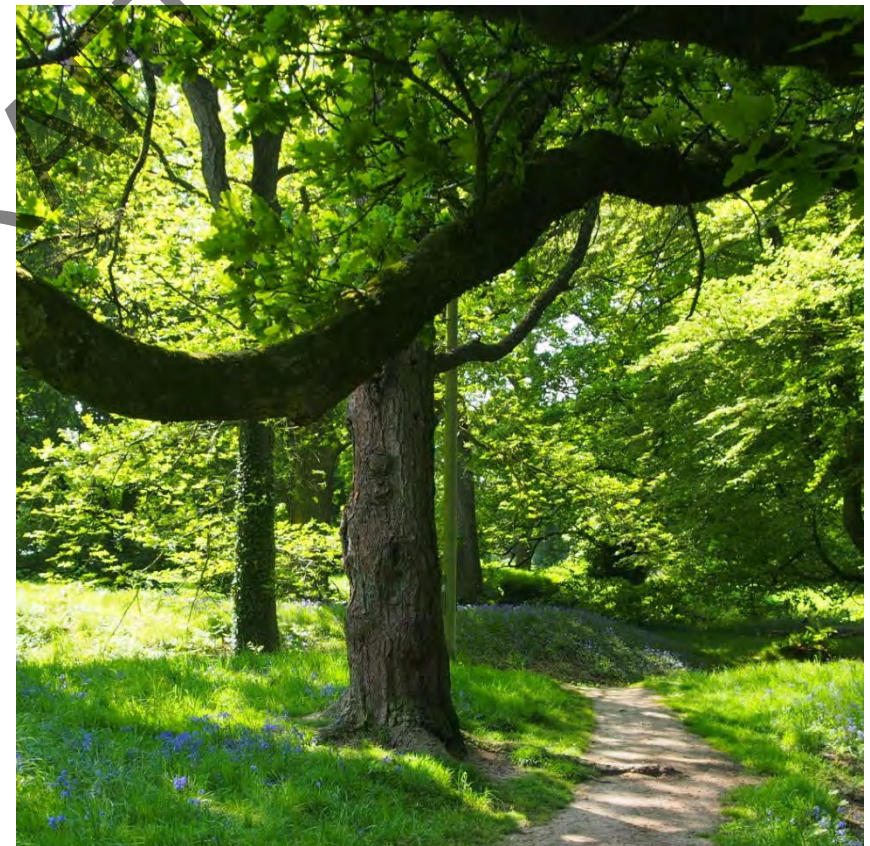
[Somerset Minerals Plan](#)

[Somerset Waste Core Strategy / Waste Plan](#)

[Taunton Dene Local Plan and Core Strategy](#)

[South Marine Plan](#)

[South Marine Plan Technical Annexes](#)



Bluebells in oak/beech woodland at Castle Neroche Iron Age Hillfort, Blackdown Hills Scarp DCA; Steep Wooded Scarp Slopes LCT (See Section 2.3 for an explanation of DCAs and LCTs)

2.0 The Devon-wide Landscape Character Assessment Framework

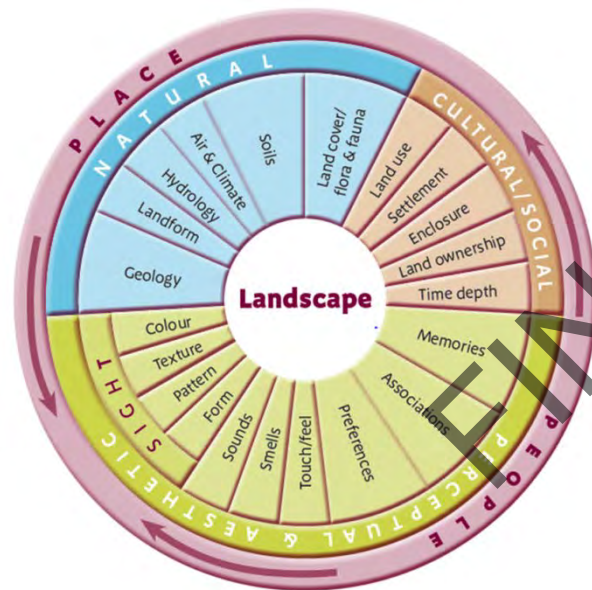
*The Blackdown Hills scarp seen from near Corfe
Blackdown Hills Scarp Devon Character Area*

2.1 Defining ‘Landscape’

The European Landscape Convention (ratified by the UK in 2007 and not affected by Brexit) provides a broad definition of ‘landscape’:

Landscape is an area of land, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/ or human factors...¹.

The following diagram explains the different elements of landscape which capture its natural, cultural and perceptual qualities². All are considered when undertaking a Landscape Character Assessment.



2.2 Landscape Character Assessment

¹ European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe 2000 p. 9

² An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014) p. 9

The concept of landscape character is embedded in the planning system (including the National Planning Policy Framework) and has been used in the UK for many years to inform the management of change and to deliver sustainable development.

Landscape Character Assessment is a tool to help understand what the landscape is like today, how it came to be like that, and how it may change in the future. Its role is to help ensure that change and development does not undermine whatever is characteristic or valued about any particular landscape.³

The process of Landscape Character Assessment requires desk studies, fieldwork, writing-up and consultation, as described in Section 3.0. It seeks to identify the distinct and recognisable patterns of physical, cultural and perceptual elements in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

To do this, it identifies distinctive Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). Landscape character assessments can be undertaken at a range of scales and levels of detail, from National to Local.

2.3 National Character Areas (NCAs) within the Study Area

There are two NCAs within the Study Area. The *Blackdown Hills* (NCA 147) covers the eastern part, broadly to the east of Sidmouth. The area to the west of Sidmouth is in NCA 148 *Devon Redlands*.

³ Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002)

2.4 The Devon Landscape Framework

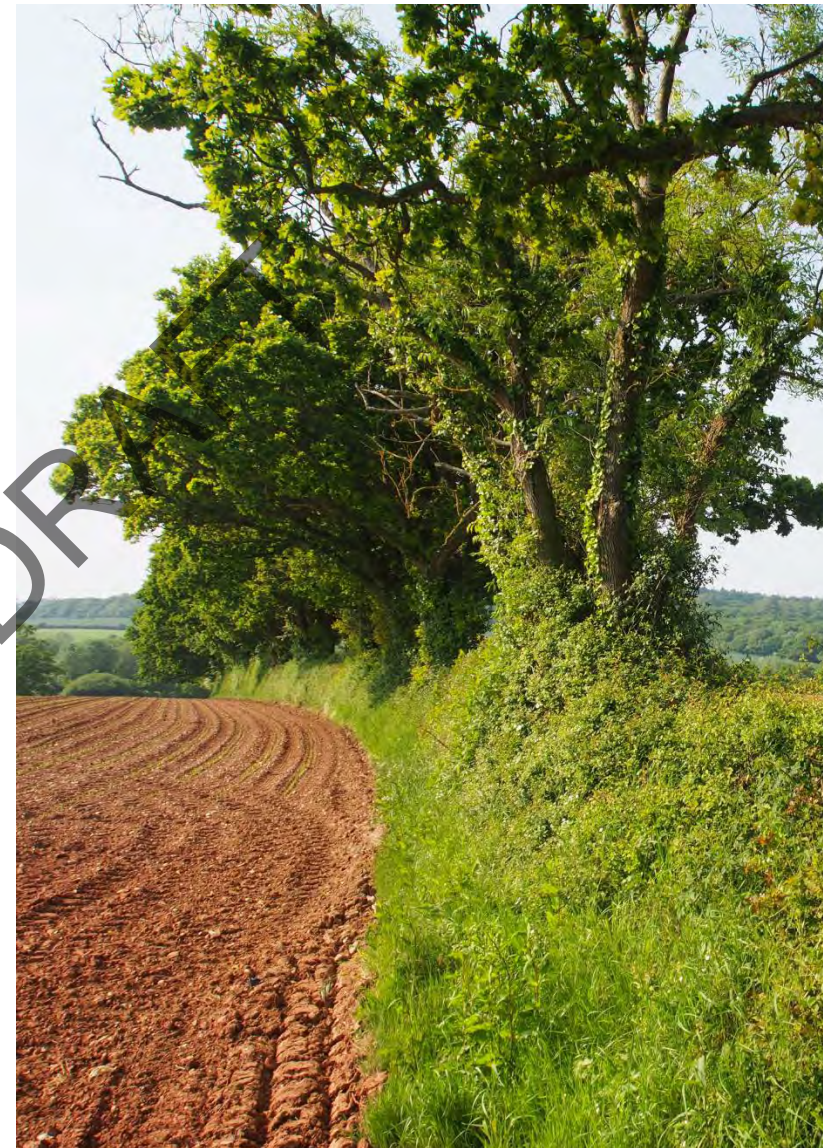
Devon has a comprehensive suite of Landscape Character Assessments, into which this document fits. These describe Devon’s landscapes, and define a series of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Devon Character Areas (DCAs) within the County.

See <https://new.devon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/landscape/devons-landscape-character-assessment>

Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are generic types of landscape which can occur in different places. They have similar characteristics wherever they occur, and are called by a descriptive name (e.g. Estuaries, Moorland Edge Slopes, Settled Valleys). 52 different LCTs have been defined across Devon. Together they make up the ‘Devon Menu’ of LCTs. Their descriptions (in documents such as this one) highlight LCTs’ key characteristics.

Devon Character Areas (DCAs) are geographically unique areas, each with a distinctive ‘sense of place’. They are often formed of groups of LCTs, and are called by a descriptive place-based name (e.g. Taw-Torridge Estuary; East Dartmoor Moorland Fringes; Axe Valley). Their descriptions (within the Devon Landscape Assessment) emphasise local identity and visual and perceptual influences.

Low detail	National	There are seven National Character Areas (NCAs) within Devon, providing a ‘snapshot’ of the landscape diversity within the County
Med. detail	Devon-Wide	The Devon Landscape Assessment describes the 68 DCAs within Devon
		District/ Unitary Authority/ AONB/ National Park Assessments describe the 52 different LCTs which combine to create the DCAs.
High detail	Local	Some areas of Devon have local assessments of smaller landscape units which break down LCTs into more detail.



*Hedgebank near Ashclyst Forest
 Clyst Lowland Farmlands DCA; Lowland Plains LCT*

2.5 Devon Character Areas (DCAs) within the Study Area

There are twelve Devon Character Areas within the Study Area, as shown on Map 2. Each comprises several LCTs, and has a distinctive sense of place.

Full details about all the DCAs may be found on the Devon County Council website, following the link on the preceding page. From here can be accessed a profile for each DCA comprising:

- Example photograph
- Description
- Constituent LCTs
- National Character Area
- Distinctive Characteristics
- Special Qualities and Features
- Forces for change and their landscape implications (past, current and future)
- Overall strategy
- Guidelines (Protect, Manage and Plan)

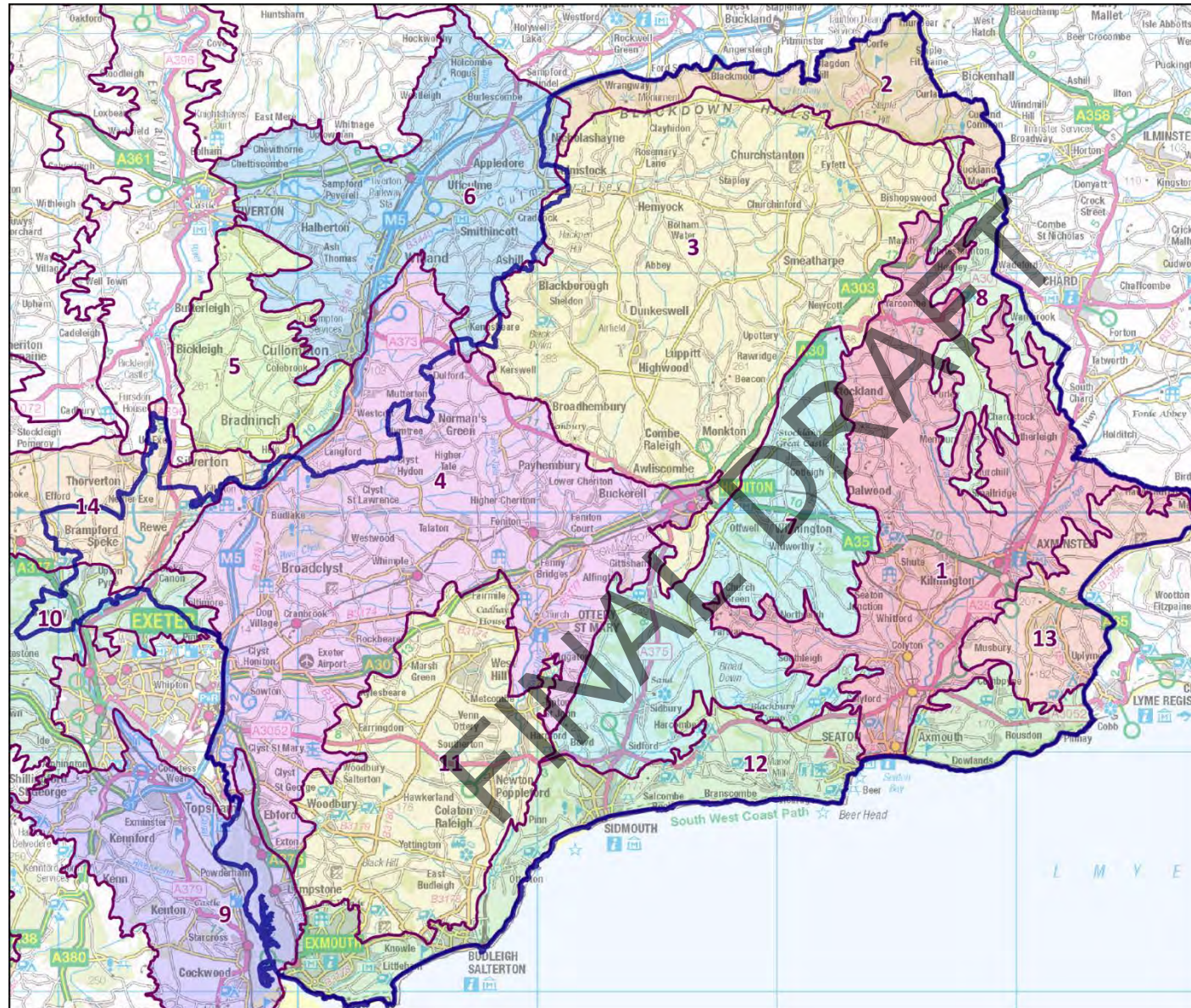
The relevant DCA profiles should be read in conjunction with the LCT descriptions within this Landscape Character Assessment. The DCAs are cross-referenced within the LCT profiles.

The twelve Devon Character Areas within the Study Area are:

- Axe Valley
- Blackdown Hills
- Blackdown Hills Scarp
- Clyst Lowland Farmlands
- East Devon Central Ridge
- Eastern Blackdown Ridge
- Exe Estuary and Farmlands
- Exeter Slopes and Hills
- Pebble Bed Heaths and Farmland
- Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau
- Wooton Hills
- Yeo, Culm and Exe Lowlands



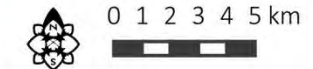
*Cliffs east of Sidmouth,
Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau DCA; Cliffs LCT*



East Devon and AONBs Landscape Character Assessment Update

Map 2: Devon Character Areas
 within and adjacent to the
 Study Area

March 2019



- Study Area
- Devon Character Areas

Label	Name
1	Axe Valley
2	Blackdown Hills Scarp
3	Blackdown Hills
4	Clyst Lowland Farmlands
5	Cullompton Rolling Farmland
6	Culm Valley Lowlands
7	East Devon Central Ridge
8	Eastern Blackdown Ridge
9	Exe Estuary and Farmlands
10	Exeter Slopes and Hills
11	Pebble Bed Heaths and Farmland
12	Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau
13	Wootton Hills
14	Yeo, Culm and Exe Lowlands

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2.6 Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within the Study Area

There are 17 LCTs within the Study Area, shown on Map 3. These cover a wide variety of coastal, upland and lowland landscapes, as follows:

LCT 1: PLATEAUX AND RIDGES

- LCT 1A: Open inland planned plateaux
- LCT 1B: Open coastal plateaux
- LCT 1C: Pebblebed heaths
- LCT 1D: Estate wooded ridges and hilltops
- LCT: 1E: Wooded ridges and hilltops

LCT 2: SCARP SLOPES

- LCT 2A: Steep wooded scarp slopes

LCT 3: VALLEYS

- LCT 3A: Upper farmed and wooded valley slopes
- LCT 3B: Lower rolling farmed and settled valley slopes
- LCT 3C: Sparsely settled farmed valley floors
- LCT 3E: Lowland plains
- LCT 3G: River valley slopes and combes
- LCT 3H: Secluded Valleys

LCT 4: COASTS

- LCT 4A: Estuaries
- LCT 4B: Marine levels and coastal plains
- LCT 4D: Coastal slopes and combes
- LCT 4H: Cliffs

LCT 5: ROLLING HILLS

- LCT 5: Estate wooded farmland

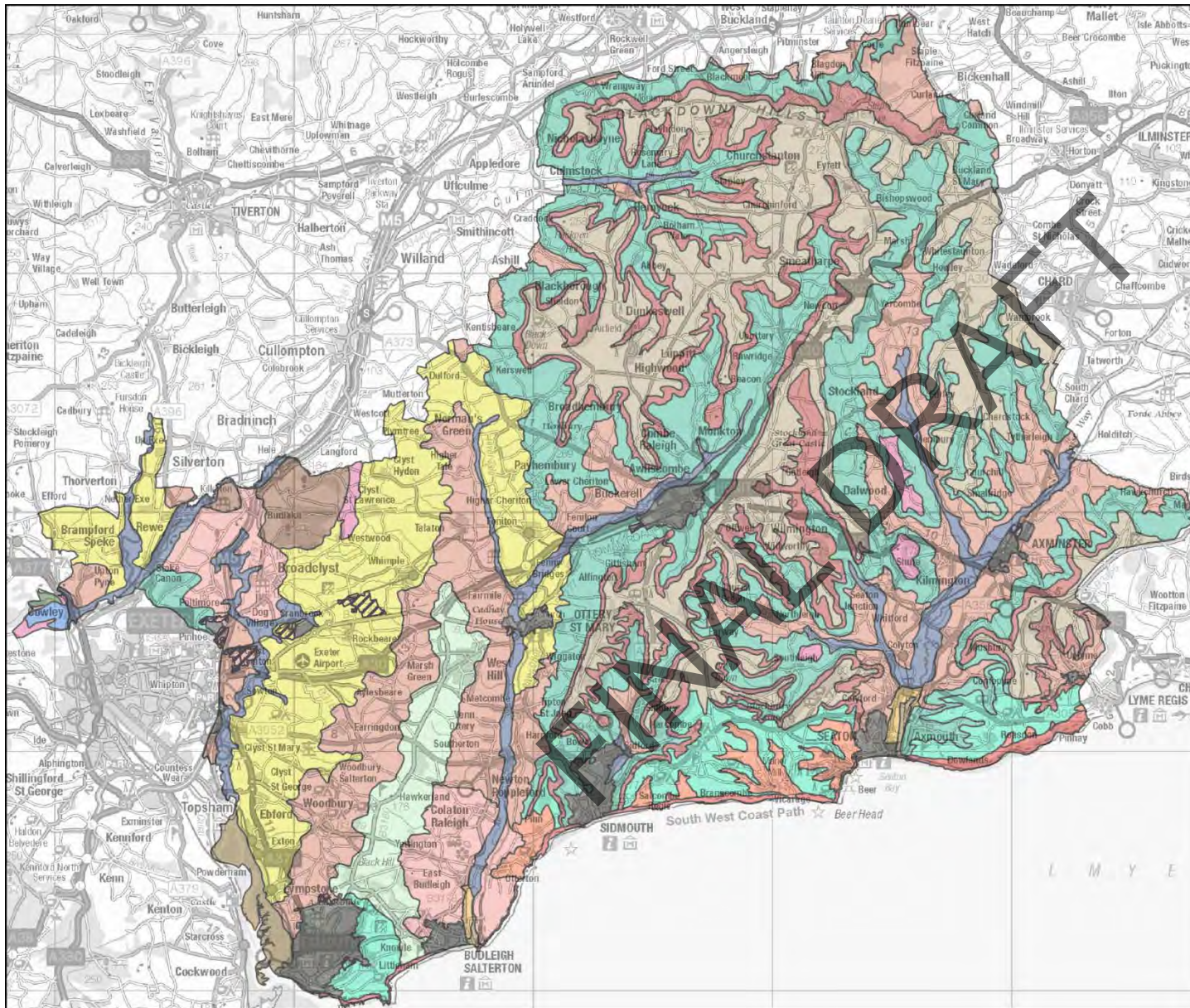
It is important to note that the boundaries between DCAs or between LCTs are rarely abrupt. It is more usual to have a 'zone of transition' between them where the landscape character gradually changes. The boundary lines have been drawn at an appropriate point within this zone of transition.

Therefore, if a site or area is close to a boundary, it is important to understand the characteristics and guidelines for each of the nearby LCTs/ DCAs, and to take them into account.

LCTs often have consistent relationships. For example, Scarp Slopes are found below Plateaux, and Lowland Plains are found adjacent to Valley Floors. These relationships help to create the wider context of landscapes within the Study Area. None exist in isolation, and it is important to remember this when considering the impacts of development or landscape management projects. Different LCTs are also linked by the views they have of each other. The illustrations on the following pages show how different LCTs relate to each other in various parts of the Study Area.

Section 4.0 contains a series of profiles, one for each of the LCTs within the Study Area. Each profile begins with a description of its landscape character, including a summary description, 'typical view' photograph, location map, key characteristics and an explanation of what makes the landscape special. This is followed by an outline of the forces for change affecting the LCT. Each profile concludes with landscape aims and guidelines. These address the forces for change and aim to retain and enhance the distinctive character of the LCT as described at the start of the profile.

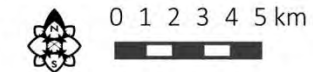
For a more detailed map of LCTs, which can be zoomed to the desired level of detail, please see the [Devon County Council Environment Viewer](#).



East Devon and AONBs Landscape Character Assessment Update

Map 3: Landscape Character Types (LCTs)
 within the Study Area

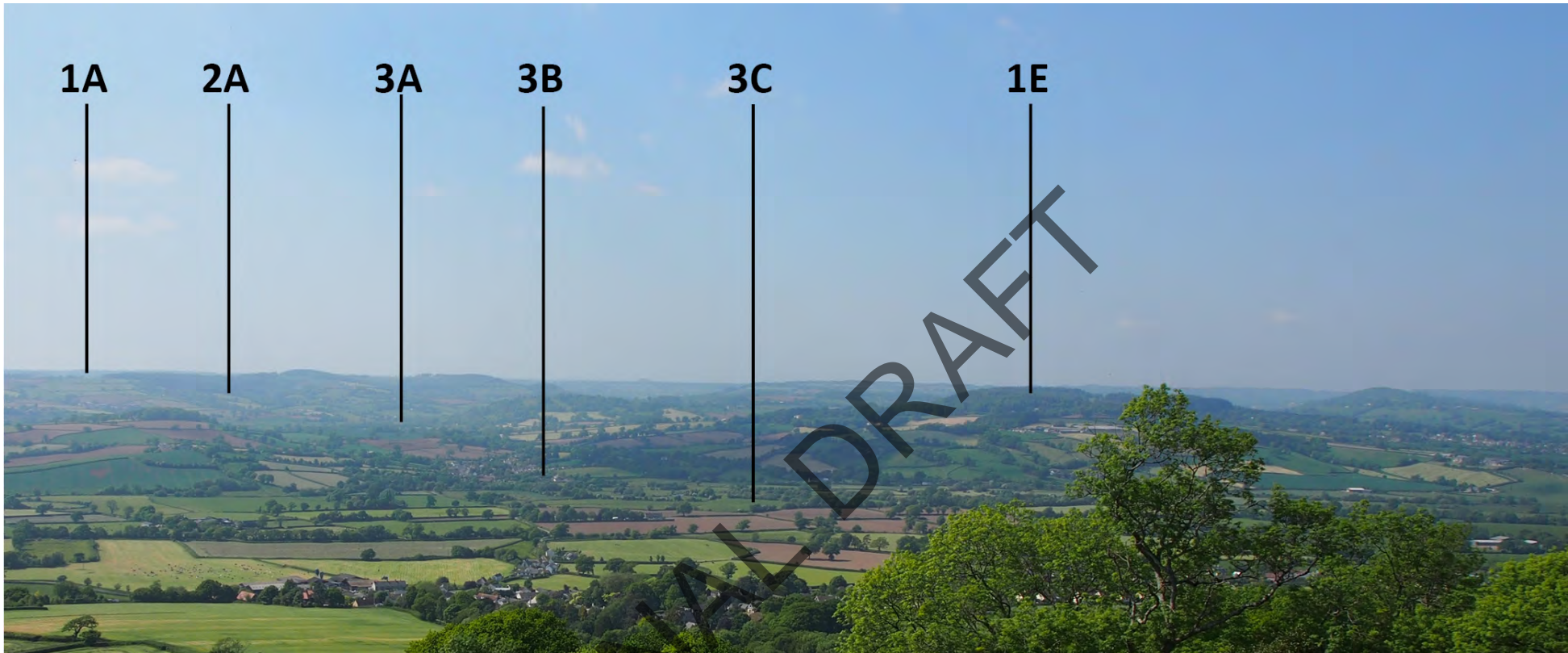
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Landscape Character Types

- 1A. Open inland planned plateaux
- 1B. Open coastal plateaux
- 1C. Pebblebed heaths
- 1D. Estate wooded ridges & hilltops
- 1E. Wooded ridges and hilltops
- 2A. Steep wooded scarp slopes
- 3A. Upper farmed and wooded valley slopes
- 3B. Lower rolling farmed and settled valley slopes
- 3C. Sparsely settled farmed valley floors
- 3E. Lowland plains
- 3G. River valley slopes and combes
- 3H. Secluded valleys
- 4A. Estuaries
- 4B. Marine levels and coastal plains
- 4D. Coastal slopes and combes
- 4H. Cliffs
- 5D. Estate wooded farmland
- 7. Main cities and towns
- Allocated Sites in East Devon

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View west from Musbury Hill across the Axe Valley, showing how LCTs relate to each other

LCT 1A: Open inland planned plateaux

LCT 2A: Steep wooded scarp slopes

LCT 3A: Upper farmed and wooded valley slopes

LCT 3B: Lower rolling farmed and settled valley slopes

LCT 3C: Sparsely settled farmed valley floors

LCT 1E: Wooded ridges and hilltops



View east from Pinhoe, north of Exeter, showing how LCTs relate to each other

LCT 1D: Estate wooded ridges and hilltops

LCT 3C: Sparsely settled farmed valley floors

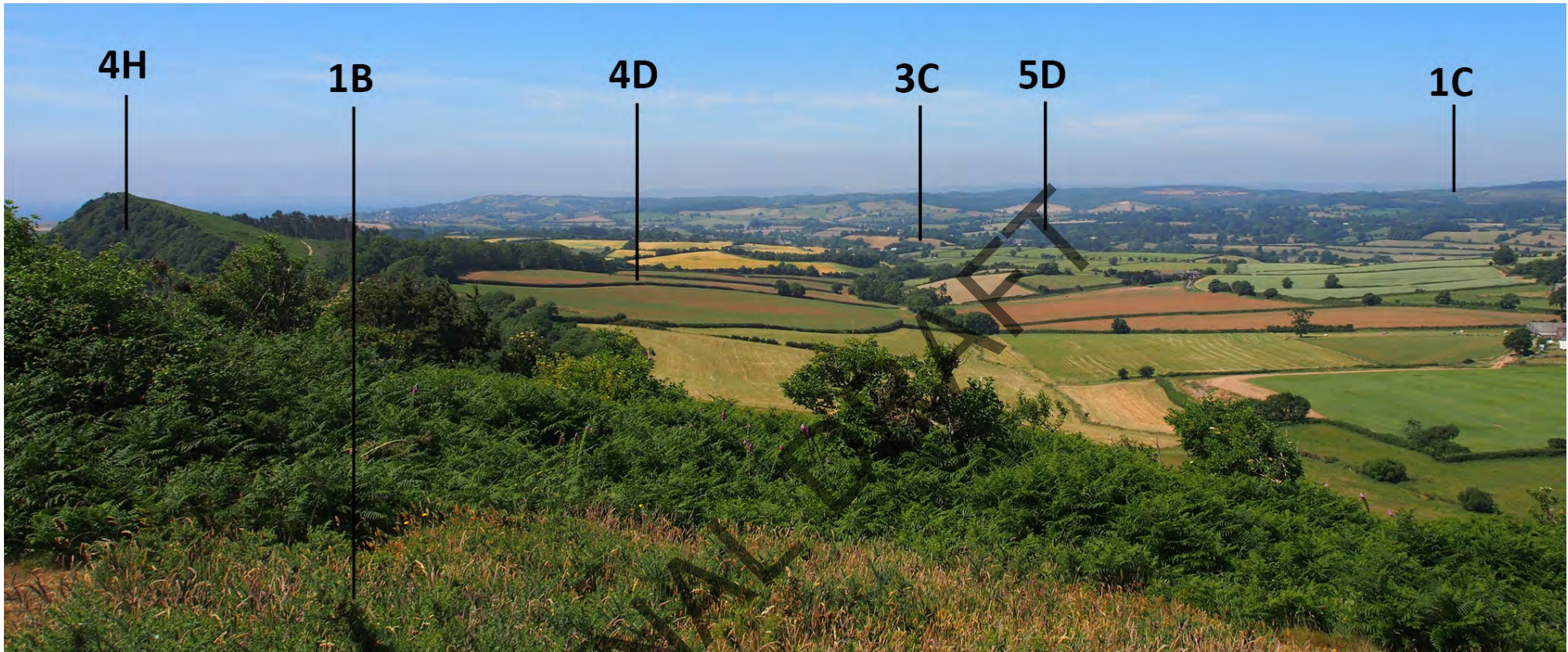
LCT 5D: Estate wooded farmland

LCT 3E: Lowland plains

LCT 1A: Open inland planned plateaux

LCT 3B: Lower rolling farmed and settled valley slopes

LCT 1C: Pebblebed Heaths



View west from Mutters Moor, on the South West Coast Path west of Sidmouth, showing how LCTs relate to each other

LCT 4H: Cliffs

LCT 1B: Open coastal plateau

LCT 4D: Coastal slopes and combes

LCT 3C: Sparsely settled farmed valley floors

LCT 5D: Estate wooded farmland

LCT 1C: Pebblebed heaths

3.0 Methodology and Consultation

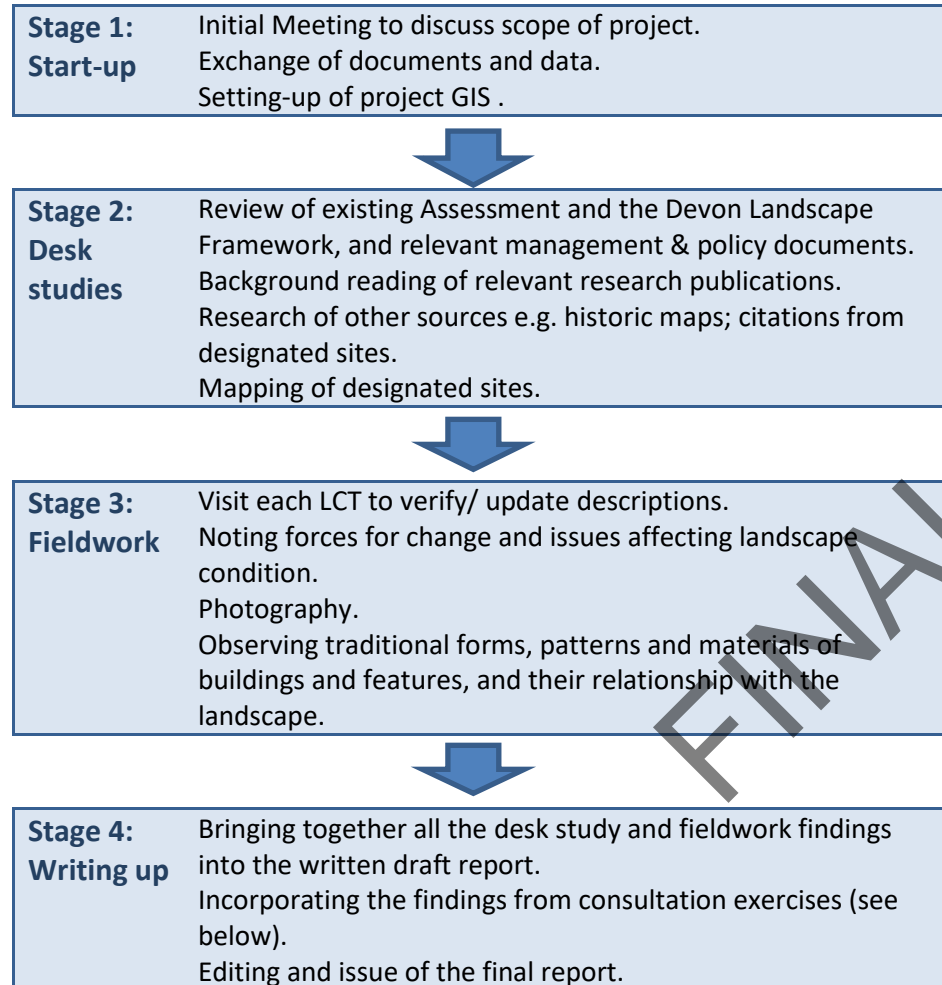


Sidbury village

East Devon Central Ridge Devon Character Area

3.1 Stages of the Methodology

The project methodology followed the approach set out in the current Best Practice Guidelines for Landscape Character Assessment⁴. It can be divided into four stages, as shown:



⁴ *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (Natural England, 2014)

3.2 Consultation

Two key phases of consultation took place during the course of the assessment. The first phase took place between the fieldwork and write-up stages, and took the form of a **stakeholder consultation workshop**, attended by a wide range of stakeholders and local experts. Invitees who were unable to attend in person were invited to complete questionnaires to comment on the distinctive qualities of the area's landscapes, identify forces for change, and contribute management recommendations. Specific advice was also sought from individuals with particular areas of expertise.

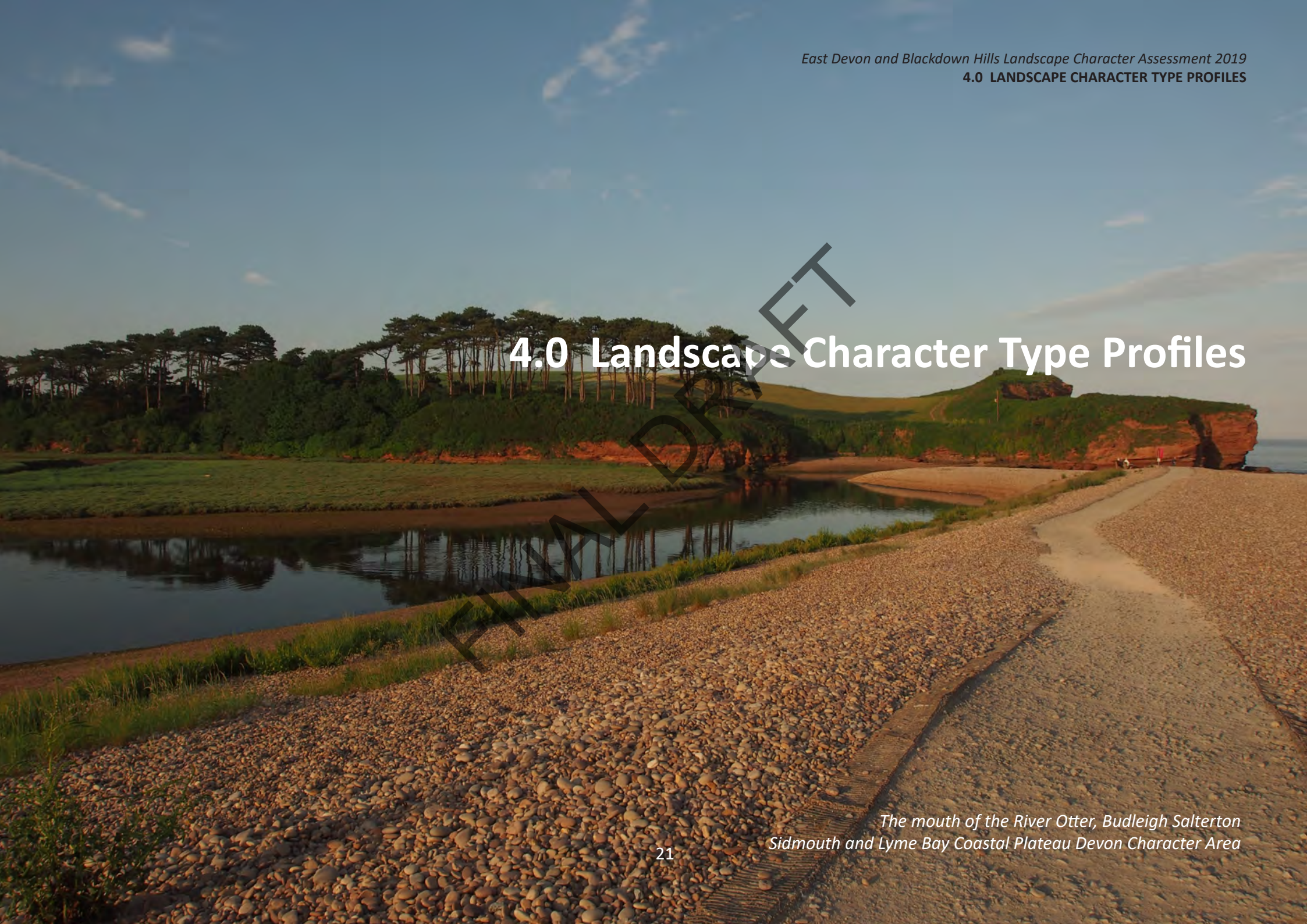
Staff from the following organisations took part in the workshop or returned questionnaires:

- Devon County Council
- Somerset County Council
- East Devon District Council
- Mid Devon District Council
- East Devon AONB Partnership
- Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership
- Forestry Commission
- Marine Management Organisation
- Federation of Small Business
- Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site
- Devon Wildlife Trust
- Devon Access Forum

The **public consultation** on the draft document took place in January-February 2019, co-ordinated by East Devon District Council. Comments received have informed this final version.

Note: The project brief did not include a requirement for a full on-the-ground review of all LCT boundaries. However, where improvements to LCT boundaries were noticed as a result of fieldwork or consultation, these changes were made, and are recorded in Appendix B.

4.0 Landscape Character Type Profiles



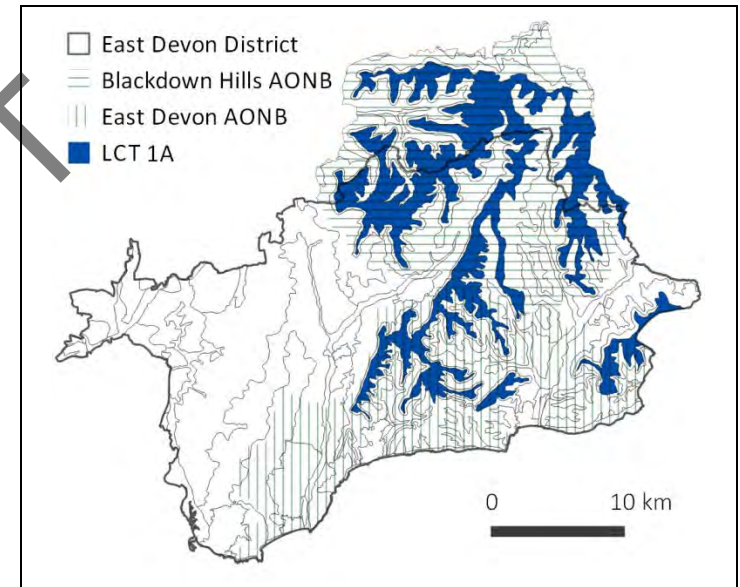
*The mouth of the River Otter, Budleigh Salterton
Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau Devon Character Area*

LCT 1A: Open Inland Planned Plateaux

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Blackdown Hills; Eastern Blackdown Ridge; East Devon Central Ridge; Wootton Hills



*A typical view across the LCT 1A near Smeatharpe Airfield
Blackdown Hills Devon Character Area*



Description

This LCT occurs in the eastern half of the Study Area, and contains some of the highest land. It comprises a series of elevated fingers of land which are flat or gently undulating. The boundaries of the LCT are generally clearly marked by the transition to steep scarp slopes below (LCT 2A). This is a relatively simple landscape, with strong horizontal elements: flat horizons, straight roads and regular field boundaries. Vertical features, such as lines of roadside trees and electricity poles, are particularly noticeable. The simple landscape pattern reflects its late enclosure from common land. Settlement is sparse, and mostly occurs around crossroads, although there is more extensive 20th Century development associated with airfields. Archaeological features include prehistoric burial mounds, hillforts and beacon sites, and historic routes along ridge tops. There are occasional long views out over surrounding landscapes, particularly from the edges of the plateaux, some of which are associated with historic beacon sites.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **High, open flat plateaux** comprising a series of long, narrow ridge tops, sometimes undulating. Little surface water.
- **Occasional copses and conifer plantations punctuate the open farmland.** Boundary trees along roads and hedgerows mostly beech in north, and oak/ hazel further south and around plateaux edges.
- **Predominantly pastoral farming on heavy soils,** with some arable. **Regular, medium-large scale fields bounded by well-trimmed hedges on narrow earth banks.**
- Semi-natural habitats include patches of heath, unimproved grassland and wide verges.
- Archaeology and cultural heritage includes prehistoric barrow cemeteries, Iron Age hillforts, later beacon and military sites.
- **Settlement generally comprises isolated farmsteads and clusters of buildings at crossroads. 20th Century settlement associated with airfields.**
- **Long, straight roads in the centre of ridges,** often lined with beech avenues, **with narrower, winding roads towards the edges.** Few public rights of way.
- **A very uniform appearance,** with a simple landscape pattern and often a fairly large scale.
- **Extensive views often blocked by woodland on boundary or roadside trees,** but occasional long views. Wellington Monument, Gittisham masts and Stockland transmitter are landmarks.

What Makes this Landscape Special

A relatively **simple landscape** dominated by straight lines, often contrasting with the irregular patchwork of fields and wooded landscapes which surround it.

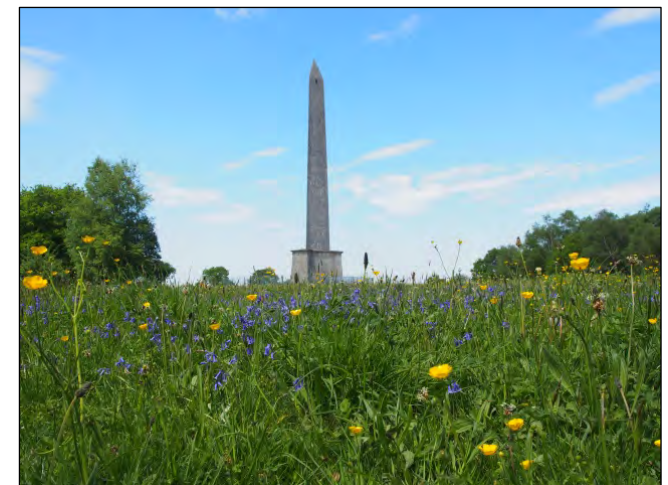
Its high land forms the **horizons** in many views from the surrounding area.

Important surviving **archaeological features relating to prominent hilltop sites**, including Farway prehistoric barrow cemetery, Culmstock Beacon and the Wellington Monument.

Extensive **heathland habitats** at Gittisham and pockets of heathland and wet grassland elsewhere.



Heathland, prehistoric barrows and landmark communications masts at Gittisham Hill



The Wellington Monument is a prominent landmark over a wide area, and a rare example of a 3-sided obelisk.

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Wires, pylons and masts appearing prominently on the skyline in views from this LCT and surrounding areas.
- Large-scale development associated with airfield sites, particularly around Dunkeswell.
- Solar farms (although existing sites within this LCT are generally well-integrated into the landscape, and are not visually prominent).
- Plastic crop covers.
- Closure of dairy farms, particularly smaller ones.
- Signage and measures to reduce speeding on straight roads.
- Positive management of archaeological and heathland sites, and restoration of the Wellington Monument.
- Positive management of roadside and field boundary hedges.

Future forces for change

- Ash Dieback resulting in loss of ash trees.
- Loss of beech trees due to drought associated with climate change.
- Changes in crop choices in response to market forces (such as demand for biomass crops).
- Increased cutting of silage, potentially resulting in loss of stockproof field boundaries.
- Future changes in agricultural grants, which are likely to impact on landscape management.
- Continued demand for communications masts.
- Possible improvements to A30/ A303 potentially increasing its impact within the landscape.

Landscape Aims

The simple, regular pattern of the landscape is retained. Skylines and plateau edges should be kept clear of intrusive development, and communications masts sited with care to have minimal impact. Biodiversity should be enhanced through continued positive management of heathland, grassland and woodland/ plantation habitats. Archaeological sites should be protected from erosion and damage, and key views from them should be kept open.



New industrial buildings adjacent to Dunkeswell Airfield



Solar Farm east of Axminster.



Grassland SSSI in positive management

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Archaeological sites, taking particular care to keep earthworks clear of bracken and scrub.
- Skylines, particularly where they form the backdrop to views from a wide area. Plateau edges can be particularly prominent locations as they are seen from the valleys below.
- The relatively simple, regular landscape pattern.

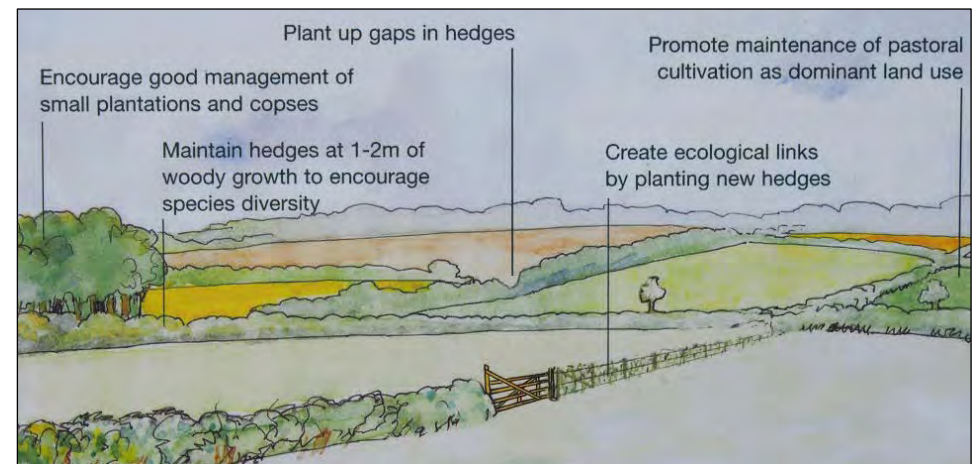
Manage

- Viewpoints, enabling public access where possible, and ensuring that vegetation at the top of the scarp slopes does not grow too high and restrict views.
- Roadside avenues and hedgerow trees, replacing trees where necessary to ensure their continuity in the landscape.
- Woodland, identifying opportunities to link woodland, and also areas for potential extensive woodland planting using local seed. Retain and manage estate woodlands and coverts.
- Hedgerows, gapping-up where necessary to retain the landscape pattern and enhance habitat connectivity. Support local hedge-laying groups.
- Areas of heath and wet pasture, removing encroaching scrub.

Plan

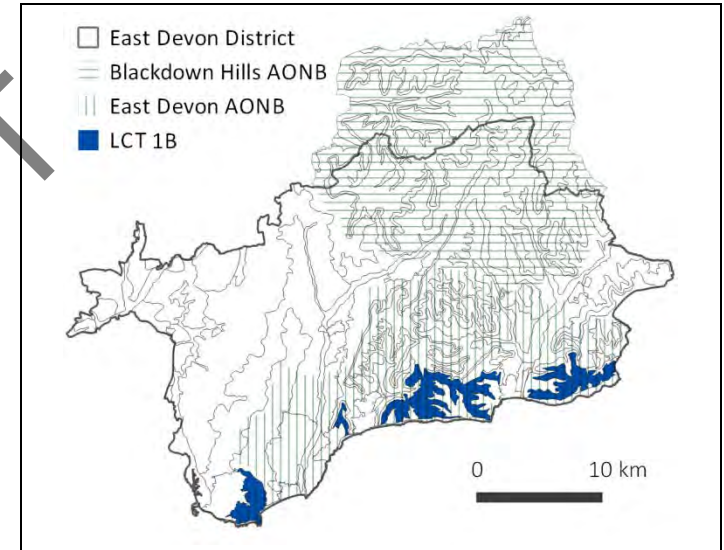
- Protect the rural character of skylines by keeping built development away from plateau edges.
- Create/ enhance safe public rights of way to enable access to sites of interest, and links with wider Green Infrastructure aspirations.
- Consider undergrounding overhead wires where particularly intrusive.
- Work with highways authority to control traffic speeds without intrusive signage.

- Respect the general pattern of settlement, comprising dispersed farms and dwellings, and hamlets around crossroads.
- Any expansion of larger settlements/ developed areas should include strengthening of development edges through sympathetic planting (e.g. beech hedgerows and avenues).
- Promote sensitive conversion of redundant farm buildings to appropriate new uses (e.g. affordable housing; small business units; tourist accommodation).
- Locate masts against a wooded backdrop where possible, or use planting to avoid them appearing as isolated features on horizons.
- Exercise care when selecting materials for industrial developments to ensure best integration into the landscape.
- Continue to ensure that solar farms are well-integrated into the existing hedgerow structure, and are not visible from above.
- Develop a long-term plan for conifer plantations reaching maturity, identifying areas suitable for replanting, or reversion to heath habitat.



LCT 1B: Open Coastal Plateau

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Pebble Bed Heaths and Farmland; Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau



A typical view across LCT 1B, looking east from Gore Lane, near the Devon Cliffs Holiday Park. The Pebble Bed Heaths form the horizon. Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau Devon Character Area

Description

This coastal LCT occurs in the southern part of the study area, and comprises the highest land along the coast between Lyme Regis and Exmouth. It is gently undulating, and also dissected by deep valleys (LCT 3A and 4D). It contains mainly regular shaped fields, often medium-large in size, and surrounded by deep hedges. Much of the land is in arable use, and the soil colour contributes to local character (generally red from sandstone in the west and paler from limestone in the east). There are also pockets of coastal grassland. The LCT feels elevated, exposed and coastal, even when the sea isn't visible. This is partly due to the windswept feel, the expanse of sky to the south, and the presence of salt-tolerant vegetation such as low thickets of blackthorn. Dramatic sunbursts and cloud formations are relatively frequent. There are some estate influences, particularly around Rousdon. Settlement is generally sparse and limited to scattered farms, although there are several campsites/ caravan parks. There are relatively few roads, but there are spectacular coastal views from the South West Coast Path where it follows the boundary between the plateau and the cliffs.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **High, undulating, open plateaux, dissected and separated by combes and river valleys.** Underlain by Permian and Triassic sandstone and mudstone in the west and limestone in the east.
- **Little woodland,** with occasional plantations and estate planting. Some **windblown vegetation.**
- A relatively large scale landscape, with a **regular medium to large field pattern, dense low hedges,** containing mix of species and **occasional hedgerow oaks. Mixed land use, mainly arable.**
- Semi-natural habitats include salt-tolerant coastal grassland, hedgerows, trees and verges, and wind-cropped thickets of blackthorn.
- Local influence of Rousdon Estate, and a post-medieval pattern of fields and farms. Numerous former limestone quarries, particularly around Beer.
- **Prehistoric archaeology** including barrows and hillforts, with a concentration of prehistoric toolmaking sites and evidence of Roman occupation on Beer Head.
- **Low settlement density,** mainly limited to scattered farms or hamlets. There are also several campsites and caravan parks.
- **Few roads, but many rights of way,** including long sections of the South West Coast Path. Main roads are straight and fast along ridges. Minor roads linking combes are narrow and often sunken.
- **Variations in underlying geology are reflected in soil colour,** being red in the west and paler in the east.
- **Extensive views along coast,** often visible from South West Coast Path. Much of the LCT has a sense of openness and exposure. Context of open sky to the south and land to the north adds to the sense of place

What Makes this Landscape Special

High land which is often highly visible in views along the coast and from elevated viewpoints.

Excellent coastal views, particularly from South West Coast Path along the southern edge of the LCT.

Geological importance, forming the setting and views of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

Registered Historic Park and Garden at Rousdon, with estate influence on surrounding buildings, walls, etc.

Prehistoric archaeology, with a concentration of sites on Beer Head.



Undulating arable fields on the Open Coastal Plateau east of Axmouth.



Coastal Grassland and forestry blocks, Peak Hill/Mutters Moor

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Coastal erosion, resulting in loss of coastal land, and the diversion of the South West Coast Path inland.
- Campsites and caravan parks are generally well-hidden, but some sites (particularly coastal sites) are visible in views along the coast.
- Expansion of settlements upwards from lower land onto surrounding Open Coastal Plateau. There is currently particular pressure for development expansion around Lyme Regis.
- Limestone quarrying, particularly around Beer.
- Wind turbine west of Seaton can be seen from a wide area.
- Changing agricultural management practices, including an increase in pig rearing (due to the clean air and lack of airborne infections) and use of crop covers.

Future forces for change

- Continued development pressure and expansion of developed area onto higher ground.
- Potential impacts from Coastal Change Management, including accommodating development at risk from coastal erosion.
- Spreading room associated with the England Coast Path will potentially result in land use change along cliff tops.
- Unknown landscape impacts of future changes to agricultural grants and policies.
- Increased frequency and intensity of coastal storms as a result of climate change, potentially affecting vegetation and land use choices, and increasing coastal erosion rates.

Landscape Aims

Retain the Open Coastal Plateaux as a large-scale and predominantly undeveloped landscape which forms a positive setting and skyline to the coast, World Heritage Site, South West/ England Coast Path and several settlements. Incursion of development onto higher land should be avoided. Habitat diversity should be encouraged, particularly the establishment and linkage of coastal grassland. Archaeological sites and ancient coastal landscapes should be protected.



Wind turbine west of Seaton



East Devon Cliffs Caravan Park



Plastic crop covers, and pig shelters

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Skylines and ridgetops which contribute to coastal views and form the settings to settlements.
- Archaeological sites, particularly Beer Head, and record if vulnerable.
- The setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.
- Open and undeveloped land which forms the setting to settlements.

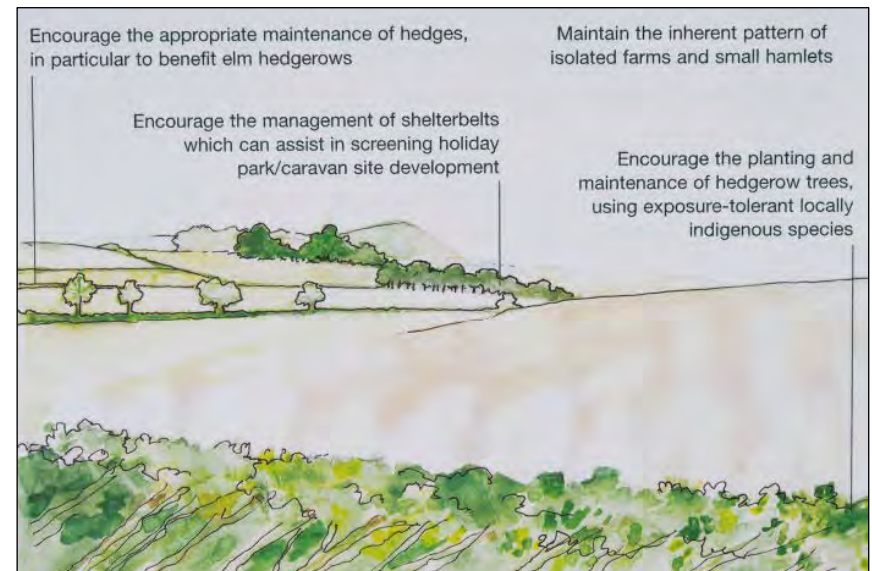
Manage

- Coastal grassland, including promoting habitat links (for example along field edges) to connect grassland sites.
- Habitats to support farmland birds, such as circl buntings, which require a mixture of hedgerows, grassland and arable crops.
- Hedgerows, particularly surviving elm hedgerows, using traditional management techniques and replacing hedgerow trees where necessary using indigenous and salt tolerant species. Fill gaps in hedgerows where necessary.
- Shelterbelts, particularly where they are screening caravan parks and other development. Encourage planting of deciduous edges to soften the visual impact.
- Damp/ wet grassland habitats in shallow valleys, grazing or cutting where necessary to prevent establishment of scrub.
- Woodlands and plantations, aiming for age and species diversity, and promoting use of local seed. Aim to link woodland blocks through copses, tree belts and hedgerows.
- Historic estates, developing Parkland Management Plans if required.

Plan

- Ensure that any development in adjoining LCTs/ urban areas is sympathetically screened using indigenous tree/ hedgerow species.

- Consider accommodating recreational pressure on arable land, rather than in more sensitive habitats (including the expansion land required for the South West Coast Path/ England Coast Path).
- Continue to keep inland campsites well screened. Resist expansion of coastal sites which can be seen in coastal views and encourage sites to enhance their landscape settings.
- Work with quarry companies to develop management and restoration plans which enhance landscape character, geodiversity & biodiversity.
- Develop a long-term plan for conifer plantations reaching maturity, identifying areas suitable for replanting, or reversion to heathland.
- Identify areas suitable for extensive new woodland planting within this large-scale landscape.
- Enhance the Rights of Way network, linking paths and access land to create circular walks from settlements or existing car parks.
- Refer to relevant Objectives, Policies and Aims in the South Marine Plan.

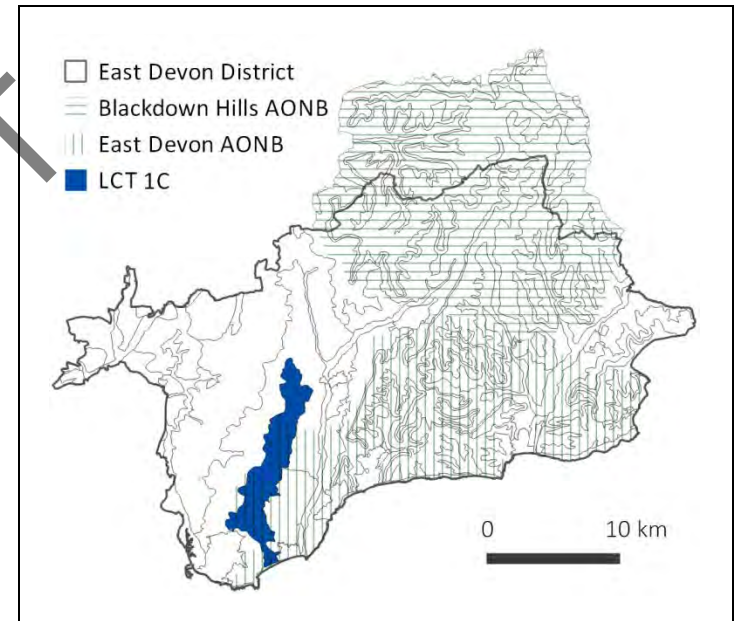


LCT 1C: Pebble Bed Heaths

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Pebble Bed Heaths and Farmland; Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau



A typical view across LCT 1C, looking north over Bicton Common, with Woodbury Castle on the horizon.
Pebble Bed Heaths and Farmland Devon Character Area



Description

This LCT is unique within Devon, and forms a north-south ridge running north from Budleigh Salterton. It is defined by its distinctive sand-and-gravels geology. Soils are poor, and the area was traditionally used as common land. Much of the area remains open, with extensive areas of heath and grassland, as well as pockets of forestry plantation and farmland (particularly in the north). Since the 1930s the majority of the area has been managed for recreation and wildlife conservation, and is internationally-designated for its nature conservation importance. It is also rich in archaeology. Prehistoric features include Woodbury Castle, barrows along the ridge line, hut platforms and traces of field systems. Surviving evidence for common land use includes the open heath, boundary banks, markers and stones. The Pebble Bed Heaths have a strong and unique sense of place due to their openness, vegetation and distinctive horizons. There are splendid views along the ridge, and over surrounding lower land.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- A north-south ridge of high, gently undulating plateau. Distinctive Bunter Pebble Beds geology influences vegetation and land use, and also forms the source of pebbles for Budleigh Salterton beach.
- Conifer plantations and some beech woods, with areas of more scattered trees including oak and birch.
- Former common land, now used for extensive recreation and conservation. Pockets of farmland in the north and at peripheries, also quarrying and military use.
- Extensive actively-managed lowland heath and woodland habitats, supporting a range of birds, insects, plants and mammals. Also areas of wet mire around springs.
- Rich archaeology and cultural heritage, including extensive prehistoric remains and features of common land.
- Largely unsettled, although West Hill woodland village (mostly dating from the 1960s onwards) is located in the north of the LCT.
- Major north-south route along western edge, with some minor roads. Network of footpaths and bridleways, and extensive access and permitted access land.
- Panoramic views along the ridge, and also across surrounding lower land. The ridge itself forms a prominent feature in views.
- A strong sense of place, and of detachment from the surrounding area.
- Woodbury castle is a high focal point.

What Makes this Landscape Special

An extra-ordinary and distinctive landscape, unique in Devon, and accessible for recreation.

An extensive mosaic of heathland, woodland and wet mire habitats which are internationally designated for their nature conservation importance.

Rich extant archaeology (including prehistoric sites) which have survived because the land has not been enclosed or ploughed. A long history of use as common land, with associated features.

Long panoramic views from and along the ridge. The ridge also forms a backdrop to views across a wide area and contributes to the setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.



Accessible meadow, heath and woodland at Bystock Pools Nature Reserve



View west from the Pebble Bed Heaths towards the Exe Estuary.

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Recent quarrying and processing.
- Erosion of archaeological sites by people (e.g. Woodbury Castle) and vegetation. Woodbury Castle has ongoing restoration works to stabilise its banks.
- Parking places, whilst informal, need some management to prevent surfaces degrading.
- Recreational pressure resulting in damage to vegetation, litter and disturbance of habitats.
- Recreational land uses, including golf course and camp sites.
- Fire (accidental and arson) burning vegetation in an uncontrolled manner.
- Clear felling of trees in response to tree disease affecting the appearance of the landscape.
- Vegetation growing up in front of viewpoints, blocking views.

Future forces for change

- Loss of trees due to tree disease and drought stress (exacerbated by climate change).
- Increased recreational pressure as the population of the surrounding area increases.
- Communications masts on high ground.

Landscape Aims

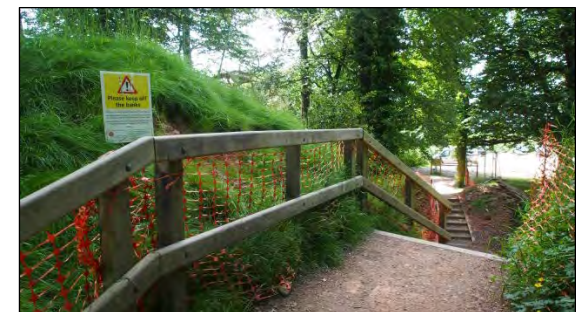
Continue to manage this internationally-designated landscape primarily for conservation and recreation. Active and integrated management should enable the conservation of wildlife and archaeological sites, as well as enabling recreation and access where appropriate. The open and unsettled quality of the landscape should be retained. Particular respect should be paid to skylines and the role of the ridge as a backdrop for surrounding lowlands, and a setting for the World Heritage Site. Mineral restoration plans should enhance the landscape character, and promote conservation and access.



Mineral pile at Black Hill quarry



Burnt vegetation on Colaton Raleigh Common



Restoration works on banks at Woodbury Castle

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Archaeological sites and their settings, paying particular attention to surviving groups of features so they can be appreciated together.
- Skylines and elevated hillsides which form the backdrop of views from lower ground.
- The setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

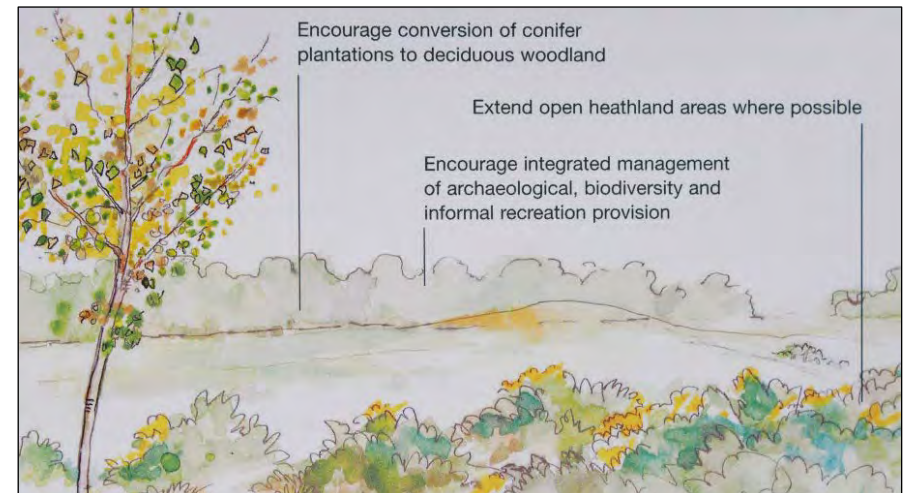
Manage

- Vegetation, to promote a mosaic of woodland, heathland and grassland habitats. Where possible, use traditional management techniques such as grazing and bracken-cutting. Where enclosure is necessary for stock grazing, make sure it remains low-key and unobtrusive. Follow guidance in the appropriate Management Plans.
- Woodland, encouraging age and species diversity. Where commercial timber is being grown, include a heath stage in the crop rotation, and plant deciduous trees on the periphery.
- Viewpoints, providing interpretation and keeping vegetation clear so that views are not blocked.
- Visitors, including projects to offset recreational pressure by guiding visitors away from vulnerable areas, through – for example – a coastal forest park. Encourage recreational access and enjoyment of Public Rights of Way and access land without detriment to wildlife. Work with golf course to enhance positive management for biodiversity.

Plan

- Restoration of mineral working sites to enhance landscape character, promote biodiversity and improve access. Restoration plans should take account of their surrounding context, and should enhance habitat connectivity across the LCT.
- Ameliorate impacts of future tree loss, including on recreation sites/routes.

- Locate any communications masts away from the edges of the ridge (where they would be particularly prominent) and make sure that they are seen against a treed backdrop.
- Promote sustainable access routes, and continue to provide adequate car parking provision so vulnerable habitats are not damaged by poor parking.
- Encourage education of recreational users, and explore potential to increase educational use explaining the geological links with the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, the rare habitats and species which the geology supports, and the surviving archaeology.
- Retain the predominantly undeveloped character of the LCT, particularly within the southern part.
- Retain the treed character of West Hill village and ensure it remains screened through tree planting.
- Retain the existing road pattern, and resist pressure to widen minor roads/ alter junctions unless essential for road safety.
- Refer to relevant Objectives, Policies and Aims in the South Marine Plan in decision-making, particularly when considering the southern part of the LCT.

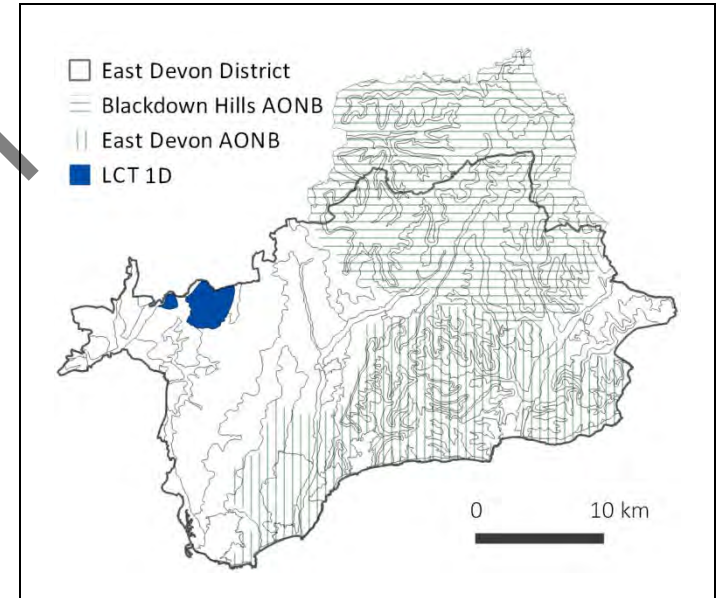


LCT 1D: Estate Wooded Ridges and Hilltops

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Clyst Lowland Farmlands



A typical view towards LCT 1D, looking north towards Ashclyst Forest from lane east of Broadclyst. Clyst Lowland Farmlands Devon Character Area.



Description

This LCT occurs in the north-western part of the Study Area, and is associated with the Killerton Estate. It comprises predominantly wooded hills in estate management, including Ashclyst Forest, and the ornamental planting in Killerton Park. The LCT forms distinctive wooded ridges on the horizon when viewed from nearby lower land. Much of the area is in National Trust ownership and has public access. Killerton House has full visitor facilities, and Ashclyst Forest contains several parking areas, picnic sites and trails. Killerton Park forms the setting to Killerton House. It is a Registered Historic Park and Garden, and contains surviving sections of deer park pales, as well as the earthworks of a prehistoric hillfort. There are ornamental and veteran trees within the Park, as well as woodland (mostly oak and ash) and some areas of conifer plantation within Ashclyst Forest.

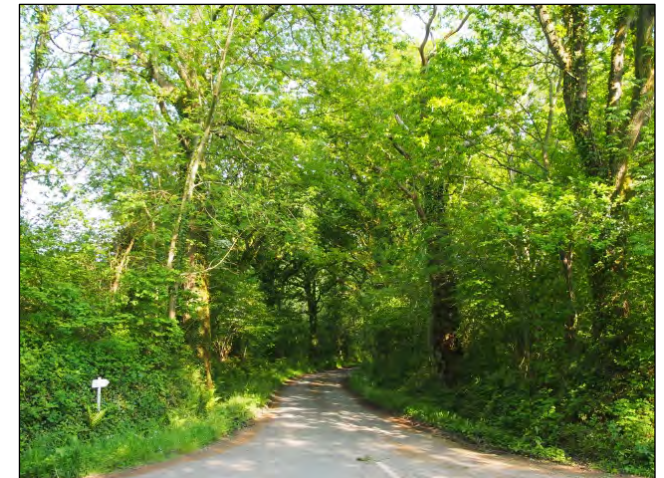
Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Distinct ridges dissected by a series of streams contrasting with surrounding undulating land.** Quarries contain examples of fossilised volcanic lava.
- **Large banks of broadleaf ash, beech and oak woodland across ridges, with blocks of conifer plantation. Estate woodland with veteran trees around historic designed landscapes.** Woodpasture is currently being restored.
- **Land use predominantly woodland and pasture, with small-medium scale irregular fields bounded by mixed species hedges,** extensive woodland and parkland.
- **Rich variety of semi-natural habitats including deciduous and coniferous woodland and veteran trees,** supporting a notable variety of butterflies.
- **Ornamental historic parkland** with archaeological features including medieval deer park pales and a prehistoric hillfort.
- **Farmsteads** and occasional larger properties nestled at the base of slopes.
- **Strong traditional vernacular associated with estates,** including distinctive yellow-ochre Killerton estate buildings.
- Winding narrow lanes linking farmsteads. Very limited Public Rights of Way, but Ashclyst Forest is Access Land.
- **Strong sense of tranquillity and history with little modern development,** although concentrations of visitors can locally reduce the sense of tranquillity.
- **Summits affording spectacular panoramic views** where there are gaps in vegetation.



Ornamental planting in Killerton Park, on the wooded hill behind Killerton House



A typical scene with narrow lanes, ash and oak trees in Ashclyst Forest

What Makes this Landscape Special

A strong cultural history, including nationally-designated archaeological sites, and designed landscapes, which are open to the public.

Its elevated woodlands and mosaic pattern of fields forms a distinctive landscape backdrop to the surrounding lowlands.

Valued and accessible woodland and parkland habitats, supporting a range of species including bluebells, birds, butterflies and other insects.

Unusual geology visible in historic quarries provides a glimpse into the volcanic history of the area.

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Over-maturity and potential loss of parkland trees.
- Commercial forestry plantations obscuring estate planting.
- Decline in traditional woodland management.
- Conifer plantations reaching maturity.
- Loss of woodpasture as secondary woodland has established.

Future forces for change

- Loss of ash trees to ash dieback likely over the next 5-10 years. Other trees (specifically larch and oak) also threatened by tree disease.
- Tree loss as a result of climate change, for example storm damage following increased frequency and intensity of storm events; loss of beech trees following prolonged periods of summer drought.
- Potential future loss of trees impacting on recreation provision. Reduction in shade may affect some activities, with consequent impacts on health and wellbeing, particularly in the context of hotter climatic conditions.
- Increased recreational pressure such as littering, erosion of archaeological sites, and trampling of fragile habitats, particularly as the local population increases.

Landscape Aims

The wooded character of the landscape should be retained, along with the mosaic pattern of small fields. Careful but discreet visitor management will enable enjoyable access whilst avoiding damage to archaeological sites or fragile habitats. Provision should be made for shaded recreation to continue even if existing trees are lost. Cars and people should not dominate the experience of being within this LCT. Nature conservation, particularly of veteran trees, butterflies and bluebells should be encouraged, and archaeological and geological sites should be kept in good repair. The wooded hills should continue to provide an attractive backdrop to the surrounding lowlands and the Killerton Estate.



Felled conifer plantation, Ashclyst Forest



Barrier preventing unlawful vehicle access, Ashclyst Forest



Veteran tree, Killerton Park

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Archaeological sites (and their settings) and geological conservation sites.
- Skylines, avoiding structures sited where they would break the horizon.

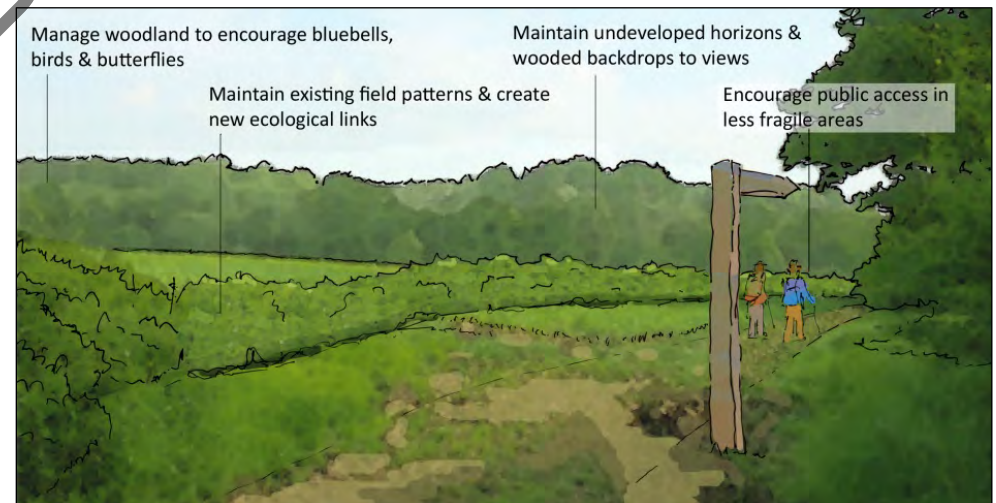
Manage

- Hedgerows, to maintain field patterns and strengthen habitat network, and to provide links between wooded areas.
- Woodlands, aiming for a mosaic of woodland habitats and good age and species diversity. Measures which encourage butterfly habitat and bluebell populations should be supported. Use traditional techniques such as coppicing where possible.
- If necessary replace lost ash, using [best practice guidance](#) to identify locally-appropriate species.
- Veteran trees, including identification and recording.
- Ornamental planting forming part of historic garden designs, whilst preventing the establishment of invasive species such as rhododendron in woodland.
- Visitors, to minimise damage to habitats and historic features whilst enabling public access. This can be achieved through (for example) low-key signage, clear demarcation of paths, and opening up opportunities for recreation in less sensitive parts of the LCT, such as conifer plantations.
- The landscape in accordance with National Trust Management Plan.

Plan

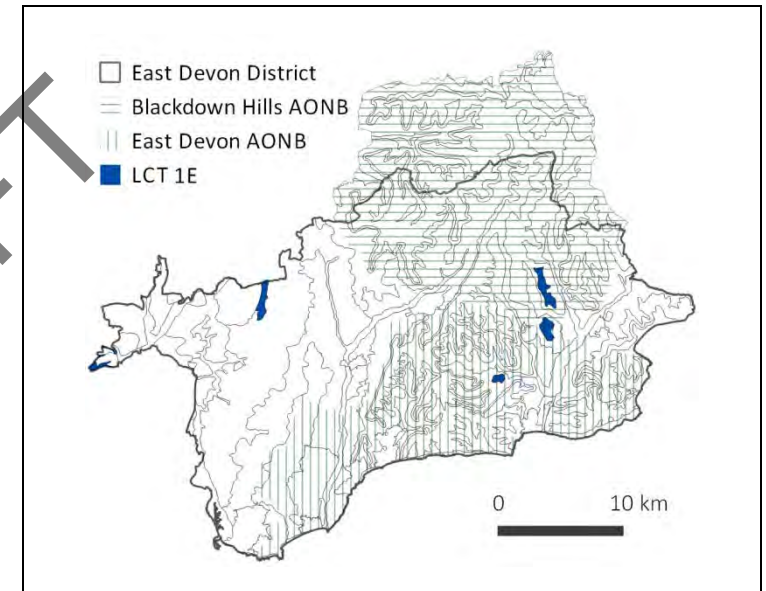
- Retain the landscape as an attractive elevated and undeveloped backdrop to views from surrounding lowlands and Killerton Estate.
- Maintain the largely unsettled character of this LCT.

- Any new development should be small in scale and fit with existing built form and function.
- Consider connections with Clyst Valley Regional Park and wider Green Infrastructure associated with Cranbrook development. This could take the form of strengthened habitat links and movement networks (including existing lanes and tracks) to enable sustainable access into Ashclyst Forest.
- Ameliorate impacts of future tree loss, including on recreation sites/routes, to enable continued shaded recreation provision.
- Archaeological surveys (e.g. LiDAR) to identify archaeological features in woodland.
- Keep horizons clear of development. If masts are unavoidable, they should be sited against a wooded backdrop.



LCT 1E: Wooded Ridges and Hilltops

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Axe Valley; Clyst Lowland Farmlands



A typical view across LCT 1E, from the southern end of Danes Hill (above Clifthorne Farm) looking south towards Shute Hill.

Axe Valley Devon Character Area

Description

Examples of this LCT are scattered in a band which runs east-west across the centre of the study area. They comprise wooded/ treed hills and ridges which rise above the surrounding landform and create distinctive profiles on the horizon. There are areas of deciduous woodland (some ancient) as well as forested areas such as Shute Hill. Their wooded appearance is enhanced by roadside and hedgerow trees (particularly oaks) and the species-rich hedgerows which line the small-medium size fields. The scattered farms, including historic farmsteads, are connected by narrow, sunken lanes, which climb the sides of the ridges, and afford spectacular views from the ridge tops. This is an historic landscape with a strong sense of place. Archaeological features include beacon sites in prominent locations, including a stone Armada beacon house on Shute Hill which has views to the coast.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Small hills and associated small ridges**, often isolated **outliers of the plateaux**.
- **Species-rich hedgebanks and tree rows, ancient woodland and great species diversity with oak and ash common as hedgerow trees**, and flowering cherry in woodland. Also areas of conifer plantation.
- **Small to medium irregular fields and spring-line mires. Mixed woodland and some pasture, with occasional arable use.**
- Semi-natural habitats include woodland, hedgebanks, verges, springline mires and streamside vegetation.
- An historic landscape with surviving medieval lanes, farmsteads and enclosure patterns. Prominent hills were used as beacon sites.
- **Sparsely settled**, with scattered farms nestled at the base of hills, or occasionally on ridge-tops.
- **Narrow, enclosed winding lanes** lined with species-rich banks climb ridges, often becoming less enclosed on ridge tops. There are occasional green lanes and public rights of way.
- **Feels high and frequently remote**, with little traffic, and a sense of detachment from surrounding lower land.
- **Limited views out** from lanes, but occasional spectacular views out from ridge tops.
- Form the backdrop and skyline in views from valleys below.

What Makes this Landscape Special

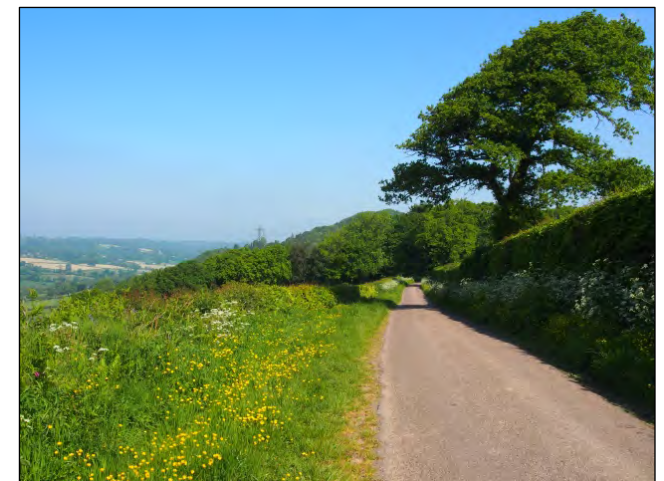
Prominent wooded/ treed hills, which form landscape backdrops and distinctive features on the skyline. Their prominence meant that they were used as beacon sites – evidenced in place names, and in the surviving stone Armada beacon house on Shute Hill, overlooking the coast.

The surviving medieval landscape pattern of lanes, fields, farms and tracks gives it a strong sense of place and history.

Spectacular views over surrounding valleys and lowlands, and a sense of tranquillity and detachment.



Steep lane lined with banks and oak trees, west of Clyst Hydon



Ridge-top road with wildflower-rich verges, and long views over the adjacent valley, Horner Hill

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Invasive rhododendron in woodland (Shute Hill).
- Conifer plantations, including extensive blocks, reaching maturity and requiring clear felling.
- Loss of views from viewpoints (e.g. Shute Hill) due to vegetation growth (although efforts are being made to keep it in check).
- Decline in traditional woodland management.
- Large buildings, solar farms etc. seen in views over lower land below.
- Growth of scrub on unimproved grassland areas.
- Changes in farm structure, including amalgamation of holdings and a demand for larger farm buildings. Also a decline in livestock (dairy) farming, meaning that traditional stockproof hedgerows and banks are no longer required and may fall into disrepair.

Future forces for change

- Loss of trees to ash dieback and other tree diseases, climate change and over-maturity, potentially reducing the wooded appearance of the ridges.
- Climate change, potentially impacting on tree species, agricultural practices, water supplies and opportunities for shaded recreation at Shute Hill.
- Continued demand for larger farm buildings visible from a wide area.
- Increased light pollution from farm yards and buildings.
- Continued demand for large-scale development on surrounding lower land, affecting views out.

Landscape Aims

The historic and very lightly settled character of the LCT should be retained, and the distinctive ridgelines kept free from development. The rich species diversity of woodlands, hedgerows, grasslands and mires should be protected and enhanced through appropriate management. Viewpoints should be accessible, and views kept open.



Felled and replanted trees, Great Pen (west of Colyton)



Large farm buildings located below ridgeline



Cleared but regrowing vegetation in front of Beacon House viewpoint, Shute Hill.

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- The historic landscape pattern of wooded slopes and irregular pastoral fields.
- Archaeological sites and their settings.
- The very lightly settled character of the landscape.
- Distinctive ridgelines and skylines, keeping them free from development and other intrusive structures.
- The character of historic narrow lanes and tracks, avoiding road widening and unnecessary signage.

Manage

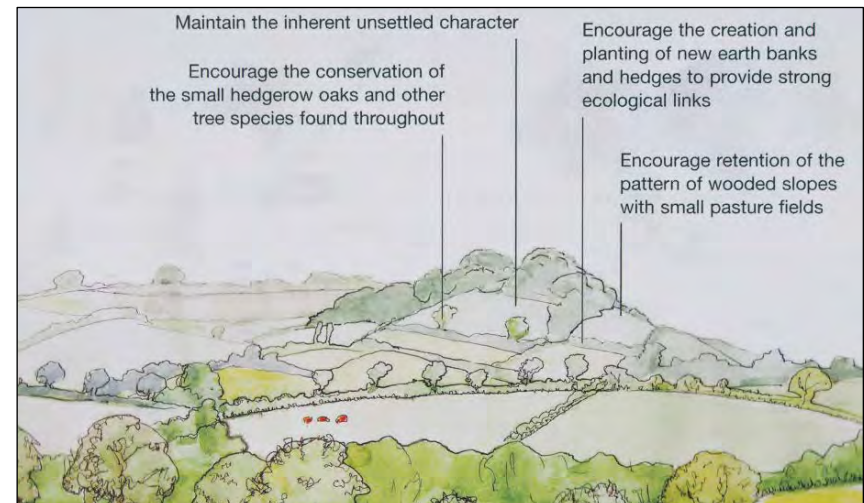
- Viewpoints (e.g. Shute Hill Beacon House), keeping vegetation clear.
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees to retain their presence in the landscape and the pattern of wide, medium-height hedges.
- Woodland, including removal of invasive species and promotion of bluebells in ground flora. Use traditional techniques such as coppicing where possible.
- Promote age and species diversity in woodlands, and around the peripheries of plantations, using local seed where possible.
- If necessary replace lost ash trees, using [best practice guidance](#) to identify locally-appropriate species.
- Unimproved pasture, grazing or removing vegetation to prevent establishment by scrub.
- Spring line mires, to retain associated habitats.

Plan

- Create new ecological links between woodland blocks.
- Retain the existing pattern of very limited settlement. Any new

development should relate to existing buildings and land uses, and should be of a similar or smaller scale to existing structures.

- Be aware that any development within this LCT is likely to be prominent in views. Keep ridgelines clear of development, ensuring farm buildings are located below the ridgeline when seen from below. Use visually-recessive materials and minimise light pollution.
- If communications masts are unavoidable, ensure that they are set below the ridgeline, and / or have a treed backdrop.
- Develop a considered approach to the management of conifer plantations on reaching maturity. This may include encouraging natural regeneration on former deciduous woodland sites.
- Identify suitable sites for archaeological survey (LiDAR) to increase understanding of archaeological features within woodland.
- Ameliorate impacts of future tree loss, including on recreation sites/routes.
- Encourage the public to explore the LCT and appreciate the views through legitimate use of footpaths, quiet roads and green lanes.
- Consider the impact of proposed developments in surrounding lower LCTs on views from this LCT.

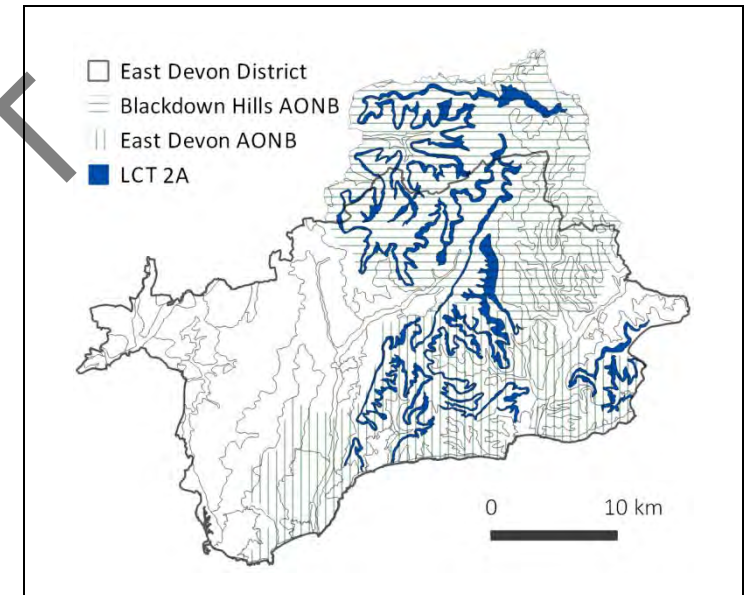


LCT 2A: Steep Wooded Scarp Slopes

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Blackdown Hills; Blackdown Hills Scarp; East Devon Central Ridge; Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau



*A typical view across LCT 2A, looking east along the Blackdowns Scarp from north of Gidland Farm.
Blackdown Hills Scarp Devon Character Area*



Description

This LCT occurs in the eastern half of the Study Area. It comprises the steepest land below the plateaux, and forms a series of narrow 'ribbons' which wrap around the tops of the valleys and form their backdrops. This land is often too steep to farm so has been left as woodland. There are also pockets of irregular medieval fields which have been carved out of the woodland (assarts). It has a high nature conservation value, containing woodland, grassland and springline mires. Many prehistoric hillforts are located within this LCT, often on the ends of promontories which extend above surrounding valleys. There are outstanding views from scarp slopes over surrounding lower land, particularly from the hillfort sites. Steep, narrow and often sunken lanes wind up and down the scarp, occasionally passing an isolated farm.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **A narrow band of steeply sloping land immediately below the plateau edges.** Underlying greensand geology contains springlines.
- Extensive woodland, both deciduous and coniferous. Trees and hedgerows increase its wooded appearance. Notable mature oak and ash trees, with beech in the north.
- **Land use of mixed woodland and semi-improved or unimproved pasture. Small scale, irregular field pattern.**
- **Many patches of semi-natural habitats, including springline mires, scrub,** grassland and woodland.
- Concentration of Iron Age hillforts in prominent locations. Also Roman and medieval ironworking sites, and medieval farmsteads, banks, fields and lanes. .
- **Lightly settled,** with occasional scattered farms, often nestled in folds of the scarp.
- **Narrow winding lanes with well-treed banks.** Lanes often run at an angle to the slope. Some green lanes and footpaths, but much of the LCT is inaccessible.
- Strong sense of enclosure in wooded areas, and a contrast of light and darkness. Irregular fields create varied and distinctive patterns.
- Seasonal contrasts in colour, particularly in deciduous woodlands, including spring bluebell woods and autumn leaves.
- From less wooded areas, and openings in trees, there are sudden and spectacular views over surrounding landscapes.
- Strong sense of tranquillity over much of the LCT, particularly away from roads and settlements.

What Makes this Landscape Special

A rich diversity of woodland, grassland and springline habitats, within an historic landscape pattern.

Its dramatic appearance as a steep ridge at the tops of the valley sites, creating a seasonally-changing backdrop to the valleys below.

Outstanding prehistoric archaeology, with numerous Iron Age sites on prominent spurs of land.

A strong sense of tranquillity, and magnificent views over surrounding valleys and across to scarps.



Veteran ash trees line the earthworks of Musbury Castle Iron Age hillfort



View over scarp slopes in the Wootton Hills, east of Axminster

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Commercial conifer plantations reaching maturity, possibly resulting in clear felling.
- Flash flooding and water run-off causing damage to roads and paths following heavy rain.
- Damage to archaeological sites by bracken, trees and other vegetation, and erosion by visitors.
- Establishment of scrub and bracken on grassland and mires sites.
- Small traditional farms no longer economically viable, so farm amalgamation results in fewer, larger farms. These often require larger, non-traditional buildings.
- Wider farm vehicles damage verges and banks along narrow lanes.
- Decline in smaller livestock farms (particularly dairy) means that stockproof hedgerows are no longer required so may no longer be maintained.
- Decline in traditional woodland management.
- Abandonment of farm buildings no longer required for their original purpose.
- Loss of views from viewpoints due to encroaching vegetation.
- Pylons and power lines prominent where they cut through woodland scarps.

Future forces for change

- Tree loss from ash dieback is likely to be a significant force for change, as there are many ash trees within this LCT, including veteran trees, woodland trees and hedgerow trees. This may also impact on shade for recreational activities and routes.
- Loss of beech trees due to drought resulting from climate change.
- Other potential impacts of climate change including tree loss in storms, changes to water supplies and different farming patterns.
- Currently unknown landscape impacts of future changes in agricultural funding and policies.
- Pressure for structures in prominent locations (e.g. communications masts).

Landscape Aims

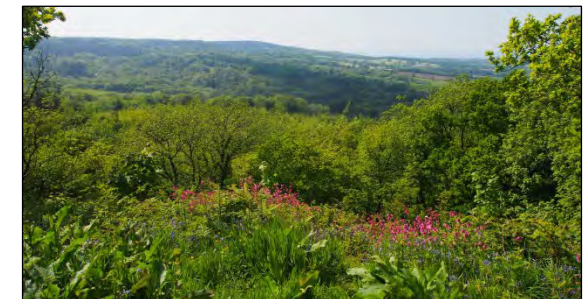
Retain the wooded appearance of the landscape, and the distinctive and attractive pattern of irregular fields which provide a dramatic but soft backdrop for the valleys below. The wide range of habitats, including woodlands, grasslands and mires should be managed in an integrated way. The rich archaeology should be well protected and researched, with non-damaging access encouraged. Views should be celebrated and accessible.



Wooded scarp near Wilmington, with conifer plantations, and masts and pylons above



Damaged road surface, Otter Valley



Open viewpoint maintained, Castle Neroche

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Archaeological sites, keeping earthworks clear of scrub and bracken, and protecting against erosion.
- The distinctive patchwork field patterns, e.g. on slopes of Dumpdon Hill.

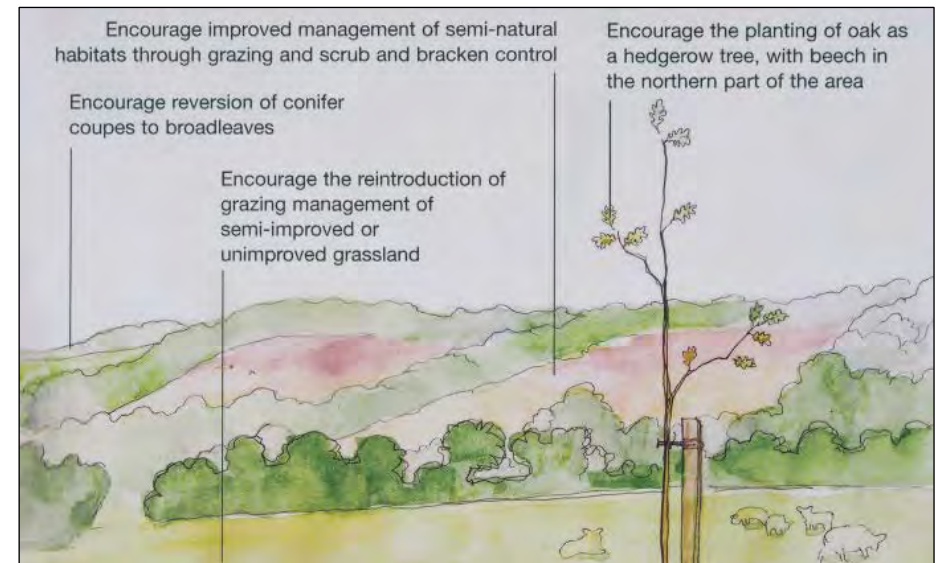
Manage

- Viewpoints, keeping vegetation controlled to allow views out.
- Woodlands, using traditional methods such as coppicing where possible, to improve age and species diversity. Where replanting, use local seed if possible. If necessary replace lost ash trees, using [best practice guidance](#) to identify locally-appropriate species.
- Grassland and mire sites, using appropriate grazing or cutting regimes to prevent encroachment by scrub.
- Hedgerows, using traditional techniques where possible, and retaining/replacing hedgerow trees. In general, beech are the dominant hedgerow trees in the north of the LCT, and oak in the south. Support local hedgelaying groups.

Plan

- Retain the overall undeveloped character of the LCT.
- Retain undeveloped horizons at the top of the scarp. These often form the skyline in views from below, and any development here would be very prominent.
- Support traditional farms and farming techniques, for example by identifying and supporting new product markets and providing grants for projects which enhance landscape character.
- Develop Natural Flood Management techniques to control water run-off.
- Record and photograph ash trees (particularly veteran trees) before ash dieback disease takes a greater hold.

- Promote habitat links between discrete areas of woodland and between grassland sites.
- Develop a long-term plan for conifer plantations reaching maturity, identifying areas suitable for replanting as deciduous woodland (including former ancient woodland sites), or reversion to grassland or heathland habitat.
- Ameliorate impacts of future tree loss, including on recreation sites/routes.
- Undertake LiDAR surveys of archaeological sites within woodland/ scrub to better understand the rich archaeology of this LCT.
- Develop and promote a trail between the many prehistoric hillforts within this LCT, providing safe and non-damaging access, interpretation and viewpoints.
- Consider the visual impacts of any new development on lower ground in views out from this LCT.

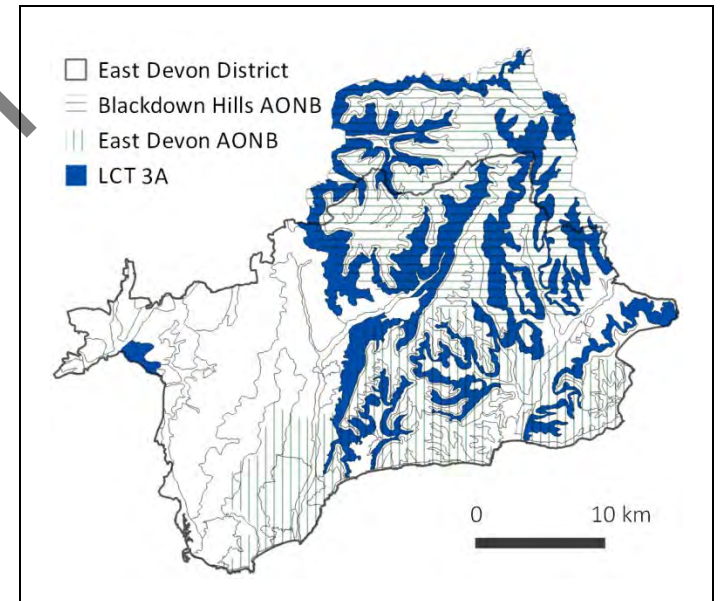


LCT 3A: Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Axe Valley; Blackdown Hills; Blackdown Hills Scarp; Clyst Lowland Farmlands; East Devon Central Ridge; Eastern Blackdown Ridge; Exeter Slopes and Hills; Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau



A typical view within LCT 3A, looking north towards Wambrook Church.
Axe Valley Devon Character Area



Description

This LCT occurs in the eastern half of the Study Area, and also immediately north of Exeter. It sits between the wooded scarps and the gentler, more settled, lower valleys. This is an ancient and settled landscape, containing patchworks of irregular fields, woodland, winding lanes, scattered farms and small villages, often with square-towered churches. There are several small parklands and estate villages, and a high density of archaeological and historical sites. This creates a timeless quality and strong sense of history. Its pleasing compositions and distinctive landscape patterns created by hedgerows, trees and irregular fields inspired early C. 20th abstract artists. The Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes is relatively small in scale with an intimate feel. There are many attractive views within this LCT, and it also forms the foreground of views from higher land above.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Undulating upper valley slopes** on Greensand, below the scarp slopes or plateaux. Small V-shaped valleys on upper slopes.
- **Deciduous woodland and copses, especially on upper slopes.** Hedgerow trees (mostly oak and ash) and some parkland trees add to the green and lush appearance.
- **Well-treed pastoral farmland, with some arable cultivation on lower slopes. Small to medium-size fields with irregular boundaries.** Associated with traditional Devon smallholdings.
- Rich concentration of archaeological sites from all periods, but with many surviving medieval features including field patterns, churches, farms, villages and lanes.
- **Wide, species-rich hedges with many hedgerow trees.** Grassland, stream and woodland habitats add to rich biodiversity.
- **A dispersed settlement pattern of isolated farms and small villages.** Villages are often nucleated around a church, and contain local stone (chert) and cob buildings. Some are estate villages.
- **Very winding narrow lanes,** many sunken with high banks and flower-rich verges.
- **An intimate and intricate landscape with wider views often confined by vegetation.** Where views occur, they contain distinctive patchwork patterns of fields.
- Relatively **remote and tranquil with little obvious modern development.**
- Association with the early C.20th Camden Town school of artists in Blackdown Hills.

What Makes this Landscape Special

Exceptionally high scenic quality, with landscape patterns visible from surrounding higher ground, and viewpoints within the LCT. This quintessential Devon landscape continues to inspire visitors and artists, and there is a sense of dropping-down into wide vistas. Dark skies are characteristic at night.

Exceptional survival of archaeological and historical features, particularly from the medieval period. In many areas, the pattern of lanes, tracks, farms, villages and churches feels as though it hasn't changed in centuries. There is a rich built heritage of churches, houses, farms and farm buildings.

Several estates, with associated houses, parks and estate villages.



Patchwork of medieval field patterns near Monkton, as seen from Dumpdon Hill



Estate cottages at Gittisham, associated with the Coombe Estate.

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Development pressure, particularly around Honiton.
- Linear growth of settlements along valleys.
- Need for additional housing, including affordable housing for local people.
- Increased size of farm buildings, and changing patterns of farming resulting in a smaller number of larger holdings. Traditional farm buildings becoming redundant or changing in character.
- Reduction in number of smaller livestock farms (particularly dairy) means that stockproof hedgerows are no longer required and may therefore become unmanaged.
- Decline in traditional woodland management.
- Plastic crop covers used due to changing crop choices and growing patterns.
- Damage to banks alongside narrow lanes by wide/ fast vehicles (including farm machinery), and unnecessary signage on village approaches affecting the character of rural lanes.

Future forces for change

- Loss of ash trees as a result of ash dieback over next 5 – 10 years (already beginning to occur).
- Unknown impacts of future changes to agricultural grants and policies.
- Climate change potentially affecting agricultural practices, tree species and water supplies.
- Light pollution, particularly bright lights in farm yards/ buildings.
- Upgrading of roads (particularly the A30) increasing their visibility in the landscape.
- Continued development pressure.

Landscape Aims

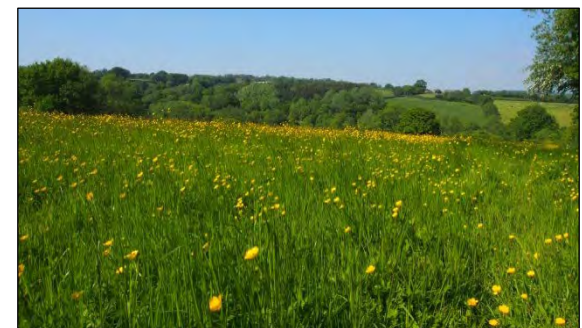
The historic fabric and existing landscape structure of small fields and woodlands should be retained and enhanced, so that the landscape retains its special 'patchwork' character and spectacular views. Wherever possible, agricultural practices should fit into the existing landscape structure and the impacts of any new buildings should be minimised. The LCT should be used for inspiring and educating the public, and telling the landscape story. Identify and protect areas of tranquillity and dark skies.



Dead/ leafless branches on a hedgerow ash tree



New village-edge housing



Grassland site in positive management by the Wildlife Trust, Bishopswood Meadows Nature Reserve.

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- The historic fabric of the landscape, and its settings, including (for example) churches, houses, farms, estates and archaeological sites.
- Historic farm buildings, exploring alternative uses for redundant buildings which retain their external appearance.
- The distinctive patchwork field patterns, associated with traditional Devon smallholdings and often dating back to the medieval period.
- The character of rural lanes, resisting pressure for unnecessary signage, particularly at the entrance to villages.

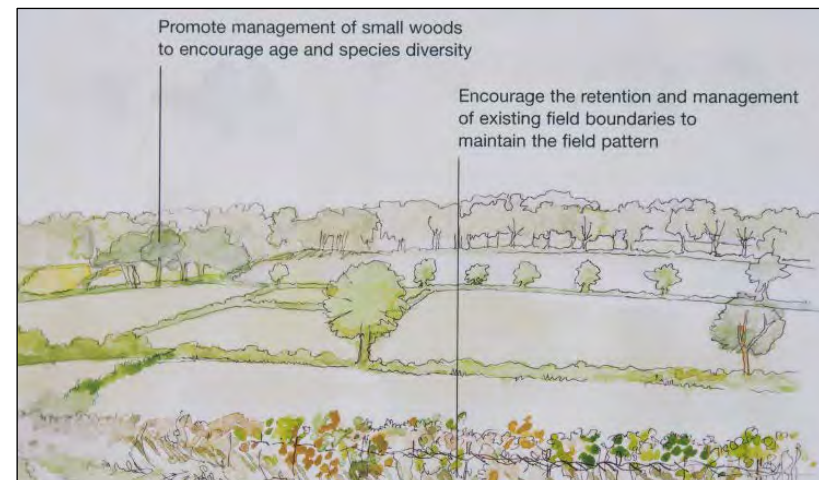
Manage

- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Promote traditional hedgerow management techniques, and repair gaps in degraded hedgerows.
- Woodlands, aiming to promote age and species diversity, using traditional techniques (e.g coppicing) where possible. Link woodland blocks with copses and tree belts to improve habitat resilience. Encourage the planting of deciduous edges to conifer plantations. If necessary replace lost ash trees, using [best practice guidance](#) to identify locally-appropriate species.
- Grassland sites, promoting appropriate grazing to control scrub and maintain unimproved grassland, flushes and wildflower meadows.
- Historic parklands, including the planting of replacement parkland trees to ensure their continued presence within the landscape.

Plan

- Support traditional farms and farming techniques, for example by identifying and supporting new product markets and providing grants for projects which enhance landscape character.
- Develop Natural Flood Management techniques to control water run-off.

- Develop guidelines for the design of new/ re-purposed farm buildings, including consideration of lighting.
- Carefully consider the impacts of proposed development on upper slopes, as these sites are often particularly visible in wider views.
- Retain the pattern of small-scale settlements constructed of local materials.
- Improve integration of new development into the wider landscape, specifically through characteristic landscape features such as hedges, earth banks and small woodlands.
- Where new dwellings are required, they should be carefully sited with regard to the traditional settlement form. For example, avoid linear development up the valley side above a nucleated village.
- Where appropriate, look to enhance the Public Rights of Way network in order to connect existing routes and create circular trails.
- Work with highways authorities to develop effective signage which minimises visual clutter and does not detract from historic settlements or village approaches.

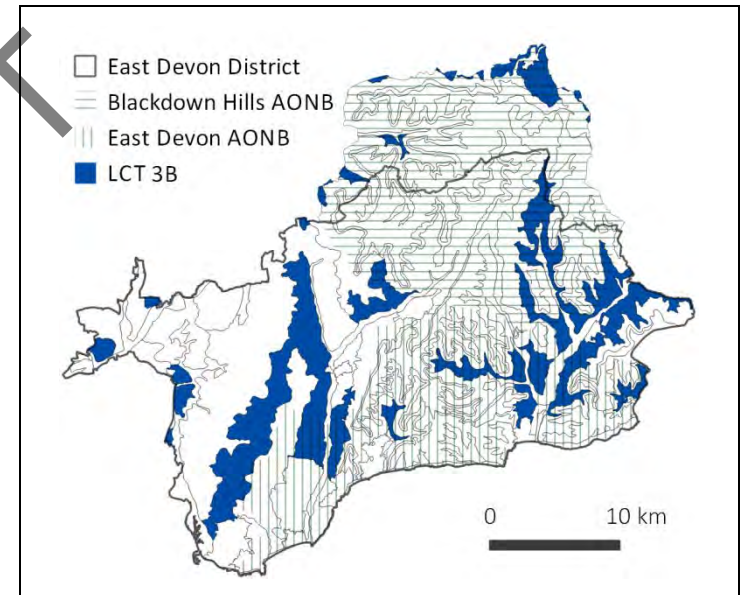


LCT 3B: Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Valley Slopes

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Axe Valley; Blackdown Hills; Blackdown Hills Scarp; Clyst Lowland Farmlands; Exeter Slopes and Hills; Pebble Bed Heaths and Farmland; Wootton Hills



A typical view across LCT 3B, looking north towards Woodbury.
Pebble Bed Heaths and Farmlands Devon Character Area



Description

This is one of the most extensive LCTs and can be found throughout the Study Area. It occurs on the lower slopes of the valley sides, and is generally a medium scale landscape, often with long views. It is predominantly agricultural, with pastoral and arable land uses (associated with distinctive red soils in the west of the Study Area). Patches of woodland, copses, and hedgerow trees give the landscape a well-treed character. It is a well-settled landscape, with farms, hamlets and villages (some of which have expanded). Villages are often centred on river crossing points and contain numerous historic buildings, often constructed of stone, and with church towers as focal points. Some villages have expanded to become larger settlements.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Gently rolling landform, sloping up from valley floor.** Numerous shallow valleys contain small streams. Red sandstone geology apparent in cuttings and soils in west of study area.
- **Many hedgerow trees, copses and streamside tree rows.** Oak and ash predominate, and there are small blocks of woodland.
- **Predominantly pastoral farmland, often with a wooded appearance.** Variable sized fields with wide, low hedged boundaries and a mostly irregular pattern, reflecting different phases of enclosure.
- **Semi-natural habitats include streams and ditches,** grassland, woodland and trees.
- Numerous historic landscape features including farmsteads, lanes, villages and churches. Concentrations of Roman sites.
- **Settled, with various settlement sizes, building ages, patterns and styles.** Various building materials, including stone, cob, whitewash/ render, slate, thatch and tile.
- **Winding, often narrow sunken lanes, with tall earth banks.** Local examples of deep cuttings through sandstone, particularly at entrances to settlements.
- **A relatively enclosed and sheltered landscape.** Some parts of the LCT feel well settled, whilst others feel exceptionally remote, with very little traffic.
- Views tend to occur across valleys, rather than from within them. Higher land in other LCTs forms the backdrop to views.
- Often strong colours within the landscape, influenced by underlying geology, season and choice of crops.

What Makes this Landscape Special

An extensive LCT which forms the setting for many settlements, and also contributes to many expansive views from higher ground.

A productive, working but still attractive landscape containing numerous historic and archaeological features.

A diversity of settlements, with building materials and settlement pattern reflecting local geology.



Scene near Staple Fitzpaine, with the Blackdown Hills Scarp in the distance



Cadhay Barton, near Ottery St Mary.

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Pressures for incremental growth around the edges of villages can affect the setting of villages and how they are seen in the landscape. Settlement expansion is particularly noticeable where its form is at odds with the traditional settlement pattern. For example, a linear expansion to a nucleated village, or expansion higher up a valley side.
- Abandonment and dilapidation of farm buildings no longer required for their original use.
- Demand for larger farm buildings which are often prominent in the landscape.
- Light pollution, particularly bright lights in farm yards/ buildings.
- Changes in crop choice reflecting market changes. For example, maize is increasingly being planted as a biofuel for anaerobic digesters creating biogas.
- Damage to banks alongside narrow lanes by wide/ fast vehicles, including farm machinery.

Future forces for change

- Landscape changes resulting from Natural Flood Management techniques (e.g. introducing beavers).
- Further decline of apple farming due to changing consumer/ supermarket preferences, subsidy changes, and also climate change, as a minimum temperature is needed for apples to germinate.
- Future changes in agricultural policies and funding are currently unknown, but are likely to have major landscape impacts in this strongly-agricultural LCT.
- Tree loss, particularly ash in areas of more calcareous soils.
- Climate change potentially impacting on agricultural practices, tree species and water supplies.
- Continued development pressure.

Landscape Aims

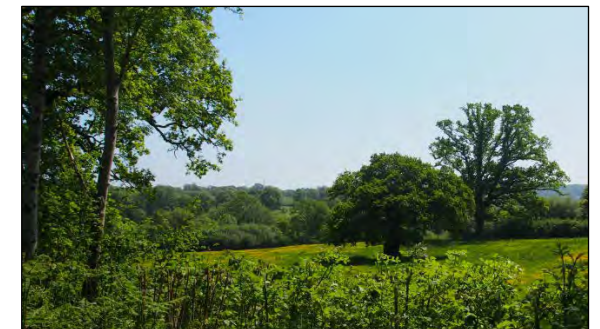
The landscape remains productive whilst retaining its landscape structure of hedgerows, woodland and farms. Alternative uses should be found for redundant farm buildings, and land uses should take place within the existing field patterns. Settlements thrive, and where they expand, this is done in a way which enhances their character and setting.



Linear development on village edge



Finding viable uses for redundant farm buildings can be a challenge



Vulnerable ash trees and veteran oaks, Wootton Hills

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Historic buildings and their settings. Where farm buildings are no longer required for their original purpose, consider alternative uses which retain their external appearance.
- Rural lanes, resisting pressure for widening or non-essential signage.

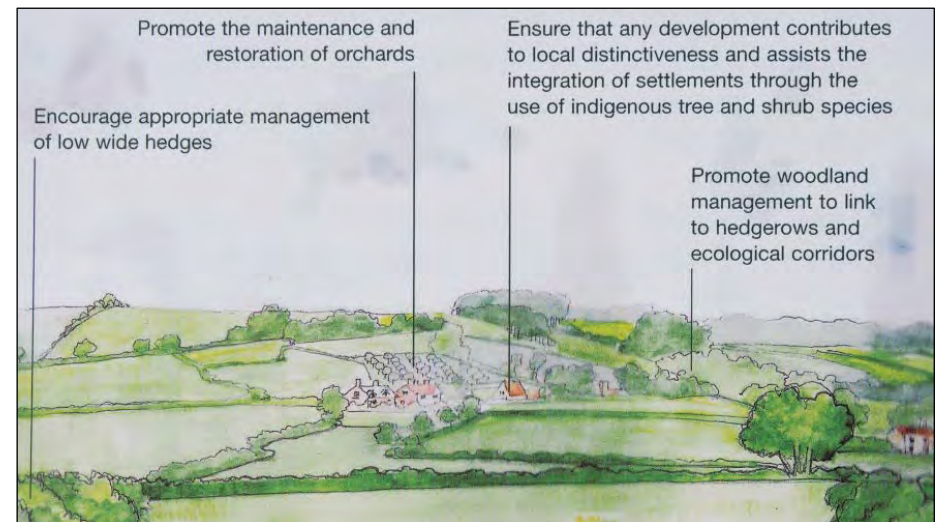
Manage

- Field patterns, by repairing degraded hedgerows, promoting traditional hedgerow management, and also retaining/ planting hedgerow trees. Replace lost ash trees with alternative species.
- Traditional orchards, supporting restoration where possible.
- Recreation, specifically game shoots, equine activities and fishing lakes, to ensure that facilities contribute to landscape character rather than detract from it. For example, through designing tree screening to match existing woodland/ hedgerow patterns, and using native species which are present locally.
- Woodlands, aiming for age and species diversity, and taking opportunities to connect woodland blocks. If necessary, replace lost ash trees using [best practice guidance](#) to identify suitable species.

Plan

- The location and form of any settlement expansion to be sensitive to existing road patterns and settlement form. For example, avoid ribbon development on the edges of nucleated villages.
- Retain distinctive entrances to villages (e.g. cuttings through sandstone banks) and consider how village approaches and entrances could be enhanced.
- Choose building materials which fit with the existing palette, taking particular care if considering bright or reflective surfaces.

- Consider settlements within their wider landscape settings. Ensure that appropriate measures to soften the settlement edge, and to integrate development into the landscape, are incorporated into any settlement expansion plans. Screening should enhance landscape character, for example through using fruit trees in traditional orchard areas, and avoiding stark lines of planting which do not respect the existing landscape pattern.
- Create stronger habitat links, particularly between woodland areas through additional woodland and hedgerow planting.
- Develop Natural Flood Management techniques to control water run-off.
- Where appropriate, look to enhance the Public Rights of Way network in order to connect existing routes and create circular trails.
- Consider the role of this LCT in wider views. It is often seen from above, so any developments spread over a large area (such as solar farms) are likely to be very apparent.

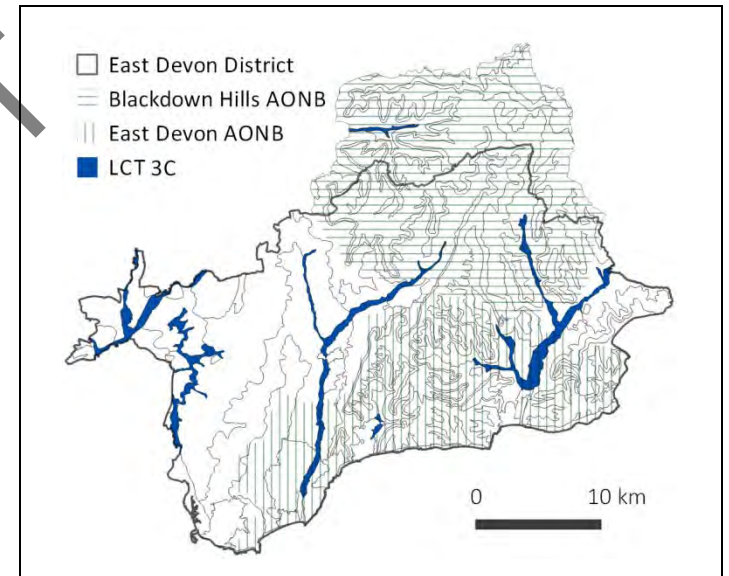


LCT 3C: Sparsely Settled Farmed Valley Floors

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Axe Valley; Blackdown Hills; Clyst Lowland Farmlands; Exeter Slopes and Hills; Pebble Bed Heaths and Farmland; Yeo, Culm and Exe Lowlands



A typical view across LCT 3C, in the floor of the Exe Valley near Brampford Speke.
Yeo, Culm and Exe Lowlands Devon Character Area



Description

This LCT is associated with the main river valleys: the Exe, Clyst, Culm, Otter, Yarty, Sid and Axe. It comprises the open, flat valley floors which often act as floodplains and which demonstrate active river processes such as meander formation. The landscape is largely unsettled (due to flood risk) but contains notable historic bridges, leats and mills. The lack of settlement gives the valleys a tranquil feel, which can be locally impacted where main roads cross them. Views are dominated by the flat valley floors, which are framed by surrounding vegetation and rising land. Meandering rivers can be picked out by the lines of riparian trees along their banks. Most valley floors are used for grazing, although there is some arable land use. Popular riverside paths provide access, and the Clyst Valley Regional Park will promote recreational use within this LCT.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Open, flat landform, often with distinct vegetated floodplain edge.** Winding river courses with main channels and smaller tributaries. Active river processes.
- Willows and other riverside trees along river banks and floodplain edges. Occasional patches of wet woodland.
- **Pastoral land use with wet meadows and some arable, with variable field sizes. Hedges, not banks, on the boundaries with rising land.**
- **Watercourses** are valuable semi-natural habitats, providing a range of aquatic and riparian habitats. Watermeadows may also be species-rich.
- Historic bridges (including examples of medieval packhorse bridges) and mills.
- **Very sparsely settled,** with farms along the adjacent to the LCT above the flood plain.
- **Network of narrow winding lanes** in some valleys, but generally access is limited to bridging points and occasional riverside paths. Main roads cross some valleys. In-use and former railway lines (one now a tramway) utilising flat valley floors.
- **Open internally, with views out screened by boundary vegetation.** Long views along valleys, especially from bridges, framed by valley sides.
- Strong sense of tranquillity, particularly away from roads. Strong seasonal changes, particularly during times of flood.
- Simple landscape pattern, particularly distinctive seen in views from higher land.

What Makes this Landscape Special

The lack of settlement creates a sense of escape and tranquillity; some valleys popular for recreation.

Its open, simple landscape pattern contrasts with the relatively complex enclosure and settlement patterns of surrounding landscapes.

A dynamic landscape which contains important examples of active river processes such as meander formation, and valuable aquatic and wetland habitats.

Historic bridges, causeways, leat systems and mills, and military structures (e.g. pill boxes and tank traps) in uncluttered landscape settings.



Valley floor scene, Yarty Valley



The Otter Valley, north of Ottery St Mary.

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Flooding, resulting in bank erosion and damage to roads, footpaths, bridges and property. Modern bridges low over rivers are particularly vulnerable.
- Past policies of canalising some rivers and constraining them within straight channels, affecting river flows, flood patterns, habitats and natural processes.
- Low river flows during times of drought or high water abstraction.
- Siltation from soil washing into rivers (particularly where arable land use occurs on floodplains).
- Recreation pressure, as people like to walk near water, but the path system is limited.
- Invasive species, such as Himalayan Balsam.
- Poor water quality due to agricultural practices upstream and around the rivers.
- Change in character of parts of Clyst Valley from agricultural to recreational as a result of Cranbrook development and the Clyst Valley Regional Park.
- Impacts on vegetation following introduction of beavers in the Otter Valley.

Future forces for change

- Natural Flood Management techniques, aiming to restore the natural character of river systems.
- Climate change leading to increased flooding (rainfall from storms) and river flows. This will in turn lead to further erosion and damage.
- Development pressure, particularly around settlements.
- Unknown landscape impacts of changes to agricultural grant schemes and policies.

Landscape Aims

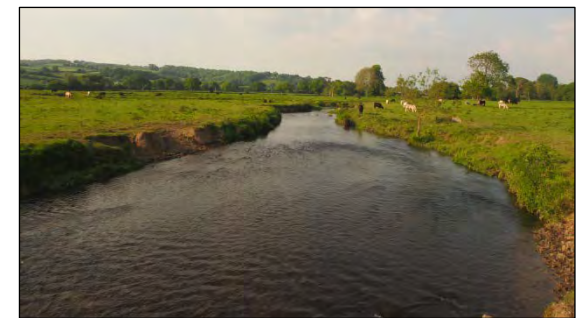
Floodplains should remain largely free from development, and be allowed to function more naturally to reduce the impacts of flooding. Integrated management of floodplains and upstream areas should be promoted to improve water quality and reduce flood risk. Planning for recreational use should respect and enhance the open character of the LCT, and opportunities should be sought to improve biodiversity and restore historic floodplain features.



Change from an agricultural to recreational character in the Clyst valley at Cranbrook



Arable agriculture on floodplain, Otter valley



Bank erosion on the river Axe.

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Historic bridges and other structures, sensitively protecting against flood damage if necessary.
- Floodplains, allowing them to function as naturally as possible.
- The simple pattern and predominantly open quality of this landscape.

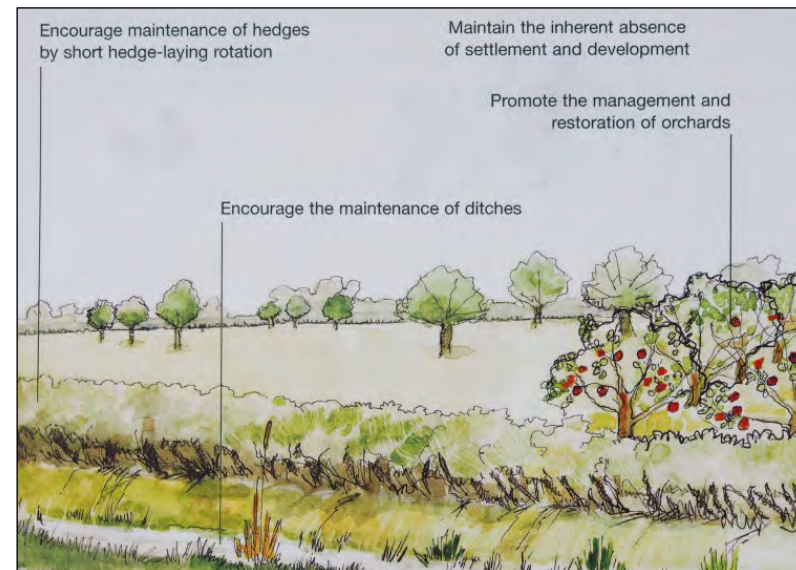
Manage

- Riverside trees, pollarding and replacing where necessary with locally-indigenous wetland species, to keep river banks stable and provide shade for fish.
- Watercourses, preventing them becoming clogged with vegetation or other debris, but encouraging aquatic plant species, mammals and insects, particularly in ditches. Control Himalayan balsam and other non-native invasive species along waterways.
- Floodplain habitats, exploring the potential to restore watermeadows, and to create wetland habitats. Retain unimproved permanent pasture and wet grassland.
- Hedgerows, especially where they comprise quick growing species, using a shorter laying rotation than elsewhere.

Plan

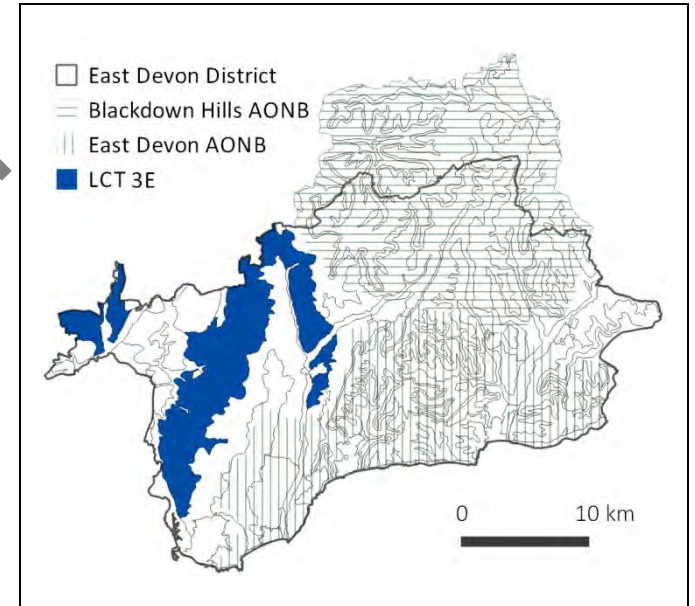
- Maintain the current absence of settlement or development in floodplains.
- Incorporate wider Green Infrastructure ambitions and movement networks for people and wildlife, in a sensitive manner. Where it can be done without detriment to fragile habitats, improve recreational access to valley floors, particularly in areas close to settlements. Due to the flat terrain, valley floor routes may be particularly suitable for use by those with disabilities if the path furniture is appropriately designed.
- Support the aspirations of the Clyst Valley Regional Park and promote suitable links with nearby settlements and LCTs.

- Develop integrated flooding and water quality solutions (including Natural Flood Management) for floodplains and wider river catchments.
- Support projects to re-naturalise rivers which have been artificially channelled, and promote the natural functioning of floodplains.
- Where there is pressure for tree planting within floodplains, restrict it to the outer edges, keeping the valley floor more open.
- Work with landowners/ managers to reduce the proportion of floodplain land in arable use.
- Work with farmers to encourage sustainable farming practices and land management such as soil aeration, crop selection and hedge reinstatement to reduce, alleviate or slow run-off from agricultural land.
- Identify opportunities to restore historic floodplain features such as watermeadow systems and traditional orchards.
- Consider the immediate setting of the floodplain and the impact of future developments on views from the valley floor.



LCT 3E: Lowland Plains

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Clyst Lowland Farmlands; Exe Estuary and Farmlands



A typical view across LCT 3E, looking south-east over Brampford Speke, with the Pebble Bed Heaths forming the distant horizon.

Clyst Lowland Farmlands Devon Character Area

Description

This LCT occurs on lower land in the western half of the Study Area. It comprises the gently sloping/ undulating land which surrounds the valley floors. This is a medium-large scale settled landscape, with villages and farms displaying a variety of building materials, ages and styles. These include the coastal villages of the Exe Estuary, inland villages and occasional estate farms. Much of the LCT remains rural but parts are influenced by new development at Cranbrook and Exeter Airport, and along transport routes. Fertile red soils are a characteristic and are particularly noticeable where arable land use is dominant. There are surviving pockets of traditional orchards, and areas of pasture, paddocks and small woodlands. Fields are generally surrounded by wide hedgerows, often with mature hedgerow oaks, although some hedgerow loss has occurred. Surrounding higher land provides the visual backdrop, and offers views over the Lowland Plains.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Level to gently sloping or rolling plain** between the valley floors and the start of steeper valley sides.
- **Small discrete woodland blocks**, and pockets of orchard planting, particularly around Whimple.
- **Mixed farmland**, often in arable cultivation. **Regular medium to large field pattern** with local variation, particularly around settlements. Contains some of the most fertile farmland in the study area.
- **Semi-natural habitats include roadside hedges** and hedgerow trees - particularly oaks – streams and pockets of grassland.
- Historic villages, farms and lanes, but some features lost due to ploughing. Notable concentration of historic parklands including veteran trees. Maritime influences on estuary villages.
- **Settled, with a mixed pattern of villages, hamlets** and isolated farms. **Great variety of building materials and styles, even within single settlements.** Cranbrook is a focal point for contemporary buildings and includes large-scale structures.
- **Variable highway network, from** sparse rural lanes to motorway and A-roads. Relatively few public rights of way.
- **Surprising feeling of remoteness in some parts.** Despite local impacts of development and infrastructure, much of the area retains a pleasant, rural feel.
- Long views over low hedges. **Some views marred by pylons** and other infrastructure.
- Surrounding LCTs (for example Estuary and Pebble Bed Heaths) contribute to views and influence character. Lowland Plains visible from surrounding higher LCTs.

What Makes this Landscape Special

Historic small parks and gardens, containing a high proportion of mature and veteran trees.

The range of settlements and building styles, from sleepy coastal villages to Cranbrook new town.

Its unassuming but still attractive rural feel, particularly away from larger settlements and roads.

Its strong visual relationship with surrounding higher landscapes – the Lowland Plains LCT is often seen from above, and is also visually influenced by surrounding LCTs.



Lympstone Village, on the Exe Estuary



Ancient and veteran parkland trees at Bishop's Court in the Clyst Valley

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Cranbrook New Town, with direct influences from building, but also more subtle landscape changes, such as road/ junction upgrades, and impacts of recreation on formerly rural valleys.
- Local impacts of infrastructure, including motorways, roads, pylons, airport and warehousing.
- A concentration of renewable energy schemes, including solar farms (some seen from surrounding high land), biogas plants and associated biomass crops (specifically maize).
- Increased signage along main roads, creating a more urban-fringe feel, particularly on approaches to Exeter.
- Ploughing of Scheduled Monument earthworks on farmland.
- Rise in intensive agriculture resulting in hedgerow and habitat loss.
- Loss of orchards – formerly a traditional land use in this area.
- Poor water quality due to intensive agricultural use.

Future forces for change

- Continued expansion of residential, industrial & infrastructure development, particularly within Greater Exeter Strategic Plan area, and development pressure along A303 and A3052 corridors.
- Continued increase in light and noise pollution from new developments and transport links.
- Increased recreation pressure as the local population grows.
- Unknown landscape impacts of future changes to agricultural funding and policy.
- Continued decline in water quality and loss of landscape structure and habitats.
- Ash dieback disease affecting hedgerow trees and woodlands.
- Climate change, potentially affecting tree species, water supplies and crop choices.
- Future tree loss may affect opportunities for shaded recreation, potentially impacting health and wellbeing.

Landscape Aims

In parts of the LCT affected by development or where development is planned, the existing landscape structure and character should be assessed in terms of its value, susceptibility to change & condition. Landscape features worth of retention can help to create high quality, distinctive and functional places, and opportunities should be taken to include these within Green Infrastructure for new built development, and allow for their ongoing management. Elsewhere, the strongly-rural character should be retained. Throughout the LCT, habitats should be enhanced and settlements should retain their distinctive characters.



Cranbrook New Town



Traditional orchard, near Whimple



Anaerobic digester near Aunk.

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- The individual characters of villages and their settings.
- The strongly-rural character which survives in parts of this LCT, particularly further away from Exeter.
- Surviving archaeological sites.

Manage

- Hedgerows, particularly elm hedges, to help their survival in the face of Dutch Elm disease. Encourage maintenance and planting of hedgerow oaks.
- If necessary, replace lost ash trees, using [best practice guidance](#) to identify locally-appropriate species.
- Historic parkland and associated veteran trees, producing Parkland Management Plans where necessary, and planting new specimen trees to ensure their continued presence in the landscape. Support the 'Great Trees in the Clyst Valley' project.
- Traditional orchards, extending them where possible and promoting use of local or other native varieties.
- Farmland, promoting field edge habitats and connecting grassland and woodland pockets.

Plan

- Guide large-scale development towards areas with existing access and infrastructure.
- Use the existing landscape structure as the basis for Green Infrastructure and access enhancements, including the proposed Clyst Valley Regional Park. Where possible, use the relatively flat terrain to enable disabled access to the countryside.
- Allow landscape spaces within and around new developments to benefit people, wildlife and the appearance of new development.

- Where new development is occurring/ planned, integrate it into the existing landscape structure of trees, woodland and hedgerows, to create distinctive and attractive places to live.
- Ameliorate impacts of potential future tree loss, including on recreation sites/routes, to enable continued provision for shaded recreation.
- Consider how proposed developments will appear when viewed from surrounding higher land.
- Prevent linear spread of development along roads where possible.
- Limit unnecessary signage, particularly along rural roads and approaching settlements.
- Allow any new development in villages to respond to locally-distinctive features, building materials etc. to retain the diversity of building and settlement characteristics across the LCT. Pay particular attention to distinctive village approaches and gateways.
- Take account of the area's role as a setting to the AONBs, and its areas of surviving strong rural character.
- Develop catchment-wide management plans (with integrated Green Infrastructure) to improve water quality in rivers and streams.

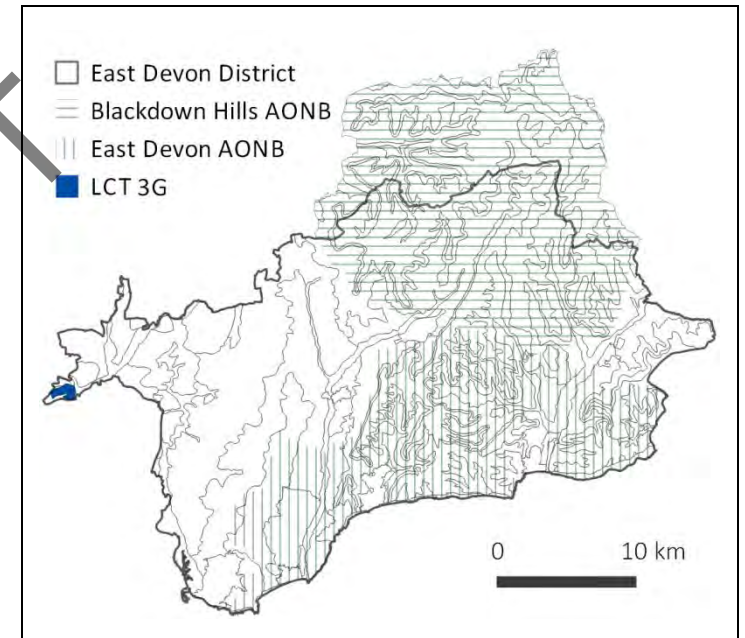


LCT 3G: River Valley Slopes and Combes

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Exeter Slopes and Hills



A typical view across the LCT 3G in the Star Barton Brook Valley,
Exeter Slopes and Hills Devon Character Area



Description

This LCT occurs in a small part of the Study Area north-west of Exeter. It contains steeply sloping valleys, with blocks of woodland and meadows. It feels enclosed and lush, and very tranquil away from the roads at the periphery, particularly because access is limited to farm tracks. There are fast-flowing streams in the valley bottoms, and some small fishing lakes along the Star Barton Brook. Settlement comprises scattered farms and small clusters of houses by the main road at the periphery of the LCT. This is an historic landscape, with a surviving pattern of Barton Fields – semi-regular fields thought to date from the 15th - 18th Centuries associated with Star Barton Farm. There is also an earthwork enclosure which has been provisionally identified as a medieval moated site.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **High slopes often forming undulating or rounded hillforms to either side of small narrow valleys.**
- **Broadleaved woodland found on lower slopes, often in discrete small woods or extending to water's edge.**
- **Pastoral** and arable **cultivation in semi-regular small to medium scale fields, with hedgerows and localised market gardening** at the periphery of the area.
- Limited **recreational land use** in the form of pony paddocks and fishing lakes.
- Semi-natural habitats include deciduous woodland, streams, lakes and hedgerows.
- Historic farmsteads and associated Barton field systems. Substantial earthwork thought to be a medieval moated site.
- **Scattering of hamlets or farmsteads**, including historic Barton farm, and cluster of houses near main road at periphery.
- **Sparse road network** within the LCT, although A377 runs along eastern edge. Occasional farm tracks within LCT, and no public rights of way.
- Feels enclosed and tranquil away from the main road, with a sense of changelessness.
- Seasonal changes in colour and texture due to farming patterns and the presence of deciduous woodland and trees.
- Occasional **extensive views** comprising long views out of the LCT along the Exe Valley.
- The LCT contributes to the north-west setting and approach to Exeter, including undeveloped skylines.

What Makes this Landscape Special

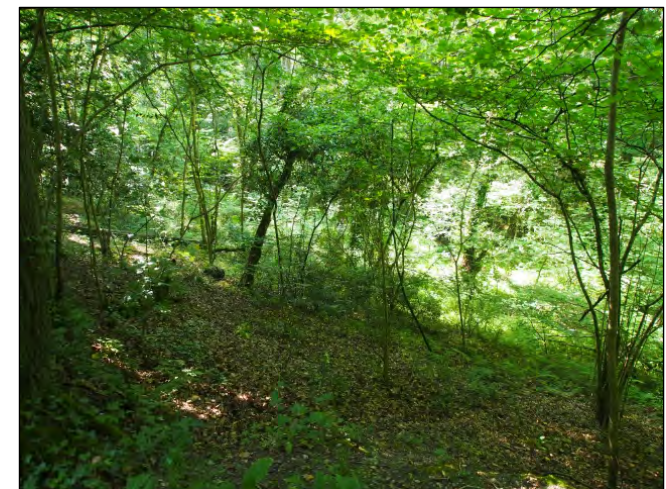
It comprises a largely intact historic landscape, with a pattern of farms, tracks and fields largely unchanged in several centuries.

The sense of peace, isolation and tranquillity, despite its proximity to Exeter.

It is a traditional Devon landscape, with seasonal variety of colours and textures, which contributes to the undeveloped setting of Exeter.



An unsurfaced track provides the only access into the LCT



Streamside woodland

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Creation of fishing lakes on the Star Barton Brook.
- Small blocks of conifer planting, now reaching maturity.
- Expansion of garden centres on former market garden sites.
- Woodland management may be affected by shooting interests.
- General decline in livestock (particularly dairy) farming in the area, removing the need to maintain stockproof hedgerows.
- Small-scale development on the periphery of the LCT (often well designed and discreetly sited).
- Glimpsed views to infrastructure outside the LCT.

Future forces for change

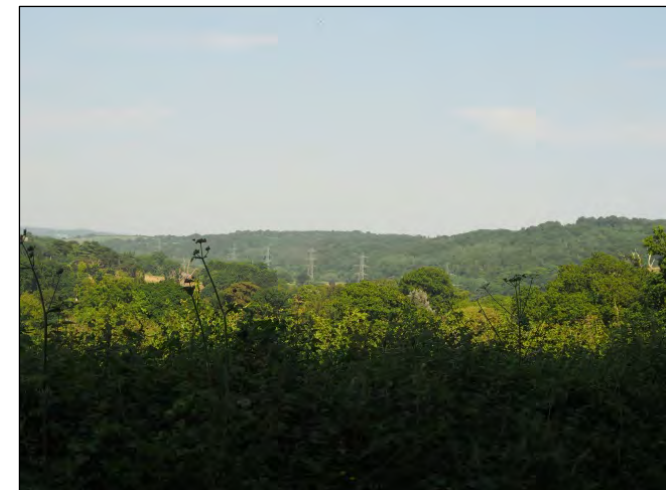
- Development pressure associated with the expansion of Exeter, especially on the periphery of the LCT close to the A377.
- Tree disease, including ash dieback, affecting woodlands and hedgerow trees.
- Risk of invasive species in watercourses.
- Unknown future changes to agricultural grants and policies are likely to impact on farming practices and woodland management.
- Demand for larger and more visually-intrusive farm buildings.
- Increased recreation pressure, particularly as local populations expand.
- Climate change, which is likely to result in increased intensity and frequency of storms, leading to flash flooding, changes in tree species, and changes in agricultural practices and crop choices.

Landscape Aims

The undeveloped character of the landscape, and its sense of isolation, should be protected. The biodiversity of woodland, farmland and watercourses should be enhanced through holistic management. The historic fabric of the landscape, including field patterns, should be retained, but there may also be opportunities for positive change, such as the planting of new trees and woodlands, and enhanced recreational access to the countryside.



Fishing lakes on the Star Barton Brook



Pylons in the Exe Valley, as seen from the LCT.

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Archaeological sites, supporting the geophysical survey of Scheduled Monument to increase understanding of the site.
- Historic field patterns.
- The sense of tranquillity and isolation.

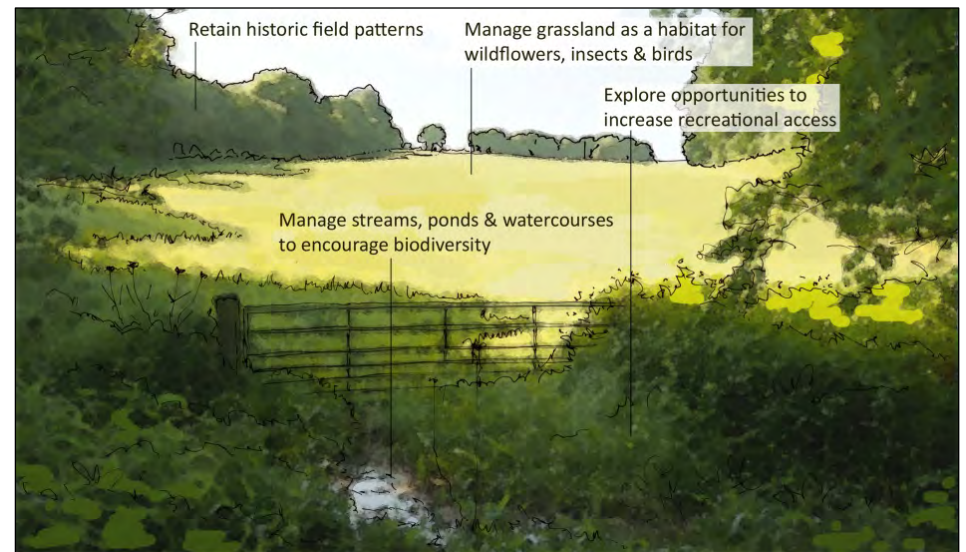
Manage

- Farmland, to retain landscape structure and enhance biodiversity. Include maintenance of hedgerows, replanting of hedgerow trees, and promoting grassland habitats along field edges.
- Any unimproved grassland, using an appropriate regime of grazing/ cutting to retain and increase its biodiversity of plant and insect species.
- Woodlands, aiming for a diversity of ages and species. Look for opportunities to link woodland habitats through enhanced hedgerows and tree belts. Where conifer blocks are reaching maturity, they should be replaced with broadleaved tree species. If necessary replace lost ash trees, using [best practice guidance](#) to identify locally-appropriate species.
- Shooting, promoting good practice to minimise biodiversity impacts on woodlands.
- Streams, ponds and watercourses, considering their potential role in reducing flooding downstream. Plant appropriate native riparian vegetation, and remove any invasive species.

Plan

- Retain the undeveloped character of the core of the LCT.
- If new development is proposed at the periphery, ensure that it is absorbed within the existing landscape structure of hedgerows, and enhance this structure if necessary.

- Any new development at the periphery should be in the context and scale of existing buildings.
- Consider the role of this LCT as part of the rural setting and approach to Exeter.
- Explore opportunities to increase woodland cover where this can be done without loss of unimproved grassland.
- Explore opportunities for recreational access, including new footpaths which enable people to enjoy this attractive countryside close to the city.
- Resist development of buildings or other structures which would be seen against the undeveloped skyline of the LCT.

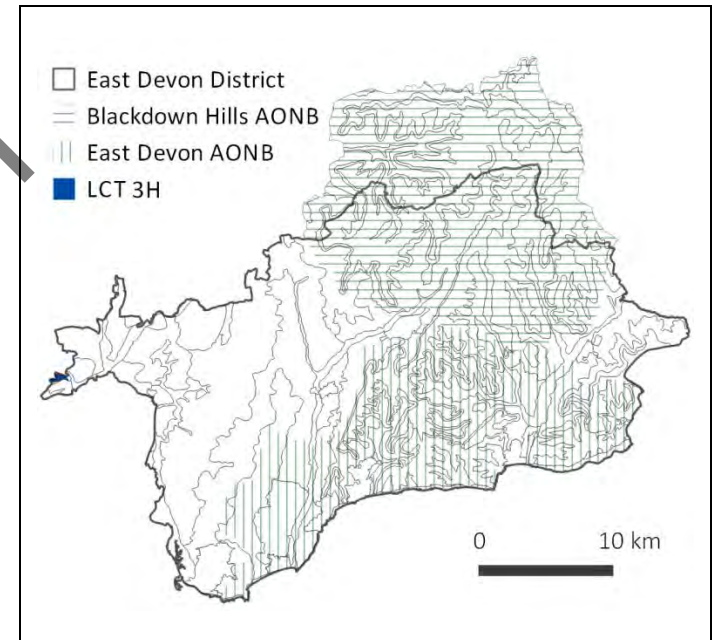


LCT 3H: Secluded Valleys

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Exeter Slopes and Hills



A typical view within the LCT 3H in the Duryard Brook Valley, Exeter Slopes and Hills Devon Character Area



Description

This LCT occurs in a very small area in the far west of the Study Area, north-west of Exeter. It is unsettled, and a farm track provides the only access. The LCT comprises a steep-sided valley and contains a mosaic of habitats including meadows, wet ground, woodland (some ancient) and a stream. The sinuous, tree-lined Duryard Brook runs along the valley floor. The inaccessibility of the LCT means that it has a strong sense of tranquillity, and there is also a strong sense of enclosure and seclusion, because the steep topography blocks views out of the valley. The LCT contributes to the rural setting and approach to Exeter, particularly the ridge along the northern edge of the LCT.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Steep valley landform with narrow valley floor.** Slopes are convex at the top and concave at the base.
- Deciduous woodland blocks on steep valley sides, including ancient woodland at Duryardwood Copse. Also hedgerow and riparian trees which add to the well-treed appearance of the landscape.
- Predominantly pastoral farmland and woodland, with irregular, medium-sized fields divided by thick hedgerows.
- Semi-natural habitats include **damp, species-rich fields, small streams, overhanging trees and small woodlands** (including oak-dominated ancient woodland).
- Ford over Duryardwood Brook.
- Unsettled within the LCT, although there are scattered farms/ dwellings just beyond the LCT boundary.
- Largely inaccessible, with only one private farm track through the LCT, and a public footpath along the northern boundary.
- **Topography helps to enclose and separate these areas from the wider landscape.**
- **Secluded character**, with a tranquil and secretive feel.
- Seasonal variations in colour and texture from the deciduous woodland and hedgerows.
- The LCT contributes to the north-west setting and approach to Exeter, including undeveloped ridgeline along northern edge.



The LCT as glimpsed from the valley to the south.



Duryardwood Copse ancient woodland

What Makes this Landscape Special

A mosaic of habitats, including species-rich ancient woodland, streams, wet grassland, pasture and hedgerows.

The sense of tranquillity and seclusion (enhanced by topography and inaccessibility) despite its proximity to Exeter.

Its role in the setting and approach to Exeter, particularly the undeveloped ridge which forms the northern boundary of the LCT.

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Woodland management may be affected by shooting interests.
- General decline in traditional woodland management such as coppicing, affecting the structure, age and species mix of woodlands.
- General decline in livestock (particularly dairy) farming in the area, potentially removing the need to maintain stockproof hedgerows.
- Tree loss to the north of Duryardwood Copse.

Future forces for change

- Development pressure associated with the expansion of Exeter, especially to the east of the LCT close to the A377.
- Tree disease, including ash dieback, affecting woodlands and hedgerow trees.
- Risk of invasive species in watercourses.
- Farming practices potentially impacting on water quality downstream.
- Unknown future changes to agricultural grants and policies are likely to impact on farming practices and woodland management.
- Demand for larger and more visually-intrusive farm buildings.
- Climate change, which is likely to result in increased intensity and frequency of storms, leading to flash flooding, changes in tree species, and changes in agricultural practices and crop choices.

Landscape Aims

The mosaic of habitats, including woodlands, wet pasture, meadows, hedgerows and streams should be maintained, as the inaccessibility of the landscape means wildlife is undisturbed. Woodland should be actively managed to promote age and species diversity. This is particularly important in the species-rich ancient woodland in order to protect this important habitat. The isolated and unsettled feel of the LCT should be retained, and it should continue to contribute to Exeter's rural and undeveloped setting and approach.

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

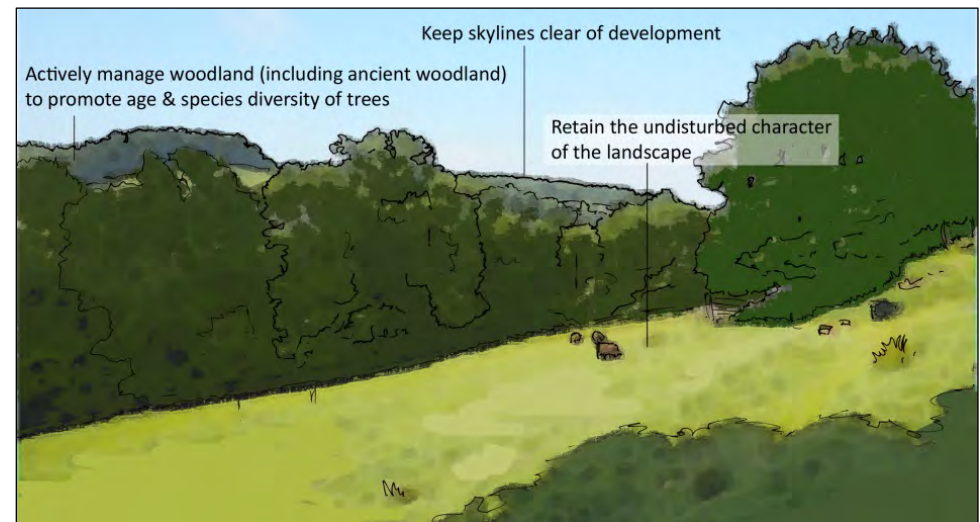
- The area's secretive and isolated feel, and its sense of tranquillity.

Manage

- Farmland, to retain landscape structure and enhance biodiversity. Include maintenance of hedgerows, replanting of hedgerow trees, linking woodland habitats.
- Any unimproved / wet grassland, using an appropriate regime of grazing/ cutting to retain and increase its biodiversity of plant and insect species.
- Woodlands, including ancient woodland. Where possible, consider traditional woodland management such as coppicing to enhance age and species diversity. When replanting, use native seed if possible. If necessary replace lost ash trees, using [best practice guidance](#) to identify locally-appropriate species.
- Shooting, promoting good practice to minimise biodiversity impacts on woodlands.
- Streams and watercourses, considering their potential role in reducing flooding downstream. Plant appropriate native riparian vegetation, and remove any invasive species.

Plan

- Retain the undeveloped character of the LCT.
- If new development is proposed beyond the LCT which may impact on it, provide appropriate native tree screening if the existing landscape structure of hedgerows and trees is not sufficient.
- Consider the role of this LCT as part of the rural setting and approach to Exeter.
- Resist development of buildings or other structures which would be seen against the undeveloped skyline of the LCT.
- Explore opportunities to increase woodland cover where this can be done without loss of unimproved grassland.
- Discourage public access into the LCT, so that it can continue to be a haven for wildlife which can remain undisturbed.

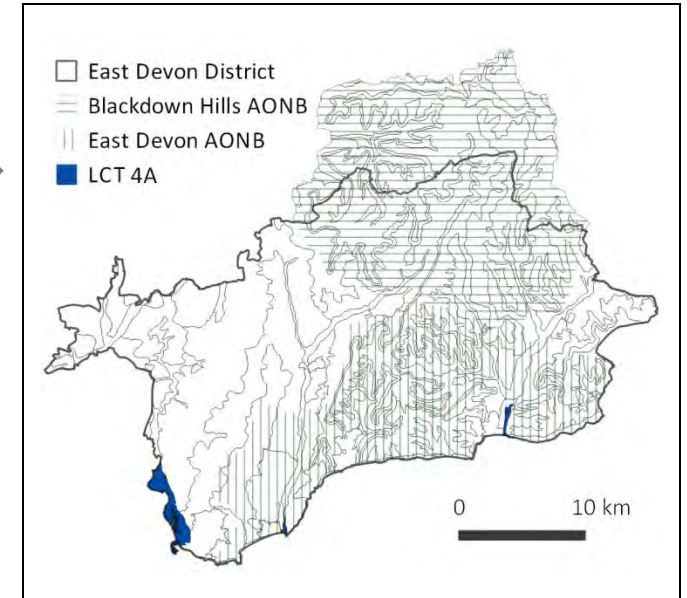


LCT 4A: Estuaries

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Exe Estuary and Farmlands



A typical view across LCT 4A, looking south along the Exe Estuary from Exton Station.
Exe Estuary and Farmlands Devon Character Area.



Description

This LCT occurs in the south and south-west of the Study Area and is associated with the Exe, Axe and Otter Estuaries. It comprises the open water, channels and intertidal zones associated with river mouths. Intertidal mudflats, sand and saltmarsh provide a range of habitats for wading birds, and the Exe Estuary is internationally designated for its nature conservation importance. This is a dynamic landscape, with its appearance constantly changing with tides, weather and seasons. It has a peaceful and expansive feel, with the broad, flat estuaries framed by the rising land on either side, and reflecting the colours of the wide skies above. Its scale is relatively large, and its character is influenced by the surrounding higher land. The Estuaries have a strongly coastal feel, both visually and due to other perceptual qualities such as the smell of the sea and sounds of seabirds. The LCT itself is unsettled, although there are adjacent settlements on the shores of the estuaries. There are few roads or rights of way within the LCT, but footpaths, railway lines and the Seaton tramway follow the shoreline and have views across the estuaries.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- Estuaries opening out onto south coast. **Covered with shallow water at high tide, with creeks and tidal rivers highly influenced by prevailing tidal condition.** Shingle spits/beaches at the mouths of the Axe and Otter estuaries.
- River channels can be narrow and shifting, with strong tidal flows.
- Areas defined by permanently dry land to east and west. Red sandstone headlands are distinctive features.
- No tree cover within LCT, although trees on headlands (including Estate planting) add to character.
- **Semi-natural habitats include extensive mudflats**, with areas of **sandbanks**, mudflats and saltmarsh, supporting a range of wildlife.
- **Unsettled, but influenced by adjacent towns.**
- **Small quays and jetties found along the shoreline, often associated with settlements.** Adjacent railway/ tram lines and bridges.
- **Few roads or public rights of way within the LCT**, but South West Coast Path, cycle routes, Tramway & Exe Valley Railway line run adjacent. Exe is well-used for water-based recreation, with **majority of boat traffic comprising small recreational boats**
- **Mainly tranquil away from major settlements, with strong sensory characteristics.** Distinctive views of Exe from trains and stations.
- **An open and expensive landscape, with large skies.** Church towers (particularly at Exmouth) are skyline features.

What Makes this Landscape Special

A range of intertidal habitats (some internationally designated for their conservation importance), including mudflats, saltmarsh and sandbanks, supporting major populations of wading birds and rare plants and flowers.

It forms a visual focus for surrounding settlements and LCTs, and is a highly valued and visually attractive landscape. It also contributes to the setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

Its recreational importance, including water-based recreation, footpaths, trails, trains, trams and local nature reserves, which enable people to see, engage with and explore this landscape.

Its dynamic character, constantly changing in response to changing tides, weather and season.



The Otter Estuary, with pine trees planted by the Bickton Estate providing skyline features and interesting reflections



The Axe Estuary at Seaton.

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Coastal erosion of beaches, headlands and banks.
- Coastal flooding, threatening properties, farmland and footpaths.
- Poor water quality, resulting from both agricultural practices and discharge into rivers.
- Issues with invasive species which spread along river channels. This is a particular problem in rivers with large catchments which are therefore difficult to regulate.
- Impacts of recreation, including disturbance of birds by walkers and boaters.
- Adjacent urban development (particularly in the Axe Estuary) affecting character.
- Changes in character of adjacent landscapes (e.g. tree loss) affecting views from the estuaries.

Future forces for change

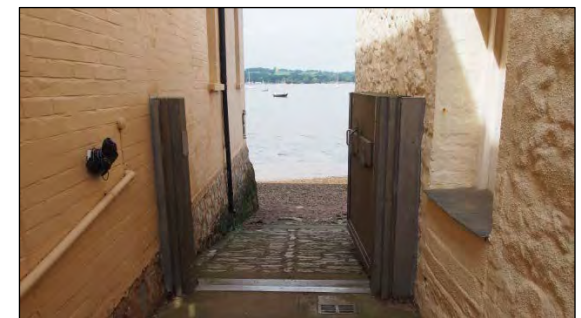
- Increased rates of coastal erosion due to effects of climate change, including sea level rise, and more violent storms.
- Increased riverine and coastal flooding due to climate change and associated sea level rise. Risk of failure of embankments in the Otter Estuary.
- Waterside development at mouth of Axe (townhouses) will impact on character of the estuary.
- Continued settlement expansion adjacent to the estuaries changing their context and character.
- Demand for visually-intrusive flood barriers and coastal defences.
- Positive management changes through active management and larger-scale change, e.g. the Lower Otter Restoration Project, which aims to restore the valley closer to its natural state, enhance wildlife habitats and to retain public access.
- Positive management following designation of the Axe and Otter Estuaries as Marine Conservation Zones, and implementation of the Exe Estuary Management Plan.

Landscape Aims

The Estuaries should be managed in a holistic way, balancing the requirements of nature conservation and recreation, and making them more resilient to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise. Their settings should be enhanced, and habitats expanded where possible.



Rock armour protecting eroding headland, Exe Estuary



Discreet flood gates protecting properties at Lymptone



Proposed waterfront development, Axe Estuary

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Distinctive skyline features which contribute to the setting and character of the Estuaries, (for example Exmouth church tower, and the pine trees on the eastern side of the Otter Estuary).
- Intertidal habitats (e.g. saltmarsh, mudflats, sandbanks) many of which are nationally/ internationally designated for their wildlife conservation importance.
- The setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

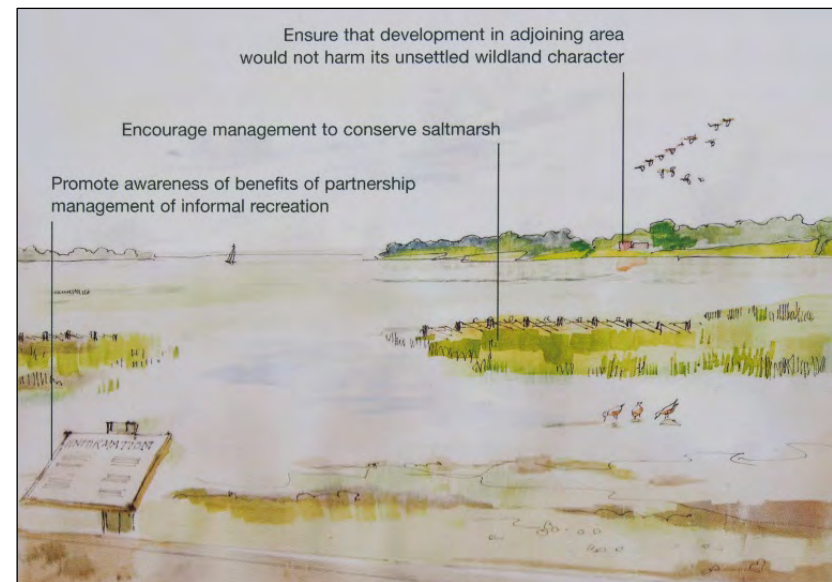
Manage

- Habitats, in accordance with *SSSI Management Plans*, the *Exe Estuary Management Plan* and *Marine Conservation Area Management Plans*.
- Recreation, zoning where necessary to protect the most sensitive nature conservation sites (in accordance with Management Plans). Follow guidance from the Exe Estuary Partnership regarding bait collecting; dog walking; Personal Water Craft; shore use and water use.
- Footpaths and trails along the margins of the estuaries, providing interpretation where appropriate. Encourage disabled access on paths over flat terrain, and minimise disturbance to fragile habitats.
- Surrounding farmland (in other LCTs) to improve water quality and minimise the spread of invasive species along watercourses.

Plan

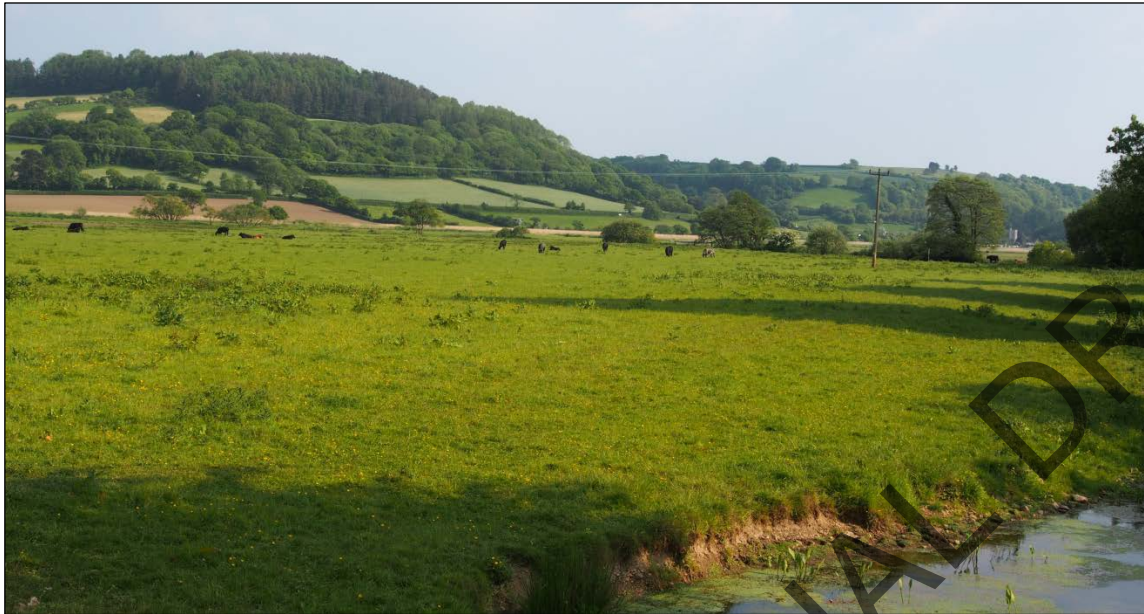
- Retain the inherently unsettled and open character of the LCT.
- Avoid expansion of development in surrounding settlements which will have a negative impact on views of/ from the Estuaries.
- Consider the landscape impacts of flood barriers and coastal defences, and work with engineers where necessary to develop schemes which are as sensitive as possible to their location.

- Promote sustainable leisure and recreation facilities where appropriate, to enable people to see and access the LCT but without damaging fragile habitats.
- Support opportunities to re-naturalise the Otter Estuary, as set out in the *Lower Otter Restoration Plan*. Recommended measures impacting on this LCT include removal of river embankment to reconnect the river with its floodplain, expansion of estuarine habitats, protection of paths against flooding, and new footbridges.
- Develop catchment-wide measures to improve water quality through minimisation of agricultural pollution.
- Encourage underwater archaeology within the estuaries, and along riverbanks, to increase understanding of historic land/river uses and to prevent loss of archaeological heritage through dredging or erosion.
- Refer to relevant Objectives, Policies and Aims in the South Marine Plan.



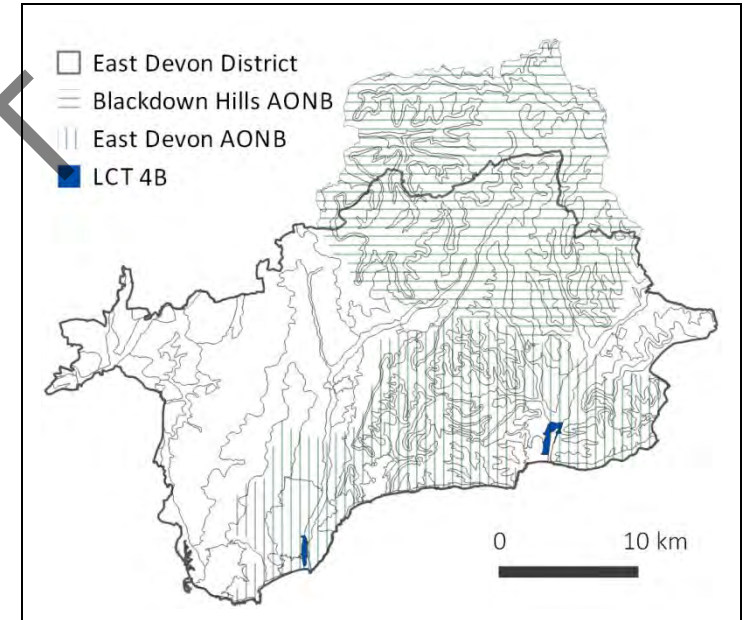
LCT 4B: Marine Levels and Coastal Plains

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Axe Valley; Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau



A typical view across LCT 4B in the Axe Valley

Axe Valley Devon Character Area



Description

This coastal LCT occurs towards the mouths of the rivers Axe and Otter, and is associated with the Axe and Otter Estuaries. It contains wetlands and reclaimed farmlands which are influenced by marine characteristics, but today are not generally affected by tidal changes. Saline influence limits agricultural cultivation and settlement, so the landscape has an open and unsettled feel. Valuable wildlife habitats include ditches, grazing marsh, open water and reedbeds. Nature reserves and paths offer public access, and the landscape can also be enjoyed from the Seaton Electric Tramway. Although it is relatively small in area, it is a highly distinctive landscape often strongly influenced by adjacent estuaries and changing with weather, light and tides. Its strong sense of place is enhanced by awareness of the sea in sights, sounds and smells. The surrounding higher landscapes (for example the wooded hill on the eastern side of the Axe, and the pine-clad sandstone headland at Budleigh Salterton) contribute to its character.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Flat land** and open water **within a floodplain, based on alluvial or tidal deposits**, and containing some reclaimed farmland in areas formerly estuary.
- **Vegetation influenced by coastal conditions, with some hedges but limited tree cover.**
- **Largely unenclosed**, with some pasture on reclaimed grazing marsh divided by ditches. Extensive informal recreational use, including nature reserves.
- **Habitats of national importance include coastal grasslands, reedbeds, open water and grazing marsh.**
- Non-designated archaeological sites including lime kilns, former ports (e.g. East Budleigh) and medieval saltworking sites. .
- **Largely unsettled**, due to flooding.
- No roads within the LCT, although some run along the periphery. Recreational routes include the South West Coast Path, and Seaton Electric Tramway. Evidence of historic use for water transport.
- Parts are exceptionally tranquil, however, in some locations, **the proximity of roads and settlements in adjoining areas reduces tranquillity.**
- **Strong sensory characteristics: colour and texture of marshes, reeds and water, smell of water, nearby saltmarsh and mudflats, sound of birdcalls, reflecting sunlight and seasonal inundation.**
- **Flat, expansive landscape with a feeling of space and long views**, especially along valleys.

What Makes this Landscape Special

A rich mosaic of coastal/ wetland habitats with a high conservation value, including relatively rare habitats such as grazing marsh.

A unique and distinctive unsettled landscape with a strong sense of place. This is enhanced by the perceptual qualities of sights, sounds and smells. The adjacent LCTs which form its setting enhance its character, and this LCT also contributes to the setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

A landscape popular for recreation which can be accessed and enjoyed. The footpath alongside the Otter between Budleigh Salterton and Otterton is one of the most popular in the County.



Reed-fringed ditches separating fields of reclaimed farmland in the Otter Valley. Note Bicton Estate planting on the river-cliff and horizon.



Seaton Marshes Nature Reserve in the Axe Valley

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Reclamation of estuaries for farmland in the 18th / 19th Century.
- Use of land in Otter Valley for municipal tip in the 20th Century.
- Recent and ongoing development on the Axe Valley coastal plain at Seaton.
- Adjacent development and roads impacting on character and tranquillity.
- Positive management of the Axe Valley Nature Reserve and enhancement/ extension of coastal wetland habitats.
- Clearance of vegetation on former tip site, as part of the Otter Valley Restoration Plan.

Future forces for change

- Increased riverine and coastal flooding due to climate change and associated sea level rise. Risk of catastrophic failure of embankments in the Otter Estuary, potentially affecting farmland, footpath access, and the cricket club.
- Risk of increased salinisation of farmland as a result of sea level rise or breaches of sea defences.
- Positive management through the Lower Otter Restoration Project, which aims to remove artificial banks along the river, and allow natural floodplain processes and estuarine habitats in areas of current reclaimed farmland. Public access routes would also be protected.
- Continued expansion of wetland habitats and visitor facilities in nature reserve sites in the Axe Valley.

Landscape Aims

Opportunities should be sought to enhance the biodiversity, natural floodplain function and recreational potential of this LCT. This should be achieved through expansion of neighbouring estuarine and/ or wetland habitats where appropriate, along with traditional management of grazing land and improved sustainable access routes. The current unsettled and open character of the landscape should be retained. Adjacent development should not be detrimental to the character of the LCT, and its distinctive settings should be protected.



Site of former municipal tip, Otter Valley



New development on former coastal plain at Seaton (now classified as 'urban')



Area of the Lower Otter Restoration Project

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Historic sites, e.g. military structures and historic transport sites, even if undesignated. These should include maritime sites associated with river transport.
- Distinctive settings which contribute to the character of the LCT, including wooded valley sides and treed headlands.
- The setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

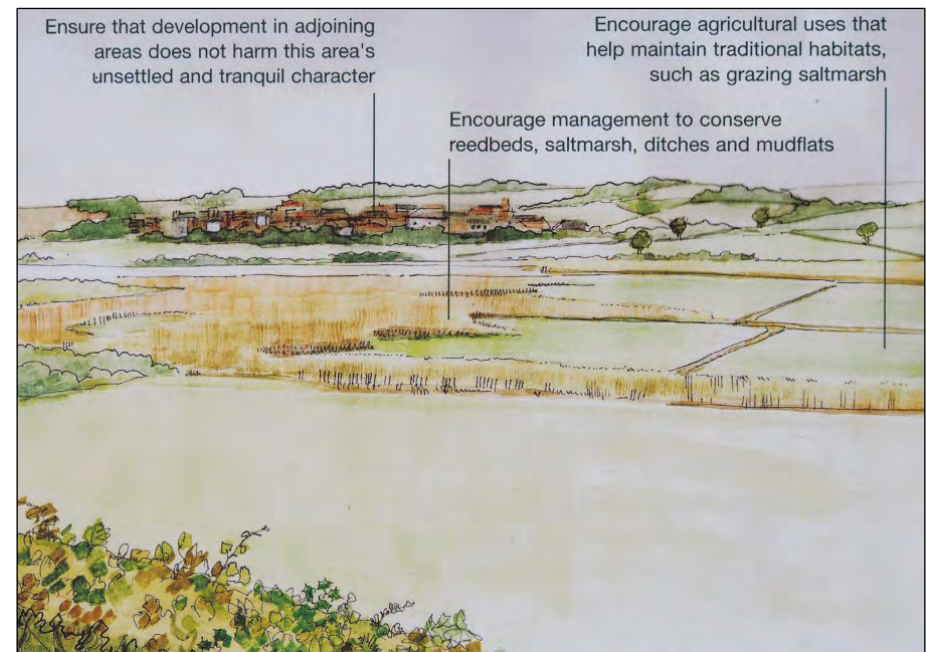
Manage

- Farmland, using traditional management of grazing marshes, and maintaining ditches which act as field boundaries.
- Wetland and reedbed habitats to encourage wildlife diversity. Encourage expansion of adjacent estuarine habitats into this LCT where possible.
- Waterways, controlling Himalayan balsam and other non-native invasive species.
- Footpaths and trails, promoting disabled access where terrain permits. Encourage improved public access into the lower parts of the Axe Valley, potentially connecting Nature Reserve sites and reducing dependency on car use.

Plan

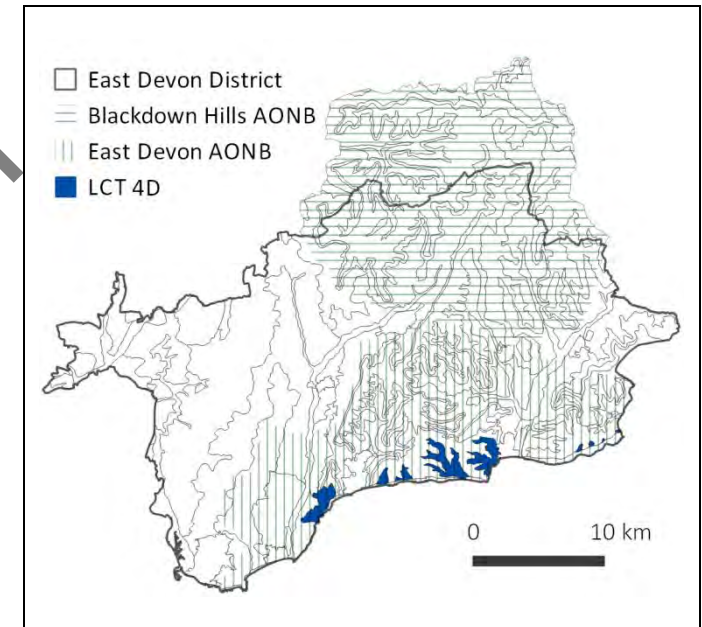
- Retain the currently undeveloped and open character of this LCT.
- Ensure that development in adjoining settlements and LCTs does not affect the unsettled and open character of the Marine levels and coastal plains.
- Where development has occurred on the periphery of the LCT, create a strong planted edge between the LCT and adjacent settlements.
- Enhance existing footpaths and routes, and add new links where possible to enable sustainable access into the heart of the LCT.

- Support opportunities to re-naturalise the Otter Estuary, as set out in the *Lower Otter Restoration Plan*. Recommended measures impacting on this LCT include removal of the river embankment to reconnect the river with its floodplain, expansion of estuarine habitats, protection of paths against flooding, new footbridges, and protection of the former municipal tip.
- Work with landowners/ managers within the LCT to identify means of reducing diffuse pollution into watercourses.
- Refer to relevant Objectives, Policies and Aims in the South Marine Plan.



LCT 4D: Coastal Slopes and Combes

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau



*A typical view across LCT 4D, looking up the Branscombe Valley from the lane to the beach.
Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau Devon Character Area*

Description
 This LCT occurs in the central coastal part of the Study Area. It comprises a series of incised branching valleys which run down to pebbly bays at the coast. Some combes contain historic settlements (e.g. Beer, Branscombe and Salcombe Regis) which have concentrations of attractive vernacular buildings within historic landscape settings. There is also often a tourism influence, particularly where there is access to the coast. Many valleys are narrow and steep, with well-wooded upper slopes and remnant orchards. Others are more gently sloping, with more scrubby, open character, especially along their upper boundaries. An irregular patchwork of hedged fields and woodland covers the sides of the combes, which are accessed by steep, narrow and sunken lanes. There are spectacular views from the tops of the valleys, and from High Peak, which is itself a landmark. The South West Coast Path connects the southern ends of the combes and provides exhilarating views of the combes and the coast.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Multiple branching valleys that can range from narrow and steep including scarp slopes to more open shallow systems.** Underlying Beer Limestone a highly-valued material for building and carving.
- **Broadleaved woodland, dominant in places,** particularly along valley tops and along watercourses. Occasional remnant orchards.
- Mix of unenclosed woodland **and small to medium irregular fields marked by low hedgebanks.** Mainly pasture, with pockets of wet pasture and scrub.
- Semi-natural habitats include grassland, woodland, scrub, wet pasture and caves.
- Long history of settlement, with surviving historic buildings, lanes and field patterns. Prehistoric and Roman finds on High Peak, landscaped as part of the Bicton Estate.
- **Old settlements in combes, with stone and locally flint as dominant building material.** Settlement pattern varies and includes dispersed and nucleated villages. Beer is an historic fishing village.
- **Extensive coastal rights of way** (including South West Coast Path) **with steep paths down to beaches. Narrow, winding roads and limited vehicle access to coast.**
- **Coastal influence in exposure, vegetation and extensive views. High, open and exhilarating on top slopes, grading to intimate and enclosed in lower valleys.**
- Sense of timelessness in parts, although also awareness of traffic and tourist influences, particularly in summer.
- Coastal views, with High Peak both a viewpoint and a focal point with artistic associations.

What Makes this Landscape Special

Awareness of landform and underlying geology, including Beer Limestone and flint seen in buildings and walls, and red sandstone seen in cliffs and road cuttings. Partly within Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, and containing extensive geological SSSIs which are also SAC bat habitats.

Attractive historic villages in combe floors, with buildings comfortably integrated into the landscape. A concentration of historic buildings, including houses, churches, inns, farms, fishing infrastructure and a forge, set within a landscape of winding lanes, medieval field patterns and dramatic cliffs.

Coastal views and character, appreciated by visitors and artists since the early C. 19th and contributing to the setting to the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.



Beer village, with fishing boats pulled up on the pebble beach



House built of Beer Limestone

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Tourism and recreation infrastructure (e.g. caravan sites; car parks) and associated signage, especially in coastal areas.
- Damage to banks and verges due to wide farm machinery, and traffic on narrow lanes (particularly during summer holiday season).
- Neglect of some historic buildings.
- Limestone quarrying, particularly around Beer.
- Coastal erosion and flooding, resulting in loss of coastal land, and the diversion of the South West Coast Path inland.
- Changing farming patterns, including a decline in small-scale dairy farming, reducing the need for pastoral fields and stockproof hedges. Loss of orchards.
- Loss of grassland due to encroachment by gorse and scrub, and decline in traditional woodland management.

Future forces for change

- Continued pressure from recreation and tourism development and infrastructure.
- Potential impacts from Coastal Change Management, including accommodating development at risk from coastal erosion.
- Spreading room associated with England Coast Path potentially resulting in land use change along clifftops.
- Unknown landscape impacts of future changes to agricultural and fisheries grants and policies.
- Increased frequency and intensity of coastal storms and flooding as a result of climate change, potentially affecting vegetation and land use choices, and increasing coastal erosion rates.
- Tree loss, with ash dieback a particular concern as there is a high proportion of ash in this LCT. Tree loss may also potentially affect shade for outdoor recreation.

Landscape Aims

Retain the distinctive local character of settlements, including the working fishing beach at Beer. The surrounding agricultural landscape, rich in history and biodiversity, should remain managed and valued. Recreation and tourism should be carefully accommodated so settlements can thrive, and people are able to enjoy the landscape, coast and views.



Coastal signage and other visual clutter



Fishing sheds, Beer



Coast Path at Branscombe.

(Photo credit: East Devon AONB)

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Historic buildings and their settings, with reference to National Trust Management Plans where relevant. Non-designated buildings are particularly vulnerable.
- The patchwork field patterns which provide the settings to villages.
- The High Peak skyline, as a local landmark and part of the designed landscape of the Bicton Estate.
- The setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

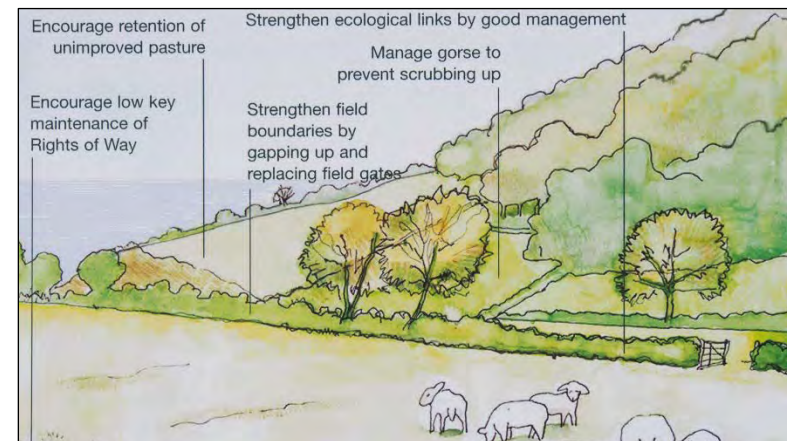
Manage

- Field boundaries to retain field patterns, including maintenance of earth banks and tree rows, gapping-up hedges and promoting traditional hedgerow management.
- Grassland, grazing or cutting prevent gorse and scrub encroachment.
- Woodland, aiming for diversity of age and species, and using local seed and traditional techniques such as coppicing where possible. Identify opportunities to link woodland areas using hedgerows, copses and tree belts which respect the landscape pattern. If necessary replace lost ash trees, using [best practice guidance](#) to identify locally-appropriate species.
- Surviving orchards, expanding them where possible.

Plan

- Retain the inherent pattern of sparse settlement.
- Any new development should be small in scale, and respect its context in terms of settlement form, building style, scale and materials. Existing settlement character varies across the LCT.
- Retain the positive relationship between buildings and topography, with buildings nestled in valley floors, and often constructed parallel to the contours. Retain the character of narrow lanes.

- Ensure tourism development is of appropriate scale and character, and does not impact negatively on the tranquillity or views of the adjacent Cliffs LCT.
- Resist expansion of coastal campsites which can be seen in coastal views, and encourage sites to enhance their landscape settings.
- If new agricultural buildings are required, ensure they are set low within the landscape, and are constructed of visually-recessive and non-reflective materials. Avoid lightspill from yards and buildings.
- Encourage Beer to remain a working fishing village, supporting the restoration and provision of fishing infrastructure.
- Work with quarry companies to develop management and restoration plans which enhance landscape character & biodiversity.
- Consider a summer 'park and ride' scheme to reduce tourist traffic on narrow roads into Beer.
- Consider circular footpath routes from villages and the South West Coast Path/ England Coast Path which enable people to explore the LCT without using cars.
- Refer to relevant Objectives, Policies and Aims in the South Marine Plan.

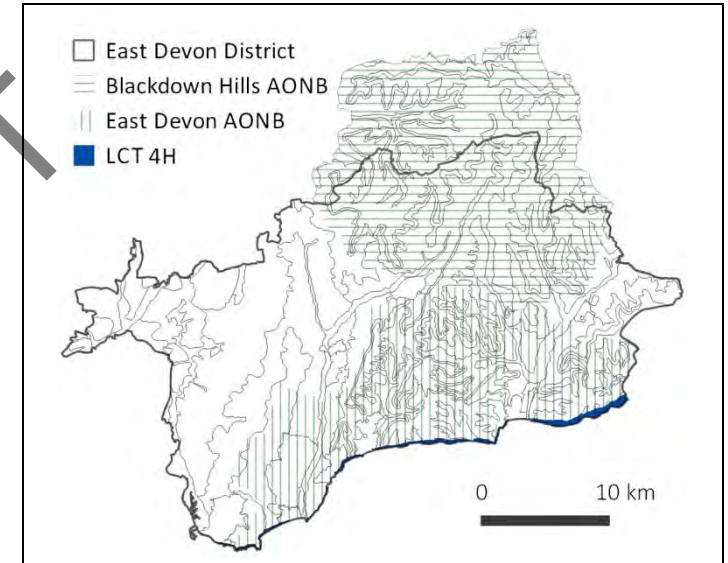


LCT 4H: Cliffs

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau



A typical view of LCT 4H, showing white limestone and red sandstone layers, looking east from Seaton beach. Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau Devon Character Area



Description

This dramatic, colourful and distinctive LCT occurs forms the coastal margin along the southern edge of the Study Area. It is one of the most easily recognised LCTs, and includes white limestone cliffs in the east and distinctive red sandstone cliffs and headlands in the west. In the central part, the cliffs are banded. It is of great geological significance, and within the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. Some sections of the cliffs are near-vertical, whilst other sections are slumped, or contain offshore rocks. Shingle beaches, in places steeply shelved, run at the base of the cliffs, with wave-graded pebbles and cobbles forming an important natural sea defence. Some stretches of the cliffs are vegetated, including by succulent non-native plants. Self-sown field-maple/ ash woodland has established on landslips at the eastern end of the study area, with a fern ground cover in darker parts. This is a rare example of a landscape where nature is in control. The cliffs are unsettled and dynamic, and exhibit a range of coastal processes. Access is limited to the South West Coast Path, which runs in an exposed location along the cliff tops and provides spectacular views of the cliffs and coast.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Steeply-sloping cliffs of varying heights, nearly vertical in places;** slopes shallower elsewhere due to landslips. **Narrow shingle beaches at base of cliffs.**
- A dynamic landscape, with **distinctive landforms and rock stratifications** related to limestone and sandstone geology which extends inland and out to sea.
- **Predominantly treeless,** although the eastern end of the study area is densely vegetated, with deciduous woodland and fern-rich groundcover.
- **Unenclosed,** with occasional surviving examples of undercliff 'platts' used for vegetable growing.
- **Cliff faces support important breeding colonies of seabirds,** and succulent plants. Local examples of extensively vegetated slumped landslips on lower half of cliff.
- Remains of prehistoric barrows on cliff tops, also industrial remains (e.g. limekilns) and military archaeology.
- **Unsettled**
- **Accessible only along cliff top** via South West Coast Path, **or in some places along beach.**
- **Extensive and sometimes wild, with dominant marine influence and high levels of tranquillity** and remoteness away from settlements.
- Strong influences of weather and season, and contrasting colours of white limestone and red sandstone.
- **Extensive and dramatic views along coastline** from cliff-top path, and associations with artists.

What Makes this Landscape Special

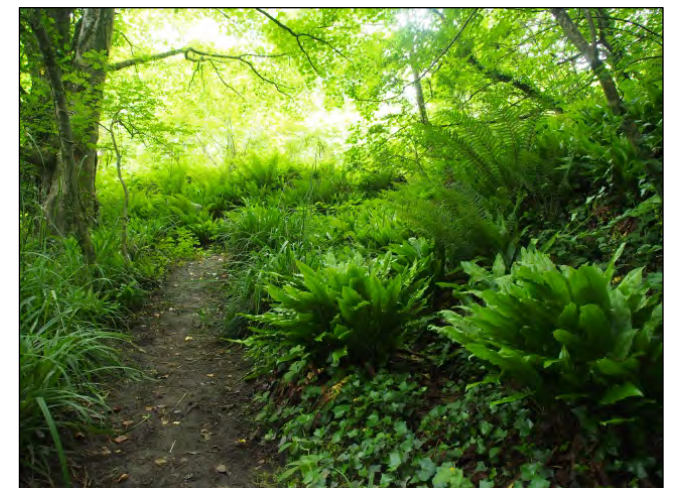
Outstanding examples of local geology, including stark white limestone in the east, red sandstone in the west, and pebble beds. Beer Head is the western extent of chalk cliffs in England. Relic and ongoing coastal formations and processes (including landslips) can be observed, along with fossils, and the LCT is within the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. The wilderness of the Axmouth-Lyme Regis undercliffs is a National Nature Reserve. Some cliffs are designated SSSI and SAC for their biodiversity and/or geodiversity.

The distinctive colours, shapes and skylines of cliffs form the settings to coastal towns. The dramatic seascapes and strong aesthetic appeal of the cliffs continue to inspire visitors and artists.

Valued for recreation, with the South West Coast Path the only access to some sections, and a strong sense of remoteness, tranquillity and awe.



High Peak, the Picket Rocks and the cliffs along the western side of Sidmouth Bay form the setting to Sidmouth.



Coastal oak woodland with fern groundcover growing on slumped cliffs near Lyme Regis

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Dynamic coastal processes, including landslips, beach movements, coastal erosion etc.
- Wear and tear on popular coastal footpaths.
- Settlement and development in adjoining LCTs (for example caravan parks) affecting views along the coast from within this LCT.
- Spreading of non-native vegetation.

Future forces for change

- Increased rates of coastal erosion due to effects of climate change, including sea level rise, and increased frequency and intensity of storms.
- Displacement of property and paths away from the edge of cliffs due to coastal erosion, and a resulting need to accommodate them further inland.
- Development may increase pressure for more coastal defences, impacting on natural processes and conservation of assets such as the SSSIs, SACs and WHS.
- Spreading room associated with the England Coast Path will potentially result in land use change along cliff tops.
- Impacts of currently unknown future changes to fisheries policies.

Landscape Aims

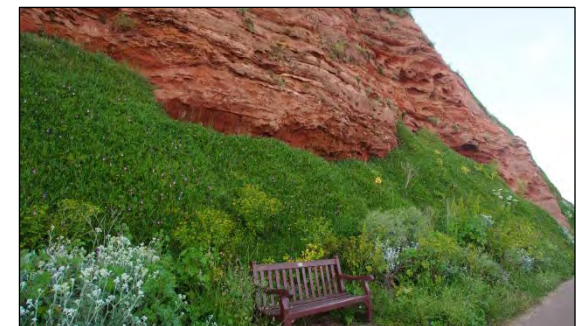
The natural and undeveloped feel of the coast, which is so highly valued, should be retained. This LCT should remain a place where it is possible to experience nature being in control. Where necessary, access to some areas should remain restricted in order for natural processes and habitats to thrive without disturbance. Elsewhere, the South West Coast Path/ England Coast Path should remain an opportunity to experience the coastal environment and appreciate its spectacular views and the associated sense of tranquillity and awe. The Outstanding Universal Value of the Jurassic Coast WHS should be protected, including allowing natural processes of erosion to continue.



Active coastal processes near Lyme Regis



Cliff erosion at High Peak, with rocks of eroded headland out to sea.



Non-native Hotentot fig on cliffs at Budleigh Salterton.

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- The undeveloped and tranquil character of much of the LCT.
- Archaeological sites, or where this is not possible due to ongoing coastal processes, record them.
- The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and the coastal processes which underpin its inscription.
- The distinctive settings to coastal settlements.

Manage

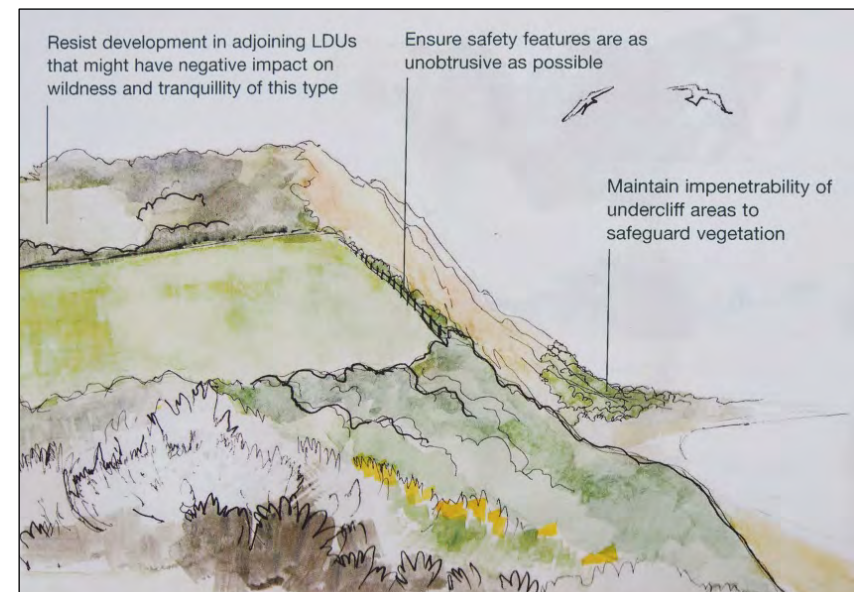
- South West Coast Path/ England Coast Path, ensuring that access and safety features are as unobtrusive as possible to avoid dilution of unspoilt character along cliff tops.
- Semi-natural habitats, including undisturbed undercliff vegetation. Refer to Undercliff National Nature Reserve Management Plan and SSSI Management Plans for detailed management recommendations.
- Manage in accordance with the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site Management Plan/ Partnership Plan.
- Public Access, restricting access where necessary to avoid disturbance of cliff habitats, as well as for safety reasons.

Plan

- Maintain the natural qualities of the coastline and resist future coastal development in this LCT or adjacent LCTs (such as caravan site expansion), and enable existing inappropriate development to relocate.
- Where appropriate (for example away from settlements), retain the LCT as a place where nature is in control.
- Educate the public regarding the coast's geology, geomorphology, archaeology and vegetation, but without encouraging inappropriate exploration.
- Refer to relevant Objectives, Policies and Aims in the South Marine Plan



South West Coast Path west of Lyme Regis

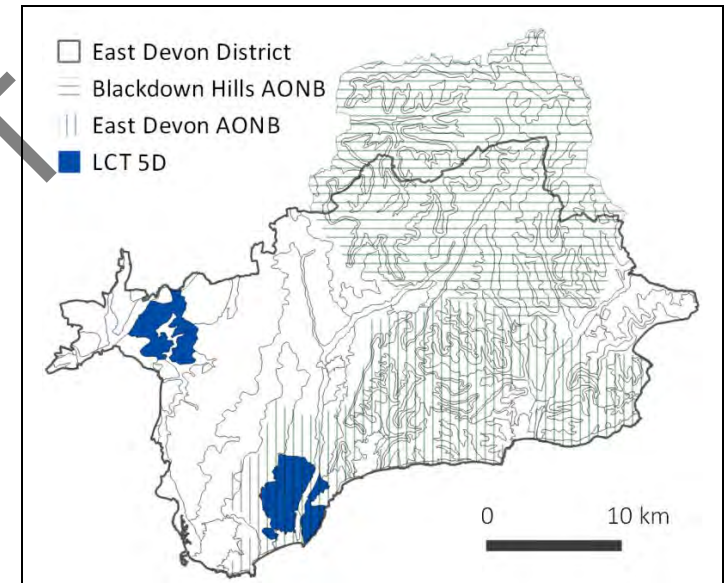


LCT 5D: Estate Wooded Farmland

Devon Character Areas containing this LCT: Clyst Lowland Farmlands; Pebble Bed Heaths and Farmland; Sidmouth and Lyme Bay Coastal Plateau



A typical view within LCT 5D from Killerton Park.
Clyst Lowland Farmlands Devon Character Area



Description

This LCT occurs in two blocks in the western part of the Study Area, and comprises the wider landscape setting of the Killerton and Bicton estates. It includes the land which formed the views from the main houses and gardens, and contains designed features such as parkland, obelisks, ornamental tree planting and estate cottages, as well as farmland and woodland. Such designed landscapes in the English Landscape Style contribute to the character of Devon. The Bicton area also encompasses the working elements of the estate, such as the sawmill (now industrial units). Much of the land around the Killerton Estate is owned by the National Trust, and includes the distinctive estate buildings, painted yellow ochre as seen in Broadclyst village. Bicton is the centre of Clinton Devon Estates, and also contributes to the setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. The Bicton estate villages of East Budleigh, Otterton and Colaton Raleigh do not have such a strong visual identity as those of Killerton, but are still very attractive, with rows of thatched cottages, and streams running alongside the village streets. The cores of both estates are Registered Historic Parks and Gardens and open to the public.

Key Characteristics

Note: **Bold** text indicates a Devon-wide characteristic. Not bold indicates a local characteristic

- **Rolling hills and ridges drained by frequent streams creating an undulating topography**
- **Well-wooded character, with frequent plantations, estate woodlands, historic woodpasture and conifer blocks.** Also ornamental tree planting.
- **Predominantly pastoral farmland, with areas of arable cultivation. Fields enclosed by wildflower-rich banks and mixed hedges. Some estate railings and walls.**
- **Grassland, ponds and valley mire, and bands of ancient woodland.**
- **Historic parkland, estates and manors influencing landscape character and creating strong sense of place.**
- **Nucleated historic hamlets and villages with square stone church towers forming local landmarks.** A range of materials and building styles, with distinctive yellow ochre estate villages around Killerton.
- **Winding rural roads bounded by Devon banks restricting views, crossing streams on stone bridges.** Network of green lanes around Bicton.
- **Strong sense of peace and tranquillity,** particularly away from the cores of estates. Around Bicton, pines have a sculptural quality against the skyline.
- Key views include those from the main houses and gardens. Some features (e.g. Bicton obelisk and Killerton cottages) are landmarks, whilst others are more subtle.

What Makes this Landscape Special

Landscapes which form the setting to substantial estates, and which were designed to be seen and enjoyed by the owners. Expansive views contained designed features which may be built (e.g. Bicton Obelisk) or planted (e.g. the sculptural pines on the ridge on the eastern side of the Otter Valley, part of a scheme to accentuate the surrounding horizons when seen from the carriage drive). Bicton Estate also contributes to the setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

A sense of a well-managed and working countryside, implying economic success as well as visual attractiveness.

Estate villages, including the distinctive yellow-ochre cottages seen at Broadclyst, and thatched cottages of East Budleigh and Otterton. Association with Sir Walter Raleigh at Bicton.



Hayes Barton, birthplace of Sir Walter Raleigh, on the Bicton Estate



Distinctive yellow ochre cottages associated with the Killerton Estate at Broadclyst

Forces for change acting on this LCT

Past and current forces for change

- Over-maturity of parkland trees, meaning that they are gradually being lost from the landscape. Sometimes these include rare specimens.
- Loss of wider estate planting (including ridge-top pines and river-cliff planting around Bicton) and a gradual loss of appreciation of historic views and viewpoints.
- Ploughing of parkland which has traditionally been grazed, changing the appearance of the landscape, and also increasing soil erosion by wind and water.
- Decline in traditional woodland management
- Changing farming practices, and loss of traditional farm buildings as they are expensive to maintain but no longer required for their original purposes.
- Adapting estates to accommodate increasing numbers of visitors and associated facilities.

Future forces for change

- Likely demand for larger farm buildings and other landscape changes to keep farming viable.
- Erosion of distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings.
- Positive changes from National Trust management at Killerton and Clinton Devon Estates at Bicton, including replanting of mature pines on the river cliff above the Otter, as seen from Budleigh Salterton.
- Tree disease impacting on a range of woodland and parkland trees, potentially reducing shade for recreational activities and routes.
- Impacts of climate change, including flooding, and tree loss from drought, storms and pests.
- Unknown impacts of future changes to agricultural grants and policies.

Landscape Aims

Historic estates and their settings, including planting schemes associated with the estate landscapes, should be celebrated and enhanced. Visitors should be welcomed and informed, but without visitor infrastructure becoming too dominant and impacting negatively on the character of the landscape or the setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. The estate landscapes should retain a working feel, with farms supported, and encouraged to improve biodiversity and habitat resilience. The distinctive character of the estate villages should be retained and enhanced.



Over-mature / diseased pines within Estate planting



Ploughed and intensively farmed former parkland



Modern wall using traditional materials and techniques, Colaton Raleigh, near Bicton

Landscape Guidelines

Protect

- Key historic views from properties, gardens, carriage drives and public viewing points such as roads and footpaths.
- Skylines, through resisting development which will appear on horizons, and by managing/ replacing historic planting schemes.
- Estate features such as the Bicton Obelisk, which is both a feature of designed views from the gardens, and a local landmark.
- The very distinctive character of some estate villages.
- The setting of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

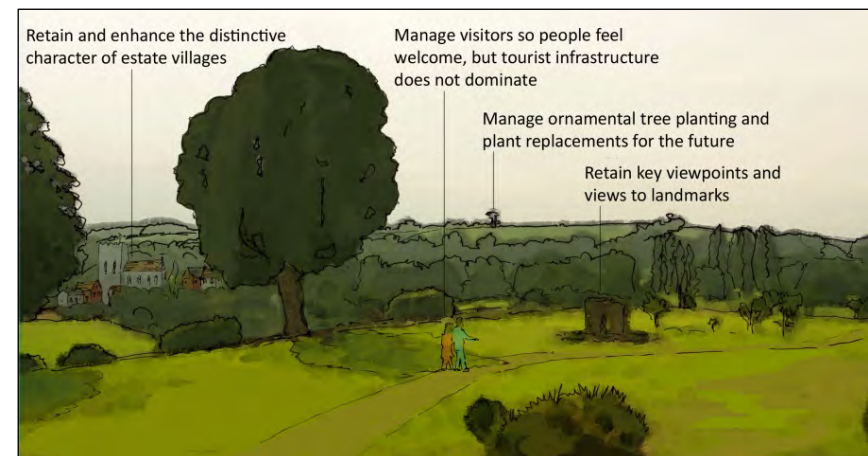
Manage

- Ornamental tree planting, continuing to plant replacements for the future (e.g. Budleigh Salterton Headland; the planted river cliff alongside the Otter).
- Viewpoints, opening up secondary vegetation where necessary so views can be appreciated.
- Historic parkland, replacing specimen trees to ensure their continued appearance in the landscape. Where parkland has been ploughed and there is no option to return it to pasture, consider planting hedgerows/ hedgebanks to minimise soil loss through erosion and to increase habitat connectivity.
- Woodlands, aiming for age and species diversity, except where use of a particular species was key to the original planting plan. Use traditional techniques such as coppicing where possible.
- Consider replacing lost ash with locally-appropriate alternatives using [best practice guidance](#) to identify suitable species.
- Farmland, including hedgerows/ hedgebanks to maintain landscape structure. Identify opportunities to increase habitat connectivity though linking woodland and grassland areas using field margins.

- Visitors, to minimise damage to paths, archaeological and nature conservation sites, whilst still enabling people to enjoy the landscape
- The estate landscapes in accordance with Management Plans produced by the National Trust / Clinton Devon Estates.

Plan

- New buildings should be sympathetic to existing buildings (for example in terms of scale and materials) but not necessarily a pastiche.
- Where new farm buildings are required, they should be very carefully sited and designed to minimise their visual impact on the wider landscape. For example, they should not be sited on ridgelines or prominent slopes, and should use visually-recessive and non-reflective materials.
- Identify opportunities to inform local people and the wider public of the history and importance of the estate landscapes, and to explain why trees and other features were located in particular places.
- Ensure that visitor infrastructure remains subordinate to the wider landscapes of the estates.
- Ameliorate impacts of future tree loss, including on recreation sites/routes.





The Corry Brook Valley from Danes Hill, Blackdown Hills DCA; Wooded Ridges and Hilltops LCT



Traditional orchard near Whimble, Clyst Lowland Farmlands DCA; Lowland Plains LCT

Appendices



Appendix A: List of acronyms and glossary of technical terms

AONB Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

DCA Devon Character Area

EDDC East Devon District Council

GI Green Infrastructure

GIS Geographic Information System

HER Historic Environment Record

LCA Landscape Character Area

LCT Landscape Character Type

MCZ Marine Conservation Zone

MMO Marine Management Organisation

NCA National Character Area

NFM Natural Flood Management

NNR National Nature Reserve

SSSI Site of Special Scientific Interest

SAC Special Area of Conservation

SANG Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace

SPA Special Protection Area

SWCP South West Coast Path

WHS World Heritage Site

Ancient tree A tree which, because of its great age, size or condition is of exceptional value for wildlife, in the landscape, or culturally.

Alluvium Material deposited by a river

Ancient woodland An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600AD.

Ash die-back Disease affecting ash trees (also called Chalara) caused by the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*

Barrow A mound of earth or stones, usually covering a burial or burials.

Biodiversity The variety of life, including all habitats and species

Bronze Age Archaeological period c. 2,000-700BC

Cairn An artificial pile of stones

Combe A short valley or hollow on a hill or coastline, often dry valleys in a limestone area

Coping stones The stones which form the top of a wall

Coppice/coppicing Method of managing woodland in which trees are cut every 10-15 years for small diameter wood

Curtilage The area of land surrounding a building, such as a garden. Not all buildings have a curtilage.

Devonian Geological period c. 359-419 million years ago. The Devonian rocks found within the study area date from c.407-345 million years ago.

Dispersed (settlement) A scattered settlement pattern with buildings spread out without a clear centre

Ecological corridor An area of vegetated land linking other areas of biodiversity interest, encouraging the spread of plant, animal and insect species.

Estuary The broad mouth of a river that flows into the sea, where fresh water mixes with tidal sea water

Exotic trees Species of trees which are not native to the UK, and which have been introduced from other parts of the world, often as part of ornamental planting schemes within gardens and estates

Field pattern The distinctive pattern created within the landscape by the size and shape of contiguous fields. The relationship between size and shape is often strongly related to the age of the pattern itself. Irregular, smaller fields are generally older than larger, more regular field patterns

Green Infrastructure A network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Habitat The place where a particular species lives and grows. It is essentially the physical environment which surrounds and is utilized by a species population

Heathland Usually open habitats characterised by dwarf shrubs (e.g. heather) and certain tree species. Associated with unimproved areas underlain by infertile acid soils

Hedgebanks A field boundary feature distinctive to South-West England, comprising an earth bank topped with a hedgerow. The bank may be faced with stone or turf

Hedge Laying Method of managing and maintaining hedgerows by removing some trees, retaining others and a proportion of appropriate branches being part cut and laid tight into the hedgebank or ground

Incised Steeply and deeply cut

Indigenous Plants or animals belonging naturally to or occurring naturally in a particular area.

Iron Age Archaeological period c.400BC-43AD

Jurassic Geological period c.200-145 million years ago

Land Cover Combinations of natural and man-made elements including vegetation which cover the land surface

Landscape Character Area (LCA) A single unique area which is the discrete geographical area of a particular landscape type. Each has its own individual character and identity

Landscape Character Type (LCT) Distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. Wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, historical land use, and settlement pattern

Lime kiln Site where limestone was burnt to provide lime for fertiliser, builders' mortar etc.

Linear development A settlement pattern which follows a line, such as a road or river bank

Linhay A shed or other farm building open in front, typically with a lean-to roof. The term is particularly common in South-west England

Natural Assets The elements of nature that produce value and benefits (directly and indirectly) to people

Nucleated settlement Settlement with a distinct core with buildings closely grouped together

Pale Earthwork marking the boundary of a medieval deer park

Phytophthora ramorum Destructive parasitic fungi causing brown rot in plants

Pillbox A small military defensive guard post, usually constructed of concrete, but occasionally of locally-available materials, with openings through which weapons can be fired

Planned Refers to a more recently enclosed area of land, that is often characterised by regularity in field shape, straight roads, and is large in scale

Plateau An extensive area of relatively flat high land, usually bounded by steep sides

Riparian Of, or on, a riverbank

Salinization The processes of increased quantity of salt in the soil or groundwater, affecting the species which can grow

Salt marsh A coastal wetland that are flooded and drained by salt water brought in with the tides. It is dominated by salt-tolerant plants which help to trap and bind sediments. Salt marshes are important feeding grounds for waders and other bird species

Semi-natural habitat Vegetation which has been modified by humans that is still of significant nature conservation interest

Spring-line mires Areas of wet ground associated with watercourses, upwelling at geological boundaries

Time-depth Ability to see a range of historic features which have been created over many years

Turbaries Areas of land that has been formerly designated as common land where peat may be dug up for use as fuel

Undercliff A terrace formed above beach level from material that has fallen from a cliff

Unimproved grassland Grassland which has not been treated with fertilizer, lime or artificial drainage to improve yields

Vernacular Architecture concerned with domestic and functional rather than public or monumental buildings. It generally utilizes locally-available materials and techniques to create buildings with a distinctive local character

Veteran (tree) A term describing a tree that has habitat features such as wounds or decay

Wildlife Corridor Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations

Appendix B: Changes to Landscape Character Types (LCTs) made since last published (2008)

The Landscape Character Types map on page 15 of this document contains a small number of changes when compared to the equivalent map in the 2008 *Landscape Character Assessment and Management Guidelines*. These changes are set out in the table below, along with an explanation of why they were made. Some of the LCT numbers and/ or titles are also different, reflecting changes in the 'Devon Menu' of LCTs made in the intervening years. Some changes were made in 2017 to ensure that the LCA evidence informing the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan is fit for purpose, up to date and consistent across administrative boundaries.

Location	Change made	Reason for change
Exe tributary valleys to the west of Cowley	Changed from LCT 1E (<i>Wooded Ridges and Hilltops</i>) to LCTs 3G (<i>River Valley Slopes and Combes</i>) and 3H (<i>Secluded Valleys</i>) Change made in 2017, verified in 2018.	The new LCTs have been added to the 'Devon Menu' of LCTs since 2008.
Around Killerton Estate, including Ashclyst Forest	Changed from LCT 1E (<i>Wooded Ridges and Hilltops</i>) to LCT 1D (<i>Estate Wooded Ridges and Hilltops</i>). Change made in 2017, verified in 2018.	The new LCT has been added to the 'Devon Menu' of LCTs since 2008.
South of Killerton, including Broadclyst	Changed from LCT 3B (<i>Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Slopes</i>) to LCT 1D (<i>Estate Wooded Farmland</i>). Change made in 2017, verified in 2018.	The new LCT has been added to the 'Devon Menu' of LCTs since 2008.
Around Bicton Estate	Changed from LCT 1B (<i>Open Coastal Plateau</i>) and LCT 3B (<i>Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Slopes</i>) to LCT 1D (<i>Estate Wooded Farmland</i>).	This area reflects the characteristics of LCT 5D, which has been added to the 'Devon Menu' of LCTs since 2008.
Coast between Otterton and Sidmouth	Changed from LCT 1B (<i>Open Coastal Plateau</i>) to LCT 4H (<i>Cliffs</i>).	Improves accuracy of mapping along coastal margin.
Otter Estuary	<i>Unsettled Farmed Valley Floors</i> changed to LCT 4B <i>Marine Levels and Coastal Plains</i> . LCT 4B (<i>Marine Levels and Coastal Plains</i>) changed to LCT 4A (<i>Estuaries</i>).	Aligns LCT with the Otter Estuary Recommended Marine Conservation Zone (Defra, June 2018).
Axe Estuary	Changed from LCT 4B (<i>Marine Levels and Coastal Plains</i>) to LCT 4A (<i>Estuaries</i>).	Aligns LCT with the Axe Estuary Recommended Marine Conservation Zone (Defra, June 2018).
Around Sidbury	Changed from <i>Unsettled Farmed Valley Floors</i> to LCT 3B (<i>Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Valley Slopes</i>) and a small urban area.	The area better reflects the characteristics of the new LCT, and the change improves consistency with similar valleys elsewhere.
Side slopes of Mutters Moor, West of Sidmouth	Changed from <i>Coastal Slopes and Combes</i> LCT to LCT 2A (<i>Steep Wooded Scarp Slopes</i>).	The area better reflects the characteristics of the new LCT, and the change improves consistency with similar hills elsewhere
South side and southern tributary valleys of Coly Valley, around Southleigh	Changed from LCT 3B (<i>Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Valley Slopes</i>) and LCT 1E (<i>Wooded Ridges and Hilltops</i>) to LCT 3A (<i>Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes</i>).	The area better reflects the characteristics of the new LCT, and the change improves consistency with similar valleys elsewhere.
East of Axminster	LCT 2A (<i>Steep Wooded Scarp Slopes</i>) changed to LCT 3C (<i>Sparsely Settled Farmed Valley Floors</i>). LCT 3B (<i>Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Valley Slopes</i>) changed to LCT 2A (<i>Steep Wooded Scarp Slopes</i>).	Corrected labelling mistake in previous version of the map. No LCT boundaries were changed, but the sequence of LCTs up the valley side is now correct.
Coast to west of Lyme Regis	Four small coastal combes changed from <i>Cliffs</i> LCT to LCT 4D (<i>Coastal Combes</i>).	The areas better reflect the characteristics of the new LCT, and the changes improve consistency with similar coastal combes elsewhere



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