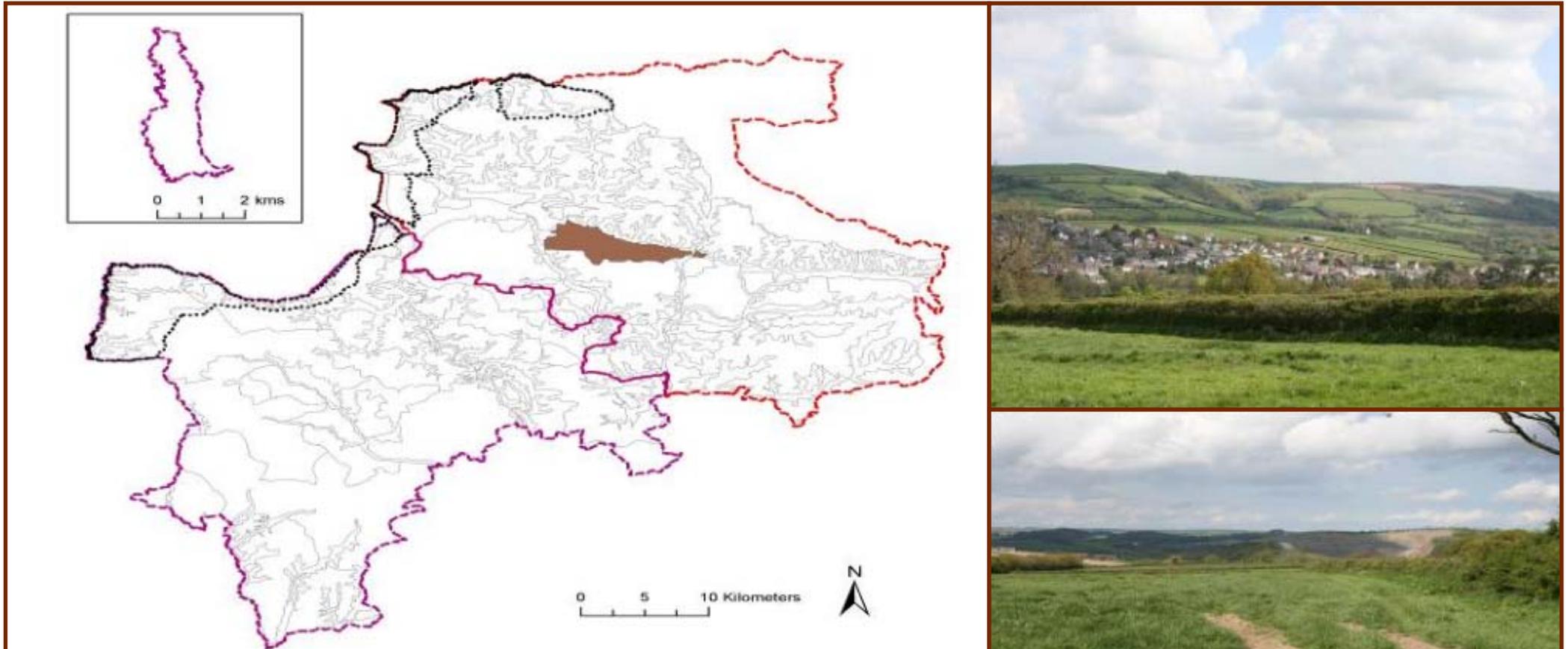


LANDSCAPE TYPE:
ID: ESTATE WOODED RIDGES & HILLTOPS

PART I: DESCRIPTION



CONSITUENT LDUs: 367, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 541, 546, 552, 567, 609, 682, 683, 812

SUMMARY OF LOCATION

This LCT occupies a small part of North Devon District, encompassing a prominent series of chert hills running parallel to the A361 from the eastern fringes of Barnstaple to the edges of the Castle Hill Estate.

ID: ESTATE WOODED RIDGES & HILLTOPS**KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR THIS LCT NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE**

- Distinctive topography of dramatic whale-backed ridges stretching east-west across the landscape, surrounded by strongly undulating land.
- Ridges of chert forming prominent hills rising up above the surrounding rolling landscape composed of mudstones with bands of sandstone. Exposures of limestone, chert and sandstone visible in local quarries (Highdown Quarry is a SSSI).
- Hill summits of up to 190 metres affording spectacular panoramic views, including to the uplands of Exmoor (to the north) and Dartmoor (to the south).
- Landscape cut by a series of streams draining from the ridges, forming tributaries of the Taw and Bray (to the west and east respectively).
- Large bands of broadleaved beech and oak woodland snaking across the ridges and along stream valleys, with blocks of conifer plantation and secondary woodland on hill slopes. Estate woodland with veteran trees around Castle Hill.
- Traditional orchards found around Dennington Barton.
- Predominantly pastoral character with sheep and cattle grazing. Hill slopes and summits provide rough grazing land, whilst the Castle Hill estate includes historic wood pasture and parkland.
- Elsewhere, nucleated hamlets and farmsteads are nestled at the base of slopes, with Swimbridge and Landkey being the main settlements overlooked by the landscape's hills.
- Mixture of curving small-medium scale medieval fields and more regular larger enclosures of recent origin, bounded by mixed species hedges with flower and fern-rich banks. Some Devon hedges are high with no topping hedgerows (particularly on hill summits), whilst banks on woodland edges are characterised by grown-out lines of beech.
- Rich variety of semi-natural habitats including heathland, bracken and semi-improved grassland on Codden Hill, rush pasture and neutral grasslands on Hangman's Hill, historic wood pasture and ancient trees on the Castle Hill estate, and rich broadleaved woodlands and damp meadows throughout.
- Historic features include a scheduled Bronze Age bowl barrow at Codden Beacon, as well as nationally important historic parkland features including fishpond, ice house and deer fencing on the Castle Hill estate. Historic quarries, traditionally worked for roadstone, are important landscape features.
- 18th century Castle Hill mansion (its creamy-yellow buildings standing out in the landscape) and ornamental parkland estate (Grade I Registered Park & Garden) conveys a strong influence in the east of the LCT. Bydown House (Grade II*) is also surrounded by a parkland estate.
- Strong traditional vernacular of whitewash with black painted details, with some buildings of cream cob/render as well as exposed local stone.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and history with little modern development. Venn Quarry (which closed in 2006) is a prominent feature in the open countryside, as is the Portmore Golf Park. The northern fringes of the LCT are influenced by the eastern fringes of Barnstaple and the A361 trunk road.



PART 2: EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL QUALITIES

- Long, panoramic views including to Lundy Island and the uplands of Exmoor and Dartmoor.
- Areas of ancient parkland and wood pasture with veteran trees.
- Important wildlife habitats including lowland heath on Codden Hill.
- Network of winding rural roads and ancient trackways.
- High levels of peace and tranquillity.



FORCES FOR CHANGE

PAST / CURRENT FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Past loss of lowland heathland on Codden Hill – some fragmented patches remaining.
- Scrub encroachment on south facing slopes of Codden Hill due to a decline in grazing levels.
- Past quarrying activity leaving visible scars in the landscape (although some former quarries are important both for nature conservation and for displaying geological exposures).
- Some remnant areas of parkland estate being neglected. However, all of the Castle Hill Estate is managed favourable under an Environmental Stewardship agreement.
- Conifer planting on areas of heathland and within semi-natural woodlands.
- Visual and noise intrusion of the A361 North Devon link road which lies to the north of the LCT.
- 20th century and ongoing expansion of Barnstaple and the nearby villages of Swimbridge and Landkey, eroding local levels of tranquillity.
- Increased use of areas of common land in close proximity to settlements for recreation, including dog walking, with some negative impacts from erosion and litter.

ID: ESTATE WOODED RIDGES & HILLTOPS**FORCES FOR CHANGE****FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

- Uncertainty over future levels of agricultural subsidies to support farming on 'marginal' land such as heathland on Codden Hill.
- Development pressure between Landkey and the South Molton roundabout impacting on northward views from the hills.
- Development pressure along the A361 corridor – probable future coalescence of Barnstaple and Landkey.
- Increase in UK-based tourism with associated demands for new attractions (e.g. golf courses) and infrastructure, as well as an increase in traffic levels on rural roads, car parking, recreational pressures and farm conversions.
- Potential change in ownership of parkland estates, leading to a gradual change in their character and patterns of management.
- Longer growing season and enhanced growth rates of vegetation (as a result of climate change) including bracken, gorse and secondary woodland resulting in a decrease in remaining areas of heathland.
- A changing climate resulting in an increase of pests/disease affecting the composition and distribution of woodlands and semi-natural habitats (e.g. Sudden Oak Death).
- Expansion in the growth of bioenergy crops such as Miscanthus as a result of market demand for 'green' energy and fuel sources, out of keeping with current cropping patterns.

FUTURE FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (Continued)

- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, small wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.
- Open hills and ridges likely to become under pressure from wind farm developers.



PART 3: LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

OVERALL STRATEGY: To protect the distinctive character of the landscape, with areas of heathland extended and managed through grazing, long views from the hills protected and enhanced, and parkland estates traditionally managed and strengthened to build resilience to the effects of climate change.

Landscape and planning guidelines

| Guideline | Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies) | Planning policy links and delivery recommendations |
|---|--|---|
| PROTECT | | |
| Protect important views to and from the hills and designed parkland landscapes – to as far as Lundy Island, Exmoor and Dartmoor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify important views and viewpoints to and from the landscape (and identify why people think they are important) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance in development management planning to avoid siting vertical structures on the hills within this LCT, and on other hill summits visible from this landscape. |
| Protect the landscape’s ancient trackways and network of quiet rural lanes, resisting unsympathetic highways improvements or signage. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Devon Green Lanes and Veins Project Encourage the Highways Authority to respect the special character of the landscape’s rural lanes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 Develop a policy for protecting the character of rural lanes / ancient trackways in the forthcoming LDF. DCC to roll out a highways protocol / best practice guide on roadside management for rural areas. Devon CC Environmental Review of permitted highway development proposals. |
| Protect important geological exposures revealed through past quarrying activity (including through keeping vegetation at bay). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural England SSSI monitoring (e.g. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Devon & Torridge Joint Core |

ID: ESTATE WOODED RIDGES & HILLTOPS

| Guideline | Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies) | Planning policy links and delivery recommendations |
|--|--|--|
| Quarries should also be protected as valued historic landscape features. | for High Down Quarry) • Environmental Stewardship | Strategy: Policy COR6. • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO1. |
| Protect in a good state of repair the traditional local vernacular of whitewash with black painted details, with some buildings of cream cob/render as well as exposed local stone. Limited new development should utilise the same materials and building styles wherever possible (whilst seeking to incorporate sustainable and low carbon building construction and design). | • Conservation Area appraisals / management plans • Estate Management Plans • Devon Rural Skills Trust | • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR4. COR6 and COR8. • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO1 and C07. • Consider formulating a Design Guide as a SPD in the forthcoming LDF. |
| Protect and appropriately manage the nationally important features relating to the Castle Hill Estate (including parklands, fishpond, ice house and deer fencing) and the Bronze Age bowl barrow at Codden Beacon. | • Environmental Stewardship • Estate Management Plan | • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6. • Devon Structure Plan: Policy CO7 and CO8. |
| MANAGE | | |
| Sensitively manage the landscape’s remaining ancient and veteran trees, including through traditional pollarding where appropriate. | • England Woodland Grant Scheme • Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • Estate Management Plans • Devon Rural Skills Trust | • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO9 |
| Manage important areas of lowland heath on Codden Hill, including through appropriate grazing and controlled burning levels to keep levels of scrub/ young trees at bay. | • Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP | • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6. • Devon’s Structure Plan: Policy CO9 |
| PLAN | | |
| Plan for the planting of the next generation of veteran trees, choosing climate resilient species to ensure longevity. | • England Woodland Grant Scheme • Environmental Stewardship | • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policy COR6 |

ID: ESTATE WOODED RIDGES & HILLTOPS

| Guideline | Identified delivery mechanisms (e.g. links to specific projects, Initiatives and policies) | Planning policy links and delivery recommendations |
|--|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estate Management Plans | |
| <p>Plan for the expansion of lowland heath on Codden Hill, managed through appropriate grazing and burning levels, with remnant sites re-linked to form an intact habitat network.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • Devon BAP • South West Nature Map | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR6 • Devon's Structure Plan: Policy CO9 |
| <p>Plan for potential habitat recreation in disused quarry sites, whilst protecting important geological outcrops revealed in rock faces.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship • South West Nature Map • Devon BAP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential links into a wider Green Infrastructure network for new development in the area (see below). |
| <p>Plan for the future expansion of local settlements, integrating new development into its landscape framework through the provision of a surrounding network of green spaces, wildlife habitats and recreational routes.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Nature Map • Devon BAP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Devon & Torridge Joint Core Strategy: Policies COR2, COR4, COR5, COR8 and COR17 • Devon Structure Plan: Policies CO6, CO9, TO6. • Green Infrastructure Strategy |