



Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Management Plan 2023-28

Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report

September 2023



Essex County Council



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Address: County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1QH

Contact no: 0333 013 6840

Email: placeservicesecology@essex.gov.uk

Website: www.placeservices.gov.uk

VAT number: GB 104 2528 13



Report Checking and Version Control

Prepared by:

Hamish Jackson | Senior Ecological Consultant | hamish.jackson@essex.gov.uk

Sue Hooton | Principal Ecological Consultant | sue.hooton@essex.gov.uk

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Glossary of Acronyms | 6 |
| 1. Introduction | 7 |
| 1.1 The Purpose of This Report | 7 |
| 1.2 Coast & Heaths AONB Summary | 7 |
| 1.3 Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2023-28 | 8 |
| 2. Legislative Background | 9 |
| 2.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) | 9 |
| 2.2 Court Rulings | 10 |
| 3. Method and Approach | 12 |
| 3.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment of Plans | 12 |
| 3.2 Habitats sites | 12 |
| 3.3 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects | 16 |
| 3.4 Identifying Habitats sites, their Conservation Objectives and Qualifying Features | 17 |
| 3.5 Screening Categorisation | 20 |
| 3.6 Appropriate Assessment and the Integrity Test | 21 |
| 4. Screening of Likely Significant Effects | 23 |
| 4.1 Screening Policies for Likely Significant Effect | 23 |
| 4.2 Potential Impacts of the Coasts & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2023 - 28 | 23 |
| 4.3 Summary of Screening Results | 25 |
| 5. Conclusion | 26 |
| 6. References | 27 |
| 7. Appendices | 28 |



List of Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1. Description and Explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites | 13 |
| Table 2. Habitats sites within 20 km of the Coasts and Heaths AONB | 18 |
| Table 3. Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Categorisation | 21 |
| Table 4. Assessment of potential impacts | 24 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1. Outline of the Four Stage Approach to the Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Regulations | 15 |
|--|----|

List of Appendices

| | |
|---|----|
| Appendix 1. HRA Screening of Individual Policies | 28 |
| Appendix 2. Coast & Heaths AONB: Management Plan 2023-28 | 31 |
| Appendix 3. Characteristics of Habitats sites | 34 |
| Appendix 4. Habitats sites within 20km of the Coast and Heaths AONB | 84 |



Glossary of Acronyms

| | |
|------|--|
| AA | Appropriate Assessment |
| AEOI | Avoid Adverse Effect On site Integrity |
| DC | District Council |
| EA | Environment Agency |
| EC | European Commission |
| EU | European Union |
| Ha | Hectare |
| HRA | Habitats Regulations Assessment |
| IRZ | Impact Risk Zones (for SSSIs) |
| Km | Kilometre |
| LPA | Local Planning Authority |
| NE | Natural England |
| NPPF | National Planning Policy Framework |
| PRoW | Public Right of Way |
| RAMS | Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy |
| RIS | Ramsar Information Sheet |
| SAC | Special Area of Conservation |
| SPA | Special Protection Area |
| SSSI | Site of Specific Scientific Interest |
| ZOI | Zone of Influence |



1. Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of This Report

- 1.1.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) require the Competent Authority (in this instance Suffolk County Council) to undertake a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) before making a decision about permission for any plan or project that may result in an adverse effect on the site integrity of a Habitats site¹ as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021).
- 1.1.2 Therefore, this report has been provided to determine whether the Management objectives and policies of the Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Management Plan 2023-28 (“The Plan”) will result in an adverse effect on the site integrity Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- 1.1.3 This report therefore provides a (plan level) Stage 1 HRA Screening, as required by Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment would be undertaken if any of the objectives and policies of The Plan require mitigation to avoid adverse effects on site integrity (AEOI).
- 1.1.4 For the purposes of HRA, Suffolk County Council (acting on behalf of the AONB as well as a member of The Partnership) is considered to be the Competent Authority for assessing this Management Plan and consulting with Natural England on its conclusion.

1.2 Coast & Heaths AONB Summary

- 1.2.1 The Coast & Heaths AONB (AONB) covers an area of around 170 square miles (441 square kilometres) stretching from Kessingland, near Lowestoft, in the north, to Parkeston near Harwich on the southern shore of the Stour Estuary to the south. To the east the boundary is formed by the North Sea and the western boundary is largely to the east of the A12 and encompasses Suffolk’s estuaries.

¹ Habitats site: Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) for the purpose of those regulations and those listed in paragraph 181 of the NPPF (2021). This includes potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation; listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on Habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.



- 1.2.2 The character of the AONB is a product of the underlying geology and its associated natural habitats. It is shaped by the effects of the sea and the interaction with people and the landscape. It is a gently rolling landscape, with the estuaries a common and dominant feature. Where the land does rise, commanding views across the landscape are rewarding.

1.3 Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2023-28

- 1.3.1 For the nationally designated AONB, section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty on all relevant authorities to:

“have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of an AONB when exercising or performing any function in relation to or so as to affect an AONB.

The section 85 Duty of Regard applies to all functions, not just those relating to planning and is applicable whether a function is statutory or permissive.

It is applicable to land outside as well as within an AONB, where an activity may have an impact on an AONB. The requirement is to ‘conserve and enhance’ and both aspects are required to be addressed.

In relation to planning, the Duty of Regard applies in respect of both plan making and decision taking, including deciding what weight to apply to different planning matters, considering whether planning conditions are necessary and also when considering planning enforcement action. It is good practice for a local planning authority to consider the Duty of Regard at several points [For example a reference of how AONB purposes have been considered in a planning officers report] in the decision making process and to provide written evidence that regard has been had. I am suggesting this for clarity and to assist LPAs ensure they meet the Duty.”

- 1.3.2 Therefore, the management plan provides a framework for statutory bodies to meet that duty. For the Coast and Heaths project area, the management plan and the policies it contains, provides a framework for meeting the aspiration to conserve and enhance its natural beauty and special qualities.
- 1.3.3 The management plan is set in the context of national and local policy and strategy. The primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty with secondary purposes to meet the needs of recreation, safeguarding agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities.



2. Legislative Background

2.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

- 2.1.1 Under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any Habitats Site, in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.
- 2.1.2 The first stage of HRA is the screening assessment of the impacts of a land use proposal against the conservation objectives of Habitats sites. Specifically, it is to ascertain whether or not a proposal (either alone or in combination with other proposals) would potentially damage the internationally designated features of that site. European sites are also known as Habitats Sites in the NPPF (2021).
- 2.1.3 This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to support the Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28. The area covered by the plan is shown in Appendix 1.
- 2.1.4 In line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats site.
- 2.1.5 On 23 June 2016, the United Kingdom (UK) held a referendum and voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 29 March 2017 the Prime Minister triggered Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, which commenced a period of negotiations regarding the UK's exit from the EU. On 26 June 2018 The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 received Royal Assent and work to prepare the UK statute book for Brexit is complete and the UK has now left the EU. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 made sure that UK laws continue to operate following the UK's exit. There is no immediate change to legislation or policy affecting national infrastructure. Relevant EU Directives have been transposed into UK law and those are unchanged until amended by Parliament. The requirements for HRA under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain in place with minor changes being affected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Parliament will however be at liberty to introduce future changes to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) since, after 31 December 2020, the UK is no longer bound by the EU Habitats and Wild Birds Directives.
- 2.1.6 The position under section 6(3) EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (as amended), is that the courts in the UK, with the sole exception of the Supreme Court, will continue to be bound by HRA judgements handed down by the CJEU and by domestic courts prior to 31 December 2020



when interpreting the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This is the case as long as the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain unmodified by Parliament.

2.2 Court Rulings

CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17

- 2.2.1 As previously mentioned, in line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats site. This HRA Appropriate Assessment therefore considers mitigation measures for the assessment of Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan.
- 2.2.2 In accordance with this Judgement, all mitigation measures already built into The Plan can now be taken into account for the Appropriate Assessment. At this stage other policies of the Plan can be considered in order to mitigate some of the potential Likely Significant Effects which have been identified. This stage is an iterative process as avoidance and reduction measures can be incorporated in order to be able to avoid the potential impacts identified in the Appropriate Assessment or reduce them to a level where they will no longer adversely affect the site's integrity.

CJEU Holohan C- 461/17

- 2.2.3 Court rulings include CJEU Holohan C-461/17 (7 November 2018) which now imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority at Appropriate Assessment stage:
1. [...] an 'Appropriate Assessment' must, on the one hand, catalogue the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected, and, on the other, identify and examine both the implications of the proposed project for the species present on that site, and for which that site has not been listed, and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.
 2. [...] the competent authority is permitted to grant to a plan or project consent which leaves the developer free to determine subsequently certain parameters relating to the construction phase, such as the location of the construction compound and haul routes, only if that authority is certain that the development consent granted establishes conditions that are strict enough to guarantee that those parameters will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.
 3. [...] where the competent authority rejects the findings in a scientific expert opinion recommending that additional information be obtained, the 'Appropriate Assessment' must include an explicit and detailed statement of reasons capable of dispelling all



reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned.

- 2.2.4 At Stage 2, it is therefore necessary to consider species likely to be present on the Habitats sites, but for which that site has not been listed – e.g. birds which are designated features of the underpinning SSSI – and to consider the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.



3. Method and Approach

3.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment of Plans

3.1.1 This section forms a plan level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report as required by Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

3.1.2 This section of this Report aims to:

- Identify the Habitats sites within 20km of the Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28.
- Summarise the reasons for designation and Conservation Objectives for each Habitats site to be considered in this assessment.
- Screen the Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28 for its potential to impact upon a Habitats site.
- Assess the potential for effects in combination with other projects and plans in the area.
- Identify if there are any outstanding issues that need further investigation.

3.2 Habitats Sites

3.2.1 Habitats sites is the term used in the NPPF (2021) to describe the UK network of sites of European designated nature protection areas. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of the UK's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The sites were designated under the European Union (EU) Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds) and the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora).

3.2.2 All Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are designated for other species, and for Habitats. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) are also part of the national network of sites. This is because all SPAs and SACs are comprised of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and all Ramsar sites in England are SSSIs. Together, SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites make up the Habitats sites in England. The following offers a description and explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites.

3.2.3 The following table (Table 1) offers a description and explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites.

**Table 1. Description and Explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites**

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within EU countries. Example: Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA. straddle the eastern part of the Essex/Suffolk border and include extensive mudflats, low cliffs, saltmarsh and small areas of vegetated shingle on the lower reaches *Legislation: Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)*.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are areas designated to protect habitat types that are in danger of disappearance, have a small natural range, or are highly characteristic of the region; and to protect species that are endangered, vulnerable, rare, or endemic. Example: Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries SAC is designated for its areas of shallow water over subtidal sediments, and extensive mudflats and saltmarshes exposed at low water. Its diverse and species-rich intertidal sand and mudflat biotopes grade naturally along many lengths of the shore into vegetated or dynamic shingle habitat, saltmarsh, grassland and reedbed. *Legislation: Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)*.

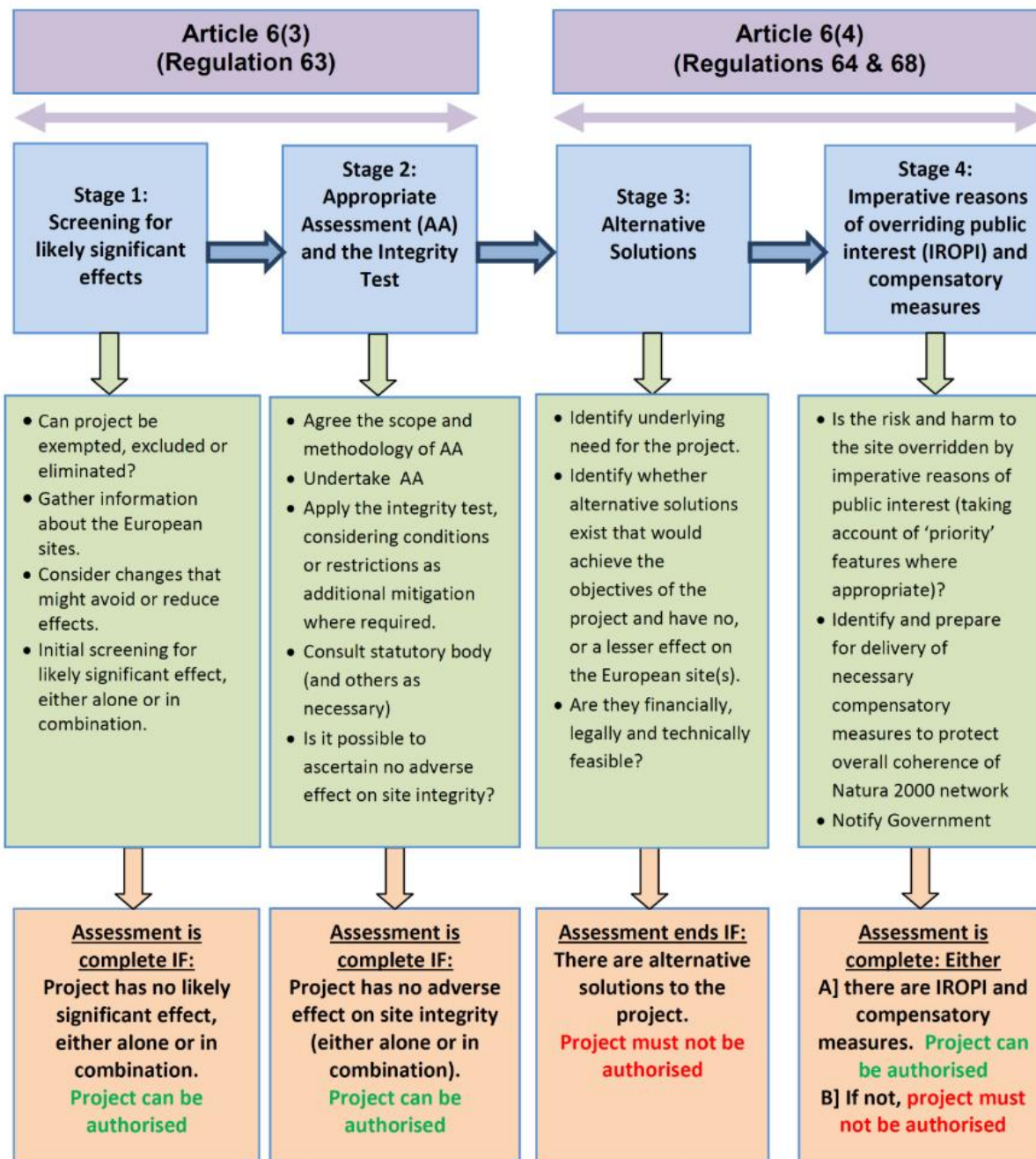
Ramsar Sites (Wetlands of International Importance)

Ramsar Sites are designated to protect the biological and physical features of wetlands, especially for waterfowl Habitats. For example, Stour and Orwell Estuaries Ramsar site is important due to the extent and diversity of saltmarsh and which supports 7 species of nationally scarce plants. Ramsar sites often overlap with SACs and SPAs and UK planning policy determines that they should be accorded the same importance when developments are proposed. *Legislation: Ramsar Convention (1971) – Wetlands of International Importance*.





Figure 1. Outline of the Four Stage Approach to the Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Regulations





- 3.2.4 Plans should not contain proposals that would be vulnerable to failure under the Habitats Regulations at project assessment stage, as this would be regarded as 'faulty planning'.
- 3.2.5 'Significant effects' has been defined through case law. A significant effect is any effect that would undermine the conservation objectives for the qualifying features of Habitats sites potentially affected, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. There must be a causal connection or link between The Plan and the qualifying features of the site (s) which could result in possible significant effects on the site (s). Effects may be direct or indirect and a judgement must be taken on a case-by-case basis. The decision as to whether or not a potential impact is significant depends on factors such as: magnitude of impact, type, extent, duration, intensity, timing, probability, cumulative effects and the vulnerability of the habitats and species concerned. So, what may be significant in relation to one site may not be in relation to another.
- 3.2.6 An effect which is not significant can be described as 'insignificant', 'de minimis' or 'trivial'- *i.e.* it would not undermine the conservation objectives.
- 3.2.7 A risk-based approach involving the application of the precautionary principle has been used in the assessment. A conclusion of 'no significant effect' was only reached where it was considered very unlikely, based on current knowledge and the information available, that a proposal in the Plan would have a significant effect on the integrity of a Habitats site.
- 3.2.8 Key advice guidance and information has also come from the following sources:
- DTA Publications Handbook: <https://www.dtapublications.co.uk/>
 - Suffolk Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS)
 - HRAs of relevant Local Plans
 - Extensive experience of producing other HRAs
 - Government information regarding Habitats sites and their 'zones of influence', *e.g.* www.magic.gov.uk

3.3 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

- 3.3.1 The screening stage identifies whether The Plan may result in a Likely Significant Effect to any Habitat Site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The screening process should identify all aspects of the Plan that are:
- Exempt from assessment
 - Excluded from assessment
 - Eliminated from further assessment
 - Have no Likely Significant Effects, alone or in combination with other plans or projects and therefore be screened out



- Screened in as it is not possible to rule out Likely Significant Effects. In line with the 2018 Court judgment (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17) mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment. Consequently, any aspect of The Plan which cannot be ruled out as having Likely Significant Effects should continue to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

3.3.2 Habitats sites which have been included for assessment are those which are within the ZOI for the underpinning Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) as identified on MAGIC www.magic.gov.uk.

3.3.3 It has been established that this Plan requires an HRA for the following reasons:

- Can the plan be exempt? - No, The Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to management of any Habitats sites.
- Can the plan be excluded? - No, The Plan cannot be excluded as it falls within the definition of being a plan within the Habitats Regulations.
- Can the plan be eliminated? - No, The Plan as a whole cannot be eliminated as it proposes a number of policies which may have a Likely Significant Effect on one or more Habitats site. However, individual policies can be eliminated.

3.4 Identifying Habitats sites, their Conservation Objectives and Qualifying Features

3.4.1 The qualifying features and conservation objectives of the Habitats sites, together with current pressures on and potential threats, was drawn from the Standard Data Forms for SACs and SPAs and the Information Sheets for Ramsar Wetlands as well as Natural England's Site Improvement Plans (SIP) and the most recent conservation objectives. An understanding of the designated features of each Habitats site and the factors contributing to its integrity has informed the assessment of the potential Likely Significant Effects of The Plan.

3.4.2 Key sources of the Habitats sites information were found at:

- JNCC: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/>
- Site Designation features and Conservation Objectives- Designated Sites View: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>
- Site Improvement Plans, e.g.: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6270737467834368>
- MAGIC (the Multi Agency Geographic Information website): www.magic.gov.uk
- "Managing Natura 2000 sites- The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC" http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/Provisions_Art_nov_2018_endocx.pdf



3.4.3 The list of Habitats sites, their qualifying features and conservation objectives can be found in Appendix 3 including web links to further information.

3.4.4 The list of key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity can be found in Appendix 3, including links to further information.

Table 2. Habitats sites within 20 km of the Coasts and Heaths AONB

| Site | Location | Scoped in or out |
|--|--|--|
| Alde-Ore (& Butley) Estuary SAC, SPA & Ramsar site | Estuary located on south-east Suffolk coast | Scoped in This Habitats sites fall within the AONB boundary |
| Benacre to Easton Bavents SAC & SPA | Lagoons located on the north -east Suffolk coast | Scoped in This Habitats sites fall within the AONB boundary |
| Blackwater Estuary SPA & Ramsar site | Estuary in Essex located from Maldon to Mersea Island | Scoped in The AONB falls within the IRZ of the underpinning SSSIs and the ZOI of the Blackwater Estuary SPA & Ramsar site as identified on MAGIC. In addition, part of the AONB falls within the county of Essex. |
| Broadlands & Broads SAC, SPA & Ramsar site | A variety of wetland habitats located to the north-east Suffolk coast and south-east Norfolk | Scoped out The AONB is within the IRZ of the underpinning SSSIs and the ZOI of Broadlands & Broads SAC, SPA & Ramsar as identified on MAGIC. However, there are no clear impact pathways to these Habitat sites and the AONB does not fall within the county of Norfolk. |
| Breydon Water SPA & Ramsar site | Estuary at the mouth of the River Yare, south-east Norfolk | Scoped out The AONB fall outside the IRZ of the underpinning SSSIs and the ZOI of Broadlands & Broads SAC, SPA & Ramsar as identified on MAGIC. In addition, there are no clear impact pathways to these Habitats sites. |
| Colne Estuary SPA & Ramsar site | Estuary located in north Essex, situated | Scoped out |



| Site | Location | Scoped in or out |
|---|---|--|
| | from Colchester to East Mersea. | The AONB falls outside the IRZ of the underpinning SSSIs and the ZOI of the Colne Estuary SPA & Ramsar site as identified on MAGIC. In addition, there are no clear impact pathways to these Habitats sites. |
| Deben Estuary SPA & Ramsar Site | Estuary in Suffolk located from Woodbridge to Felixstowe | Scoped in These Habitats sites fall within the AONB boundary |
| Dew's Ponds SAC | A group of ponds situated near the east coast of Suffolk | Scoped out The AONB falls within the IRZ of the underpinning SSSIs and the ZOI of the Blackwater Estuary SPA & Ramsar site as identified on MAGIC. In addition, there is no clear impact pathways to this Habitats site. |
| Essex Estuaries SAC | Estuaries from Clacton on Sea to Southend | Scoped in The AONB falls within the IRZ of the underpinning SSSIs and the ZOI of the Blackwater Estuary SPA & Ramsar site as identified on MAGIC. In addition, part of the AONB falls within the county of Essex. |
| Hamford Water SAC, SPA & Ramsar site | Estuary situated to the north-east of Essex. | Scoped in The AONB falls outside the IRZ of the underpinning SSSIs and the ZOI of the Hamford Water SAC, SPA & Ramsar site as identified on MAGIC. In addition, part of the AONB falls within the county of Essex. |
| Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths & Marshes SAC, SPA & Ramsar site | Heaths and marshes on the east coast of Suffolk | Scoped in These Habitats sites fall within the AONB boundary |
| Orfordness Shingle-Street SAC | Shingle structure and Lagoons situated to the south-east of Suffolk | Scoped in This Habitats site falls within the AONB boundary |
| Outer Thames Estuary SPA | Covers most marine areas near to Essex coast | Scoped in This Habitats site fall is adjacent to the AONB boundary |



| Site | Location | Scoped in or out |
|--|--|---|
| Sandlings SPA | Heathland and commercial conifer forest situated to the south-east of Suffolk | Scoped in This Habitats site falls within the AONB boundary |
| Southern North Sea (cSAC) | Covers the entire coast of East Anglia | Scoped in This Habitats site is adjacent to the AONB boundary |
| Staverton Park & The Thicks, Wantisden SAC | Old acidophilous oak woods situated to the south-east of Suffolk. | Scoped in This Habitats sites falls within the AONB boundary |
| Stour & Orwell Estuaries SPA & Ramsar site | Two estuaries to the south of Suffolk. The Orwell Estuary is located from Ipswich to Shotley. The Stour Estuary is located from Manningtree to Shotley | Scoped in These Habitats sites fall within the AONB boundary |

3.4.5 A map of all 31 Habitats sites with the 20 km radius of the Coast & Heaths AONB boundary can be found in Appendix 4.

3.5 Screening Categorisation

3.5.1 Screening considers each policy in the Plan and the results of the screening exercise recorded, using the precautionary principle. Each policy and land allocation included in The Plan has been categorised. A 'traffic light' system has been used to record the potential for policies and allocated sites to have a Likely Significant Effect, using the system of colours in Table 3 below.



Table 3. Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Categorisation

| |
|---|
| Category A: Significant effects not likely |
| <p>Category A identifies those policies that would not result in a Likely Significant Effect and are considered to have no adverse effect. These policies can be 'screened out' and no further assessment is required. This is because, if there are no adverse effects at all, there can be no adverse effect to contribute to in combination effects of other plans or projects.</p> |
| Category B: Significant effects uncertain |
| <p>Category B identifies those policies which will have no significant adverse effect on the site. That is, there could be some effect but none which would undermine the conservation objectives, when the policy is considered on its own. Given that there may be some effect this now needs to be considered in combination with other plans or projects. If these effects can be excluded in combination, the policy can be screened out and no further assessment required. However, if the possibility of a significant adverse effect in combination cannot be ruled out there will be a Likely Significant Effect in combination, and Appropriate Assessment will be required.</p> |
| Category C: Likely Significant Effect |
| <p>Category C identifies those policies which cannot be ruled out as having a Likely Significant Effect upon a Habitat Site, alone, that is the effect could undermine the conservation objectives. In this case an Appropriate Assessment is triggered without needing to consider in combination effects at screening stage, although they may need to be considered at Appropriate Assessment.</p> |

3.6 Appropriate Assessment and the Integrity Test

- 3.6.1 Where the Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan may cause Likely Significant Effects, the second stage would be to undertake an 'Appropriate Assessment' of the implications of the plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and establish whether there may be an Adverse Effect On site Integrity (AEOI) of any Habitats sites in view of their Conservation Objectives.
- 3.6.2 Some policies of the Management Plan could be used to mitigate some of the potential Likely Significant Effects which have been identified. These can be considered at Appropriate Assessment. This stage thus becomes an iterative process as avoidance and reduction measures can be incorporated in order to be able to ascertain that there is *no Adverse Effect on Integrity* on any Habitats site, before making a final assessment.
- 3.6.3 The Appropriate Assessment would be undertaken by the competent authority and should assess all aspects of The Plan which can by themselves, or in combination with other



plans and projects, affect the sites' Conservation Objectives. The assessment must consider the implications for each qualifying feature of each potentially affected Habitats site. Key vulnerabilities are set out in Appendix 4 and the Site Improvement Plans were used to obtain this information. Site Improvement Plans have been developed for each Habitats site in England as part of the 'Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS)'. The plan provides a high-level overview of the issues (both current and predicted) affecting the condition of the Natura 2000 features on the site(s) and outlines the priority measures required to improve the condition of the features. These can be found at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5458594975711232>.

- 3.6.4 In order to identify potential in combination effects other plans and projects which may affect the Habitats sites need to be identified. The list of county and district level plans which provide for development in the Coast & Heaths AONB as well as Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) to be considered will be identified.
- 3.6.5 In accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, Natural England will be consulted on the Appropriate Assessment document.



4. Screening of Likely Significant Effects

4.1 Screening Policies for Likely Significant Effect

- 4.1.1. This chapter summarises the potential for Likely Significant Effects identified, using Categories A, B and C outlined earlier in the report. It advises as to where Likely Significant Effects can be ruled out. The need for an 'Appropriate Assessment' is triggered where the HRA Screening stage identifies policies which may have a Likely Significant Effect on any Habitats sites.
- 4.1.2. 26 Habitats sites have been scoped in for HRA screening. Where this is likely to result in a significant effect, or where there is uncertainty, in line with the precautionary approach being applied in the HRA, until significant effects can be ruled out, they are treated as giving rise to Likely Significant Effects.
- 4.1.3. Policies are screened out where they would not result in development because they either set out criteria relating to development proposed under other policies are very general in nature or they seek to protect the natural environment.
- 4.1.4. An initial assessment has been undertaken to identify whether The Plan's policies have the potential to have any Likely Significant Effects on any Habitats sites. The notes in the RIS for Ramsar sites of factors affecting a sites ecological character are not considered as necessary for HRA screening purposes and noteworthy features are not treated as qualifying features in the application of HRA tests. The assessment under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations is strictly limited to the qualifying features which meet the Ramsar criteria.
- 4.1.5. A summary of the assessment is set out in Appendix 1 and a list of the management plan policies are included in Appendix 2.

4.2 Potential Impacts of the Coasts & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2023 - 28

- 4.2.1. There are a wide range of potential impacts from the management plan which can be summarised as -
- Land take by changing land use or land management practices;
 - Impact on protected species found within but which travel outside the protected sites (functionally linked land) may be relevant where changing land use or management could result in effects on qualifying interest species within the Habitats site, for example through the loss of feeding grounds for an identified species.



- Increased disturbance, for example from recreational use and / or improved access due to increased recreational advertisement
- Changes in water availability, or water quality as a result of changing land use and changing demands for water treatment,
- Changes in atmospheric pollution levels due to changed traffic patterns, waste management facilities associated with changing audience to the AONB.
- Changes in noise and light pollution levels and visual disturbance from construction or operation phases of development within the AONB.

4.2.2. A summary of the conclusion of whether the policies were likely to cause a likely significant effect and their potential impact pathways have been outlined below in Table 4. Conclusions take into account the potential effects of other plans and projects. Each policy was considered in the context of the policy Screening criteria above.

Table 4. Assessment of potential impacts

| Nature of potential impact | How the Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28 (alone or in combination with other plans and project) could affect a Habitats site? | Why these effects are / not considered likely to be significant? |
|---|--|--|
| Land take by changing land use | The Plan has been designated to support, protect and enhance designated sites; although the Plan area includes a number of Habitats sites, no land take is proposed. | N/A |
| Impact on protected species outside the protected sites | The Plan has been designed to conserve and enhance the natural environment; the Plan will not have negative impacts on Qualifying species. | N/A |
| Recreational pressure and disturbance | The Plan aims to support responsible tourism within the AONB area but does not propose new development within the AONB. The Management Plan will not result in increased recreation at the individual Habitats sites | N/A |
| Water quantity and quality | The Management Plan has been designed to conserve and enhance the natural environment and will not result in adverse impacts on water quality or quantity. It acknowledges that water abstraction for irrigation is often at the environmental limits and that the creation of winter-filled reservoirs and managed aquifer recharge need to be considered. However, any potential developments need careful siting and design to avoid adverse impacts to the AONB purpose. | N/A |



| Nature of potential impact | How the Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28 (alone or in combination with other plans and project) could affect a Habitats site? | Why these effects are / not considered likely to be significant? |
|--|---|--|
| Adverse air quality | It is considered that there is no pathway for the Plan to result in air pollution impacts. | N/A |
| Changes in noise and light pollution levels and visual disturbance | It is considered that there is no pathway for the Plan to result in pollution impacts or additional visual disturbance of the qualifying features of the Habitats sites within the scope of this HRA. It is indicated that the 'Landscape' policy and 'Land Use and Planning' includes further statements that proposals that result in increased noise and light pollution and visual disturbance within the AONB will not be supported. | N/A |

4.3 Summary of Screening Results

4.3.1 All policies are shown in the HRA Screening Table in Appendix 1 and all are screened out as having no potential for Likely Significant Effects, alone or in combination with other plans and projects. As a result, the Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28 does not need to proceed to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.



5. Conclusion

- 5.1.1 This Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report considers whether there are any Likely Significant Effects arising from the Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28.
- 5.1.2 The HRA Screening Report did not identify any impact pathways to scoped in Habitats sites. Therefore, the Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28 is predicted to have any Likely Significant Effect upon any scoped in Habitats sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.



6. References

- Atkins (2011) Habitats Regulations Assessment for Babergh District Council Core Strategy
- Footprint Ecology (2018) Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan at Final Draft Plan Stage (Dec 2018)
- Footprint Ecology (2019) Habitats Regulations Assessment Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy for Ipswich Borough, Babergh District, Mid Suffolk District and East Suffolk Councils – Technical Report. .
- Natural England (2014) Conservation objectives for European Sites. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6581547796791296>
- Place Services (2018) Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS)
- The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB (2018). The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2018-2023. Available from <https://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SCH-AONB-Management-Plan-2018-23.pdf>
- Tydlesley, D., and Chapman, C. (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, (Feb 2019) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited. Available at: <https://www.dtapublications.co.uk/>



7. Appendix

Appendix 1. HRA Screening of Individual Policies

Where mitigation is necessary to avoid Likely Significant Effects (LSE), then in line with CJEU *People over Wind* court ruling, this cannot be taken into consideration at HRA Screening Stage 1.

| Policy | Alde-Ore (& Butley) Estuary | Benacre to Easton Bavenis | Blackwater Estuary | Deben Estuary | Essex Estuaries | Hamford Water | Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths & Marshes | Orfordness Shingle-Street | Outer Thames Estuary | Sandlings | Southern North Sea | Staverton Park & The Thicks, Wantisden | Stour and Orwell Estuaries | Will Policy have Likely Significant Effect (LSE) on Habitats sites? |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| Landscape | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | No LSE – The policy aims to conserve and enhance the landscape of the AONB. |
| Coast and Estuaries | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | No LSE – The policy outlines it is a statutory purpose of the AONB to manage the coasts. Communities, businesses and statutory bodies are supported to deliver activity within or adjacent to coastal habitats, subject to |



| Policy | Alde-Ore (& Butley) Estuary | Benacre to Easton Bavenets | Blackwater Estuary | Deben Estuary | Essex Estuaries | Hamford Water | Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths & Marshes | Orfordness Shingle-Street | Outer Thames Estuary | Sandlings | Southern North Sea | Staverton Park & The Thicks, Wantisden | Stour and Orwell Estuaries | Will Policy have Likely Significant Effect (LSE) on Habitats sites? |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | compliance with AONB's statutory purpose. |
| Nature Recovery | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | No LSE – The policy aims to acknowledge nature and climate targets of the AONB. Outlines that nature based solutions and climate change mitigation and adaptation are prioritised to address environmental problems and contribute to nature recovery. |
| Land Use and Planning | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | No LSE – The policy outlines the land management and planning should have regard to and help deliver the AONB statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty. |



| Policy | Alde-Ore (& Butley) Estuary | Benacre to Easton Bavenets | Blackwater Estuary | Deben Estuary | Essex Estuaries | Hamford Water | Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths & Marshes | Orfordness Shingle-Street | Outer Thames Estuary | Sandlings | Southern North Sea | Staverton Park & The Thicks, Wantisden | Stour and Orwell Estuaries | Will Policy have Likely Significant Effect (LSE) on Habitats sites? |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|--|----------------------------|---|
| Landscapes for All | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | No LSE – The policy supports responsible tourism in principle, subject to it not detracting from the AONB statutory purpose. |
| Climate Change | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | No LSE – The policy outlines that projects that deliver climate change adaptation will be supported, as long as they do not detract from AONB purpose. |
| Working Together | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | No LSE – The policy set out the grant aid will be available for individuals, communities businesses where work is proposed to curate landscape conservation and enhancement |



Appendix 2. Coast & Heaths AONB: Management Plan 2023-28

Landscape

- Land management conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the AONB whilst balancing the competing pressures of nature recovery, tackling climate change, food production, supporting livelihoods and public access
- Features that contribute to the AONB's natural beauty are conserved and enhanced
- Projects to remove features that detract from AONB landscape quality are supported
- Landscape change over the plan period is curated to ensure AONB natural beauty indicators and special qualities are conserved and enhanced for future generations
- Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the AONB should have regard to these dark skies by seeking to avoid and minimise light pollution
- Measures should be taken to increase the area of dark skies in the AONB by removing and reducing existing sources of light pollution and seeking further dark sky status for the AONB
- Local distinctiveness of the AONB is conserved and enhanced and better understood

Coast and Estuaries

- The management of coast and estuaries in and adjacent to the AONB consider the statutory purpose of the nationally designated landscape
- Communities, businesses and statutory bodies are supported to deliver activity in the coast, marine and estuarine areas in and adjacent to the nationally designated landscape to deliver statutory purpose
- The defined Heritage Coast and purpose is recognised in decision making
- The protection of the coast and adaptation projects should recognise the AONB's statutory purpose and natural beauty

Nature Recovery

- The Coast & Heaths AONB's Nature Recovery Plan is recognised in Local Nature Recovery Strategies for the area
- Work to deliver targets in the AONB Nature Recovery Plan is undertaken
- Nature based solutions and climate change mitigation and adaptation are prioritised to address environmental problems and contribute to nature recovery
- The offer set out in the 'Colchester Declaration', relating to nature recovery and adaptation to climate change is recognised and delivered



Land Use and Planning

- Land management in the nationally designated landscape and its setting should have regard to and help deliver the AONB statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty
- Projects to remove features that detract from AONB statutory purpose are supported
- Noise pollution and visual disturbance are avoided and minimised to maintain and enhance tranquillity across the AONB
- Proposals that are likely to impact on the historic and cultural heritage of the AONB should have regard to these features and seek to conserve and enhance them.
- Proposals for development considered under the Planning Act 2000 (and subsequent revisions) in the AONB and its setting, such as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, should have regard to AONB purpose and adhere to the mitigation hierarchy
- Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project compensation and mitigation funds maximise the positive contribution to deliver AONB purpose
- Neighbourhood Plans in and adjacent to the nationally designated landscape recognise the AONB purpose

Landscapes for All

- The AONB is enjoyed in a responsible way by everyone
- The visitor economy is based on the natural beauty of the AONB
- Local communities understand the AONB designation and support activity to deliver AONB purpose
- Those visiting and enjoying the AONB are encouraged to act in a way that does not negatively impact the natural beauty and defined features of the AONB
- Tourism facilities, including access provision, does not detract from AONB purpose
- The AONB is an affordable place to live and somewhere that is economically vibrant, such that local people can find jobs in the area

Climate Change

- Climate change mitigation is part of all new development, infrastructure and transport decisions
- Climate change mitigation, including nature recovery, should be a key component of land management practices
- Greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced through a range of measures, including:
 - Development decisions
 - Energy conservation



- Small scale renewables that do not detract from AONB purpose
- Promotion of more sustainable transport
- Projects that deliver climate change adaptation that do not detract from AONB purpose are supported

Working Together

- The AONB Partnership works together and with others to deliver AONB purpose
- The AONB Partnership represents all relevant interests in the AONB and acts as an advocate for AONB purpose
- Grant aid is available for individuals, communities, businesses and organisations to deliver AONB purpose
- People and organisations work together to curate landscape conservation and enhancement



Appendix 3. Characteristics of Habitats sites

| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|--|-----------|---|--|---|
| <p>Alde-Ore Estuary</p> <p>The site comprises the estuary complex of the rivers Alde, Butley and Ore, including Havergate Island and Orfordness. There are a variety of habitats including, intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, vegetated shingle (including the second-largest and best-preserved area in Britain at Orfordness), saline lagoons and grazing marsh. The Orfordness/Shingle Street landform is unique within Britain in combining a shingle spit with a cusped foreland. The site supports nationally-scarce plants, British Red Data Book invertebrates, and notable assemblages of breeding and wintering wetland bird</p> | | | | |
| <p><u>Alde-Ore Estuary SPA</u></p> <p>EU Code: UK9009112</p> | 2403.5 | <p>Qualifying Features and potentially affected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A081 <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>; Eurasian marsh harrier (Breeding) A132 <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>; Pied avocet (Non-breeding) A132 <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>; Pied avocet (Breeding) A151 <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>; Ruff (Non-breeding) A162 <i>Tringa totanus</i>; Common redshank (Non-breeding) | <p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely The population of each of the qualifying features, and, The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. | <p>Hydrological Changes - Flood wall breaches in December 2013 (due to tidal surge) have led to flooding of Hazelwood Marshes and Lantern Marshes south (both currently intertidal). This has led to a loss of nesting habitat and saline lagoons. As a result this has likely impacted populations of qualifying SPA birds.</p> <p>Public Access/Disturbance – Human disturbance to nesting birds on beaches, notably on Orfordness and Shingle Street, by people accessing the southern end of the ness by boat, plus walkers along beach from Aldeburgh, and recreational beach users at Shingle Street. Human trampling affects vegetated shingle habitat. Military and private aircraft (paramotors,</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|--|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A183 <i>Larus fuscus</i>; Lesser black-backed gull (Breeding) • A191 <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>; Sandwich tern (Breeding) • A195 <i>Sterna albifrons</i>; Little tern (Breeding) | | <p>helicopters and planes) regularly fly low over the site leading to disturbance of SPA features, wintering and breeding birds.</p> <p>Inappropriate Coastal Management - Maintaining coastal defences at Bawdsey and Slaughden is leading to increased shingle recharge requirements at Slaughden, and loss of shingle beach at southern end of SAC at Bawdsey. Investigations are required to determine the sustainability of the coastal defence in these areas.</p> <p>Coastal Squeeze - Seawalls afford little scope for natural adaption of the estuary to sea level rise through roll back of habitat. Saltmarsh is at risk of being squeezed in the future (although currently the estuary is perceived as in balance) and limited areas of natural habitat transition within the site could be lost. The developing policy of the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership should consider scope for natural adaption to sea level rise.</p> <p>Inappropriate Pest Control - Fox predation/disturbance is a key issue for breeding birds on Orfordness, particularly Lesser black backed gulls. Foxes can</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|---|
| | | | | <p>cause gulls and other breeding birds to abandon nesting sites, and predate adult birds and chicks.</p> <p>Changes in species distribution - There are negative population trends in bird species using the site. Breeding locations are moving within and away from the designated site, possibly due to habitat change on site, as a reaction to other species and due to draw of other adjacent hinterland habitat. This requires further investigation and possible mitigation.</p> <p>Invasive Species - <i>Spartina anglica</i> is encroaching onto estuarine muds. This may reduce bird roosting and feeding areas of saltmarsh and mudflat.</p> <p>Air Pollution: Impacts of atmospheric nitrogen deposition - Modelled aerial deposits of nitrogen within Alde-Ore exceed the threshold limit above which the diversity of saltmarsh vegetation begins to be altered (possibly to reed) and adversely impacted. This is likely being caused by in combination impacts from land spreading and land use practices with</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|---|--|---|
| | | | | high nutrient inputs e.g. outdoor pig farms. Fisheries: Commercial marine estuarine – In combination impacts from fisheries in European Marine Sites need to be monitored and appropriately managed to avoid potential threats to site condition. |
| <u>Alde-Ore Estuary Ramsar</u> Code: UK11002 | 2546.9 | Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation) Ramsar criterion 2a The site supports a number of nationally-scarce species and British Red Data Book Invertebrates Ramsar Criterion 3b The Site supports a notable assemblage of breeding and wintering wetland birds. Ramsar Criterion 3c During the Breeding Season the site regularly supports internationally important populations of: Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i> Over winter the site regularly supports internally important populations of: <i>Avocet</i> | N/A | (Same as Alde-Ore Estuary SPA) |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | <p><i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>. Redshank <i>Tringa tetanus</i></p> <p>During the Breeding season the area regularly supports: Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>, (Western Europe/Mediterranean/Western Africa), 14070 pairs, representing an average of 11.3% of the breeding population (5 year mean. 1994-1998)</p> <p>Over winter the area regularly supports: <i>Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, (Western Europe/Mediterranean (Breeding)) , 766 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the population (5 year mean 1991/92-1995/96)</p> <p>Redshank <i>Tringa tetanu</i>, (Eastern Atlantic (wintering)), 1919 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the population (5 year peak mean 991/92-1995/96)</p> | | |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|--|-----------|---|--|--|
| <u>Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries SAC</u> EU Code: UK0030076 | 1632.63 | Qualifying Features and potentially affected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> H1130. Estuaries H1140. Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Intertidal mudflats and sandflats H1330. Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) | Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely | (Same as Alde-Ore Estuary SPA) |
| Benacre to Easton Bavents Benacre to Easton Bavents is situated on the east coast of Suffolk and extends southwards from Kessingland to Southwold. The site includes Benacre, Covehithe and Easton broads and excludes the cliffs at Covehithe and Easton Bavents. The variety of habitats present, include semi-natural broadleaved woodland, tall fen vegetation, shingle, dunes and grassland, saltmarsh and coastal lagoons. These habitats are important for breeding, wintering and passage birds. | | | | |
| <u>Benacre to Easton Bavents SPA</u> EU Code: UK9009291 | 470.6 | Qualifying Features and potentially affected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A021 <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>; Great Bittern (Breeding) A081 <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>; Eurasian marsh harrier (Breeding) | Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features | Public Access/Disturbance: The popularity of the beaches and the Ness for walking and dog-walking means the suitability of these areas for terns is greatly reduced. An estimated 36,000 people visit the site and both they and their dogs disturb potential breeding birds on shingle features. Long term disturbance means features are not |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|--|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A195 <i>Sterna albifrons</i>; Little Tern (Breeding) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely The population of each of the qualifying features, and, The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. | <p>always recorded where they would be expected.</p> <p>Water Pollution: Poor water quality in the saline lagoon is causing increased algal growth and a decline in the diversity of invertebrates, and thus the biotope code is being changed.</p> <p>Physical Modification The barrier beaches are retreating into the saline lagoons and reed bed habitat through natural coastal processes, leading to a decrease and potential future loss of the lagoon habitat. The artificial coastal management may exacerbate this problem.</p> <p>Changes in species distributions The Natura 2000 sites are on an actively changing coast and the shingle feature is moving north at approximately 30m per year. The current SPA no longer includes the main area used by little tern for nesting. Bare shingle is becoming vegetated rendering the current habitats unsuitable for the nesting terns, so they are moving north to take up nesting areas on newer shingle.</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|---|--|---|
| <u>Benacre to Easton Barents Lagoons SAC</u> EU Code: UK0013104 | 326.7 | Qualifying Features and potentially affected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>H1150</u>. Coastal lagoons | Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely | Fisheries: Commercial marine estuarine – In combination impacts from fisheries in European Marine Sites need to be monitored and appropriately managed to avoid potential threats to site condition (Same as Benacre to Easton Barents SPA) |

Blackwater Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4)

The Blackwater Estuary is the largest estuary in Essex north of the Thames and, is one of the largest estuarine complexes in East Anglia. Its mudflats, fringed by saltmarsh on the upper shores, support internationally and nationally important numbers of overwintering waterfowl. Shingle and shell banks and offshore islands are also a feature of the tidal flats. The surrounding terrestrial habitats; the sea wall, ancient grazing marsh and its associated fleet and ditch systems, plus semi-improved grassland are also of high conservation interest. This rich mosaic of habitats supports an outstanding assemblage of nationally scarce plants and a nationally important assemblage of rare invertebrates. There are 16 British Red Data Book species and 94 notable and local species.



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|---|--|--|
| <u>Blackwater Estuary SPA</u> (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4) UK9009245 | 4395.15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A046a Branta bernicla bernicla; Dark-bellied brent goose (Non-breeding) A059 Aythya ferina; Common pochard (Breeding) A082 Circus cyaneus; Hen harrier (Non-breeding) A137 Charadrius hiaticula; Ringed plover (Breeding) A141 Pluvialis squatarola; Grey plover (Non-breeding) A149 Calidris alpina alpina; Dunlin (Non-breeding) A156 Limosa limosa islandica; Black-tailed godwit (Non-breeding) | <p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely The population of each of the qualifying features, and, The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. | <p>Coastal Squeeze -</p> <p>Coastal defences along much of the Essex coastline prevent intertidal habitats from shifting landward in response to rising sea levels. As a result, these habitats are being gradually degraded and reduced in extent, with knock-on effects on the waterbirds and other species they support. 'Managed realignment' schemes and additional intervention measures to create new areas of intertidal habitat and reduce erosion rates are being implemented but more will be needed to offset future losses. Grazing marshes in the SIP area are important for waterbirds and are also threatened by sea level rise because most are near or below mean high tide level, currently protected behind seawalls.</p> <p>Public Access/Disturbance-</p> <p>Breeding and overwintering waterbirds are susceptible to human disturbance from a range of land- and water-based activities - including boating and watersports, walking, bait-digging, fishing and wildfowling - as well as low-flying aircraft.</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A195 Sterna albifrons; Little tern (Breeding) • Waterbird assemblage <p>Further information can be found via Natural England's Supplementary Advice.</p> | | <p>Some activities, such as powerboating, may produce physical disturbance to habitats. Moderate levels of disturbance in less sensitive locations may have no significant effect on the numbers of birds using the SIP area but the types, levels and locations of potentially disturbing activities are constantly changing. Managing the changes to minimise the risk of disturbance impacts will require a better understanding of which species and habitats are most susceptible, which types of activity are most disturbing, and which locations and times of year are most sensitive.</p> <p>Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine -</p> <p>Commercial fishing activities categorised as Amber or Green under Defra's revised approach to commercial fisheries in EMSs are being assessed by Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (KEIFCA) to determine whether management is required. For activities categorised as Amber and Green these assessments should take account of any</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|--|
| | | | | <p>relevant in combination effects with other fishing activities. Shellfish dredging over subtidal habitats has been identified as an Amber activity and is considered a high priority for assessment and development of possible management for the site.</p> <p>Planning Permission: general -</p> <p>Several of the issues affecting the Essex Estuaries and the management of disturbance effects on the sites are related to each other, and addressing them is likely to require an improved overview of the relative sensitivities of different habitats, species and locations to different types of development (perhaps summarised as sensitivity maps and matrices for the SIP area). Difficult issues include: (a) Assessing the cumulative effects of numerous, small and often 'non-standard' developments (b) Development outside the SPA/SAC boundaries can have negative impacts, particularly on the estuaries' birds (c) Assessing the indirect, 'knock-on' effects of proposals (d) Pressure to relax planning conditions on existing developments.</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|---|
| | | | | <p>Changes in species distributions - Declines in the numbers of some of the waterbird species using the Essex Estuaries SIP area may be due to changes in their distributions or population levels at a national or continental scale, possibly linked to climate change. For example, milder winters may be allowing birds to overwinter closer to their northern breeding grounds, or changes on the breeding grounds may be reducing breeding success. When assessing SPA condition, distinguishing these types of large-scale effect from effects produced by changes within the site itself is important.</p> <p>Invasive Species - An increase in Pacific oyster <i>Crassostrea gigas</i> settlement and colonisation within the European Marine Site (EMS) may result in areas of foreshore being covered in such numbers as to make them difficult to access and utilise as feeding grounds for overwintering birds. The importance of Pacific oysters for the local shellfish industry is recognised, however Natural</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|---|
| | | | | <p>England would not like to see an overall increase in the extent of foreshore across the EMS populated by Pacific oysters. Other non-native invasive species such as the American whelk tingle <i>Urosalpinx cinerea</i> and Slipper limpet <i>Crepidula fornicata</i> are known to occupy subtidal muddy habitats, potentially impacting native communities through competition for resources and predation.</p> <p>Fisheries: Recreational marine and estuarine -</p> <p>Recreational bait digging may impact waterbirds by reducing prey availability and creating disturbance in intertidal feeding areas. It could also damage the intertidal mudflats and sandflats and associated sub-features and communities, such as eelgrass beds. The extent of the activity and potential impacts on site features are not currently well understood.</p> <p>Fisheries: Recreational marine and estuarine -</p> <p>Bottom towed fishing gear (i.e. any fishing instrument designed to take sea fisheries resources from the seabed) has been</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|---|--|---|
| | | | | categorised as a 'Red' for the interest features listed, specifically the seagrass beds <i>Zostera spp</i> , a sub-feature of the SAC, as part of Defra's revised approach to commercial fisheries management in European Marine Sites (EMS). Appropriate management measures will be implemented and enforced by Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) who have put in place the 'Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw' within the SAC to prohibit the above fishing gear being used over the majority of known seagrass beds. |
| <u>Blackwater Estuary Ramsar site</u> (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4) UK11007 | 4395.15 | <u>Ramsar criterion 1</u> Qualifies by virtue of the extent and diversity of saltmarsh habitat present. This site, and the four others in the Mid-Essex Coast complex, includes a total of 3,237 ha that represent 70% of the saltmarsh habitat in Essex and 7% of the total area of saltmarsh in Britain. | N/A | (Same as above) |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|--|--|--|
| | | <p><u>Ramsar criterion 2</u></p> <p>The invertebrate fauna is well represented and includes at least 16 British Red Data Book species. In descending order of rarity these are: Endangered: a water beetle <i>Paracymus aeneus</i>; Vulnerable: a damselfly <i>Lestes dryas</i>, the flies <i>Aedes flavescens</i>, <i>Erioptera bivittata</i>, <i>Hybomitra expollicata</i> and the spiders <i>Heliophanus auratus</i> and <i>Trichopterna cito</i>; Rare: the beetles <i>Baris scolopacea</i>, <i>Philonthus punctus</i>, <i>Graptodytes bilineatus</i> and <i>Malachius vulneratus</i>, the flies <i>Campsicemus magius</i> and <i>Myopites eximia</i>, the moths <i>Idaea ochrata</i> and <i>Malacosoma castrensis</i> and the spider <i>Euophrys</i>.</p> <p><u>Ramsar criterion 3</u></p> <p>This site supports a full and representative sequences of</p> | | |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | <p>saltmarsh plant communities covering the range of variation in Britain.</p> <p><u>Ramsar criterion 5</u></p> <p>Assemblages of international importance; species with peak counts in winter; 105061 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003)</p> <p><u>Ramsar criterion 6</u></p> <p>Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance:</p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>; Grey plover • <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>; Dunlin | | |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|--|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>; Black-tailed godwit <p>Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.</p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tadoma tadoma</i>; Common shelduck • <i>Pluvialis apricaria apricaria</i>; European golden plover • <i>Tringa totanus</i>; Common redshank | | |
| <p>The Deben Estuary</p> <p>The Deben Estuary lies within East Suffolk District at the southern border of Suffolk. The estuaries include extensive mud-flats, low cliffs, saltmarsh and small areas of vegetated shingle on the lower reaches. The mud-flats hold <i>Enteromorpha</i>, <i>Zostera</i> and <i>Salicornia spp.</i> In summer, the site supports important numbers of breeding Avocet while in winter they hold major concentrations of waterbirds, especially geese, ducks and waders. The geese also feed, and waders roost, in surrounding areas of agricultural land outside the SPA.</p> | | | | |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|---|--|--|
| <u>Deben Estuary SPA</u> EU Code: UK9009261 | 978.93 | <u>Qualifying Features</u> potentially affected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A046a Dark-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> (Non-breeding); A132 Pied Avocet, <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> (breeding) | <p>With regard to the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (“the Qualifying Features” listed below);</p> <p>Avoid the deterioration of the habitats of the Qualifying Features, and the significant disturbance of the qualifying features, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving the aims of The Birds Directive.</p> <p>Subject to natural change, to maintain or restore:</p> <p>The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;</p> <p>The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;</p> <p>The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;</p> <p>The populations of the qualifying features;</p> <p>The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p> | <p>Coastal squeeze –The Deben Estuary coastline is undergoing widespread decline in the quality of saltmarsh, and an increase in lower marsh habitats at the expense of mid and upper marsh vegetation communities. This is likely due to impacts from climate change, such as rising sea level. Unless changes are made to the management of the coastline, Habitats supporting qualifying SPA birds will be lost or degraded through coastal squeeze, sedimentation and reduced exposure.</p> <p>Public access/disturbance – The Deben Estuary is subject to land and water-based activities, including boating and water sports; walking; wildfowling; and low flying aircrafts. These activities are likely to impact Habitats supporting breeding and overwintering water birds. A better understanding of which species and Habitats are most susceptible; which types of activity are most disturbing; and which locations and times of year are most sensitive is required to ensure the Estuaries are appropriately managed</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|---|
| | | | | <p>Changes in species distribution – <i>Spartina anglica</i> is encroaching onto estuarine muds. This may reduce bird roosting and feeding areas of saltmarsh and mudflat.</p> <p>Air Pollution: Impacts of atmospheric nitrogen deposition – Modelled aerial deposits of nitrogen within Deben Estuary exceed the threshold limit above which the diversity of saltmarsh vegetation begins to be altered (possibly to reed) and adversely impacted. This is likely being caused by in combination impacts from land spreading and land use practices with high nutrient inputs e.g. outdoor pig farms.</p> <p>Water Pollution – Inappropriate water quality may impact on the supporting habitats of SPA birds. Eutrophication may be having an influence on reed growth and saltmarsh composition.</p> <p>Increased flood events could lead to habitat change/loss of diversity. Nutrient run off from farming operations could exacerbate the issue. Further monitoring</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|--|-----------|---|--|---|
| | | | | and management of key issues are required. Fisheries: Commercial marine estuarine – In combination impacts from fisheries in European Marine Sites need to be monitored and appropriately managed to avoid potential threats to site condition. |
| <u>Deben Estuary Ramsar site</u> EU Code: UK11017 | 978.93 | Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation) Ramsar criterion 2 Supports a population of the mollusc <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Habitats Directive Annex II (S1014); British Red Data Book Endangered). Martlesham Creek is one of only about fourteen sites in Britain where this species survives Species with peak counts in winter: Dark-bellied Brent Goose, <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> , 1953 individuals, representing an average of 1.9% of the GB | There are no Conservation Objectives set for Ramsar sites. | Similar to Deben Estuary SPA (See above). A key threat identified by RIS was erosion. Erosion – English Nature provides advice to the Environment Agency and coastal local authorities in relation to flood and coastal protection management. This will inform the development of the Suffolk Estuaries strategies and the second generation shoreline management plan. The notes in the RIS for Ramsar sites of factors affecting site's ecological character are not considered as necessary for HRA screening purposes. The assessment under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations is strictly limited to the qualifying features which meet the |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|--|--|--|
| | | <p>population (5-year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)</p> <p>Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:</p> <p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <p>Black-tailed Godwit, <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>, Iceland/W Europe 307 individuals, representing an average of 1.9% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)</p> <p>Common Greenshank, <i>Tringa nebularia</i>, Europe/W Africa 22 individuals, representing an average of 3.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)</p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <p>Bean Goose, <i>Anser fabalis</i>, NW Europe – Wintering 5 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB</p> | | <p>Ramsar criteria. Where the qualifying features of a Ramsar site would or could be adversely affected by a plan or project, the tests at Appropriate Assessment would need to be based on Article 4 of the Ramsar Convention, which allows a Contracting Party (in this case the UK government) to delete or restrict the boundaries of sites only “ in its urgent national interest”.</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | <p>population (Source period not collated)</p> <p>Common Shelduck, <i>Tadoma tadoma</i>, NW Europe 832 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the GB population (5-year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)</p> <p>Pied Avocet, Europe/Northwest Africa 167 individuals, representing an average of 4.9% of the GB population (5-year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)</p> <p>Spotted Redshank, <i>Tringa erythropus</i>, Europe/W Africa 3 individuals, representing an average of 2.2% of the GB population (5-year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)</p> <p>Redshank, <i>Tringa totanus</i> 2124 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the GB population (5-year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)</p> | | |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|--|-----------|--|---|--|
| | | <p>Species Information</p> <p>Nationally important species occurring on the site.</p> <p>Invertebrates: <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Nationally Scarce) & <i>Vertigo pusilla</i> (Nationally Scarce)</p> | | |
| <p>Essex Estuaries</p> <p>The Mid-Essex Coast comprises an extensive complex of estuaries and intertidal sand and silt flats, including several islands, shingle and shell beaches and extensive areas of saltmarsh. The proposed SPA follows the boundaries of five SSSIs: the Colne Estuary, the Blackwater Estuary, Dengie, the River Crouch Marshes and Foulness.</p> | | | | |
| <p><u>Essex Estuaries</u> <u>SAC</u> UK0013690</p> | 46109.95 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>H1110</u> Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time; Subtidal sandbanks • <u>H1130</u> Estuaries • <u>H1140</u> Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Intertidal | <p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats | <p>1. Coastal Squeeze:</p> <p>Coastal defences along much of the Essex coastline prevent intertidal habitats from shifting landward in response to rising sea levels. As a result, these habitats are being gradually degraded and reduced in extent, with knock-on effects on the waterbirds and other species they support. 'Managed realignment'</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|--|--|--|
| | | <p>mudflats and sandflats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>H1310</u> Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand; Glasswort and other annuals colonising mud and sand • <u>H1320</u> Spartina swards (<i>Spartinion maritimae</i>); Cord-grass swards • <u>H1330</u> Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>) • <u>H1420</u> Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (<i>Sarcocornetea fruticosi</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and <p>The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely</p> | <p>schemes and additional intervention measures to create new areas of intertidal habitat and reduce erosion rates are being implemented but more will be needed to offset future losses. Grazing marshes in the SIP area are important for waterbirds and are also threatened by sea level rise because most are near or below mean high tide level, currently protected behind seawalls.</p> <p>2. Public Access/Disturbance:</p> <p>Breeding and overwintering waterbirds are susceptible to human disturbance from a range of land- and water-based activities - including boating and watersports, walking, bait-digging, fishing and wildfowling - as well as low-flying aircraft. Some activities, such as powerboating, may produce physical disturbance to habitats. Moderate levels of disturbance in less sensitive locations may have no significant effect on the numbers of birds using the SIP</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|---|
| | | | | <p>area but the types, levels and locations of potentially disturbing activities are constantly changing. Managing the changes to minimise the risk of disturbance impacts will require a better understanding of which species and habitats are most susceptible, which types of activity are most disturbing, and which locations and times of year are most sensitive.</p> <p>3. Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine</p> <p>Commercial fishing activities categorised as Amber or Green under Defra's revised approach to commercial fisheries in EMSs are being assessed by Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (KEIFCA) to determine whether management is required. For activities categorised as Amber and Green these assessments should take account of any relevant in combination effects with other fishing activities.</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|--|
| | | | | <p>Shellfish dredging over subtidal habitats has been identified as an Amber activity and is considered a high priority for assessment and development of possible management for the site.</p> <p>4. Planning Permission: general</p> <p>Several of the issues affecting the Essex Estuaries and the management of disturbance effects on the sites are related to each other, and addressing them is likely to require an improved overview of the relative sensitivities of different habitats, species and locations to different types of development (perhaps summarised as sensitivity maps and matrices for the SIP area). Difficult issues include: (a) Assessing the cumulative effects of numerous, small and often ‘non-standard’ developments (b) Development outside the SPA/SAC boundaries can have negative impacts, particularly on the estuaries’ birds (c)</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|--|
| | | | | <p>Assessing the indirect, ‘knock-on’ effects of proposals (d) Pressure to relax planning conditions on existing developments.</p> <p>5. Changes in species distributions</p> <p>Declines in the numbers of some of the waterbird species using the Essex Estuaries SIP area may be due to changes in their distributions or population levels at a national or continental scale, possibly linked to climate change. For example, milder winters may be allowing birds to overwinter closer to their northern breeding grounds, or changes on the breeding grounds may be reducing breeding success. When assessing SPA condition, distinguishing these types of large-scale effect from effects produced by changes within the site itself is important.</p> <p>6. Invasive Species:</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|---|
| | | | | <p>An increase in Pacific oyster <i>Crassostrea gigas</i> settlement and colonisation within the European Marine Site (EMS) may result in areas of foreshore being covered in such numbers as to make them difficult to access and utilise as feeding grounds for overwintering birds. The importance of Pacific oysters for the local shellfish industry is recognised, however Natural England would not like to see an overall increase in the extent of foreshore across the EMS populated by Pacific oysters. Other non-native invasive species such as the American whelk tingle <i>Urosalpinx cinerea</i> and Slipper limpet <i>Crepidula fornicata</i> are known to occupy subtidal muddy habitats, potentially impacting native communities through competition for resources and predation.</p> <p>7. Fisheries: Recreational marine and estuarine</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|---|
| | | | | <p>Recreational bait digging may impact waterbirds by reducing prey availability and creating disturbance in intertidal feeding areas. It could also damage the intertidal mudflats and sandflats and associated sub-features and communities, such as eelgrass beds. The extent of the activity and potential impacts on site features are not currently well understood.</p> <p>8. Fisheries: Recreational marine and estuarine</p> <p>Bottom towed fishing gear (i.e. any fishing instrument designed to take sea fisheries resources from the seabed) has been categorised as a 'Red' for the interest features listed, specifically the seagrass beds <i>Zostera</i> spp, a sub-feature of the SAC, as part of Defra's revised approach to commercial fisheries management in European Marine Sites (EMS). Appropriate management measures will be implemented and enforced by Kent</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|--|-----------|---------------------|--|--|
| | | | | <p>and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) who have put in place the 'Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw' within the SAC to prohibit the above fishing gear being used over the majority of known seagrass beds.</p> |
| <p>Hamford Water</p> <p>Hamford Water SPA is located on the north Essex coast, between the towns of Walton-on-the-Naze and Dovercourt. The site is a large shallow estuarine basin comprising tidal creeks, intertidal mud, sand flats and saltmarshes, as well as areas of scrub and unimproved grassland to the landward side of the sea walls.</p> <p>Several islands are located within the basin, including Horsey Island, Skipper's Island, Hedge-End Island and Gamham's Island. All of these islands have substantial areas of saltmarsh on their margins and within their seawalls, where the seawall has breached, providing important feeding and roosting areas for many of the site's qualifying waterbirds.</p> | | | | |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|--|-----------|---|---|--|
| <p>Little terns nest on sand and shingle to the north eastern corner of Horsey Island. The grass fields within the sea wall at Horsey Island are utilised by both wintering and breeding waders and wildfowl. The rough grassland habitat at Skipper's Island supports the largest UK population of the rare Fisher's Estuarine Moth (<i>Gortyna borelii lunata</i>) and large stands of its larval food plant, Hog's Fennel (<i>Peucedanum officinale</i>). This moth is also found in localised areas along the sea wall on the mainland and on several other islands, including Horsey and Hedge-End.</p> <p>Extensive intertidal mudflats provide an abundant food resource for wintering waterbirds and areas of seagrass are exploited by large flocks of brent geese on their autumn arrival. Ducks, grebes and cormorants feed within the sub-tidal waters and little terns are frequently recorded foraging in the shallower water, along the edges and mouths of creeks and channels. There are shingle spits along the coastline between Pewit Island and Dovercourt and between Walton-on-the-Naze and Stone Point. Ringed plover use these areas for nesting. The shingle habitat is topped in places by low, retreating sand dunes and supports several uncommon plants including Sea-holly (<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>), Sea-kale (<i>Crambe maritima</i>) and Sea Sandwort (<i>Honkenya peploides</i>).</p> | | | | |
| <u>Hamford Water SPA</u> EU Code: UK0030377 | 3,532.56 | Qualifying Features: <i>A046a Branta bemica bemica</i> ; Dark-bellied brent goose (Non-breeding) <i>A048 Tadorna tadorna</i> ; Common shelduck (Non-breeding) <i>A052 Anas crecca</i> ; Eurasian teal (Non-breeding) <i>A132 Recurvirostra avosetta</i> ; Pied avocet (Non-breeding) <i>A137 Charadrius hiaticula</i> ; Ringed plover (Non-breeding) | Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features • The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features • The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely • The population of each of the qualifying features, and, | See Essex Estuaries SAC |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | <p>A141 <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>; Grey plover (Non-breeding) A156 <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>; Black-tailed godwit (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A162 <i>Tringa totanus</i>; Common redshank (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A195 <i>Sternula albifrons</i>; Little tern (Breeding)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. | |
| <p><u>Hamford Water Ramsar site</u></p> <p>Site Code: UK11028</p> | 2187.2 | <p>Ramsar criterion 6 – species/population occurring at levels of international importance.</p> <p>Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):</p> <p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ringed plover, <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> Common redshank, <i>Tringa totanus tetanus</i> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> | N/A | N/A |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|--|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dark-bellied brent goose, <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> Black-tailed godwit, <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> <p>Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6. Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey plover, <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> | | |
| <u>Hamford Water SAC</u> EU Code: UK0030377 | 50.34 | Qualifying features potentially impacted: <u>S4035</u> . <i>Gortyna borelii lunata</i> ; Fisher's estuarine moth | Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely | See Essex Estuaries SAC |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|--|-----------|--|--|---|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The population of each of the qualifying features, and, <p>The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. The populations of qualifying species, and,</p> <p>The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</p> | |
| Minsmere – Walberswick | | | | |
| <p>Minsmere – Walberswick is situated within East Suffolk District. This composite, Suffolk coastal site contains a complex mosaic of habitats, notably, areas of marsh with dykes, extensive reedbeds, mudflats, lagoons, shingle and driftline, woodland and areas of lowland heath. The site supports the largest continuous stand of reed in England and Wales and demonstrates the nationally rare transition in grazing marsh ditch plants from brackish to fresh water. The combination of habitats creates an exceptional area of scientific interest supporting nationally scarce plants, British Red Data Book invertebrates and nationally important numbers of breeding and wintering birds.</p> | | | | |
| <u>Minsmere-Walberswick SPA</u> EU Code: UK9009101 | 1997.67 | <u>Qualifying Features</u> potentially affected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A021 <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>; Great Bittern (Breeding) A051 <i>Mareca strepera</i>; Gadwall (Non-breeding) A051 <i>Mareca strepera</i>; Gadwall (Breeding) A052 <i>Anas crecca</i>; Eurasian Teal (Breeding) | <p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <p>The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features</p> <p>The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features</p> <p>The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely</p> | <p>Coastal squeeze – Coastal defences are present along most of the Minsmere – Walberswick coastline to mitigate for impacts from climate change, such as rising sea level. Unless changes are made to the management of the coastline, Habitats supporting qualifying SPA birds will be lost or degraded through coastal squeeze, sedimentation and reduced exposure.</p> <p>Public access/disturbance – Minsmere – Walberswick is subject to land and</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---|---|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A056 <i>Spatula clypeata</i>; Northern Shoveler (Breeding) • A056 <i>Spatula clypeata</i>; Northern Shoveler (Non-breeding) • A081 <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>; Eurasian Marsh Harrier (Breeding) • A082 <i>Circus cyaneus</i>; Hen Harrier (Non-breeding) • A132 <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>; Pied Avocet (Breeding) • A195 <i>Sterna albifrons</i>; Little Tern (Breeding) • A224 <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>; European Nightjar (Breeding) • A394 <i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i>; Greater White-fronted Goose (Non-breeding) | <p>The population of each of the qualifying features, and, The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p> | <p>water-based activities, including boating and water sports; walking; wildfowling; and low flying Private and MOD aircrafts. These activities are likely to impact Habitats supporting breeding and overwintering water birds. A better understanding of which species and Habitats are most susceptible; which types of activity are most disturbing; and which locations and times of year are most sensitive is required to ensure the Estuaries are appropriately managed.</p> <p>Changes in species distribution – Declines in the number of bird species present at Minsmere – Walberswick coastline have occurred. This is likely to be the result of changes in population and distribution on an international scale, due to climate change.</p> <p>Invasive species – <i>Spartina anglica</i> is encroaching onto estuarine muds. This may reduce bird roosting and feeding areas of saltmarsh and mudflat.</p> <p>Inappropriate Pest Control: Pest species, particularly Corvids and gulls, are attracted by feed of nearby outdoor pig</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|---|
| | | | | <p>farming. The increased populations of these species likely cause increased predation and disturbance of SPA/SAC features.</p> <p>Air Pollution – Impacts of atmospheric nitrogen deposition: Modelled aerial deposits of nitrogen within Minsmere – Walberswick exceed the threshold limit above which the diversity of heathland vegetation begins to be altered and adversely impacted. This is likely being caused by in combination impacts from land spreading and land use practices with high nutrient inputs e.g. outdoor pig farms.</p> <p>Water Pollution: Inappropriate surface and ground water quality may impact on SPA/SAC features. The estuary water is nutrient rich with high pollutant levels. Eutrophication is having an influence on reed. Increased flood events could lead to habitat change/loss of diversity. Nutrient run off from outdoor pig farming could exacerbate the issue locally. Ground water pollution on light lands from land use practices such as treatment plants,</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|--|--|--|
| | | | | <p>land spreading, outdoor pigs, high nutrient inputs</p> <p>on fields may be an issue locally. Further monitoring and management of key issues are required.</p> <p>Deer: High numbers of red deer are damaging reedbed, woodland and heathland habitat. Minsmere RSPB Reserve has started a culling programme to control deer populations.</p> |
| <p><u>Minsmere- Walberswick Ramsar Site</u></p> <p>EU Code: UK11044</p> | 2018.92 | <p>Ramsar criterion 1</p> <p>The site contains a mosaic of marine, freshwater, marshland and associated habitats, complete with transition areas in between. Contains the largest continuous stand of reedbeds in England and Wales and rare transition in grazing marsh ditch plants from brackish to fresh water.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 2</p> <p>This site supports nine nationally scarce plants and at</p> | There are no Conservation Objectives set for Ramsar sites. | <p>The RIS identified the following Factors affecting the site's ecological character:</p> <p>Erosion: Onsite impacts, major impact – Coastal squeeze within the Blyth Estuary.</p> <p>Recreational/tourism disturbance (unspecified): Onsite impacts, major impact – Trampling damage to vegetated shingle and driftline communities, and disturbance of little tern nesting habitat.</p> <p>The notes in the RIS for Ramsar sites of factors affecting site's ecological character are not considered as necessary for HRA screening purposes. The assessment under the provisions of the Habitats</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|--|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | <p>least 26 red data book invertebrates. Supports a population of the mollusc <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Habitats Directive Annex II; British Red Data Book Endangered), recently discovered on the Blyth estuary river walls. An important assemblage of rare breeding birds associated with marshland and reedbeds including: <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>, <i>Mareca strepera</i>, <i>Anas crecca</i>, <i>Spatula clypeata</i>, <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>, <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, <i>Panurus biarmicus</i></p> | | <p>Regulations is strictly limited to the qualifying features which meet the Ramsar criteria. Where the qualifying features of a Ramsar site would or could be adversely affected by a plan or project, the tests at Appropriate Assessment would need to be based on Article 4 of the Ramsar Convention, which allows a Contracting Party (in this case the UK government) to delete or restrict the boundaries of sites only “ in its urgent national interest”.</p> |
| <p><u>Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths & Marshes SAC</u> EU Site Code:</p> | 1256.57 | <p><u>Qualifying Features</u> potentially affected:</p> <p><u>H1210</u>. Annual vegetation of drift lines</p> <p><u>H1220</u>. Perennial vegetation of stony banks; Coastal shingle vegetation outside the reach of waves</p> | <p>With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the ‘Qualifying Features’ listed below), and subject to natural change;</p> <p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> | <p>Same as Minsmere- Walberswick SPA (See above)</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|--|-----------|--|--|--|
| | | <u>H4030</u> . European dry heaths | <p>The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats</p> <p>The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and</p> <p>The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely</p> | |
| <p>Orfordness Shingle-Street</p> <p>Orfordness is an extensive shingle structure consisting of a foreland, a 15 km-long spit and a series of recurves running from north to south. It supports some of the largest and most natural sequences in the UK of shingle vegetation affected by salt spray. The southern end has a particularly fine series of undisturbed ridges, with zonation of communities determined by the ridge pattern. Pioneer communities with sea pea <i>Lathyrus japonicus</i> and False Oat-grass <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i> grassland occur. Locally these are nutrient-enriched by the presence of a gull colony; elsewhere they support rich lichen communities.</p> <p>Drift-line vegetation occurs on the sheltered, western side of the spit, at the transition from shingle to saltmarsh, as well as on the exposed eastern coast. The drift-line community is widespread and comprises sea beet <i>Beta vulgaris</i> ssp. <i>maritima</i> and orache <i>Atriplex</i> spp.</p> <p>The site also includes a series of percolation lagoons that have developed in the shingle bank adjacent to the shore at the mouth of the Ore estuary. The salinity of the lagoons is maintained by percolation through the shingle, although at high tides sea water can overtop the shingle bank.</p> | | | | |
| <p><u>Orfordness – Shingle Street SAC</u></p> <p>EU Code: UK0014780</p> | 888 | <p>Qualifying Features and potentially affected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>H1150</u>. Coastal lagoons • <u>H1210</u>. Annual vegetation of drift lines • <u>H1220</u>. Perennial vegetation of stony banks; | <p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> | See Alde Ore Estuary |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | Coastal shingle vegetation outside the reach of waves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely | |
| <p>Outer Thames Estuary</p> <p>The Outer Thames Estuary SPA is located on the east coast of England between the counties of Norfolk (on the north side) and Kent (on the south side) and extends into the North Sea. The site comprises areas of shallow and deeper water, high tidal current streams and a range of mobile mud, sand, silt and gravely sediments extending into the marine environment, incorporating areas of sand banks often exposed at low tide. Intertidal mud and sand flats are found further towards the coast and within creeks and inlets inland down the Blyth estuary and the Crouch and Roach estuaries. The diversity of marine habitats and associated species is reflected in existing statutory protected area designations, some of which overlap or about the SPA.</p> | | | | |
| <u>Outer Thames Estuary SPA</u> UK9020309 | 392451.66 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A001 <i>Gavia stellata</i>; Red-throated diver (Non-breeding) A193 <i>Sterna hirundo</i>; Common tern (Breeding) A195 <i>Sternula albifrons</i>; Little tern (Breeding) | Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features | Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine: Commercial fishing activities categorised as 'amber or green' under Defra's revised approach to commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites (EMS) require assessment and (where appropriate) management. This assessment will be undertaken by the Eastern IFCA and the Kent & Essex IFCA, and the Marine |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--|--|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely The population of each of the qualifying features, and, <p>The distribution of the qualifying features within the site</p> | <p>Management Organisation. For activities categorised as 'green', these assessments should take account of any in-combination effects of amber activities, and/or appropriate plans or projects, in the site.</p> <p>The gear types being assessed are towed demersal gear and dredges, and suction dredges for cockles as well as static/passive fishing gear methods such as set gillnets and drift netting represent potentially the most serious direct risk from fishing activity to the birds themselves. Disturbance and displacement effects may arise from boat movements associated with fishing activities. Removal of fish and larger molluscs can have a significant impact on the structure and functioning of benthic communities. Entanglement in static fishing nets is an important cause of death for red-throated divers in the UK waters. Netting is widespread across the sandbanks but is seasonal and occurs primarily when the Red-throated diver population is not at its peak. The scale of by-catch within the site has been assessed by the Kent & Essex IFCA, and</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|--|--|---|
| | | | | was not found to be problematic and so can be deemed to be low-risk. |
| <p>Sandlings</p> <p>The site lies near the Suffolk coast between the Deben Estuary and Leiston. In the 19th century, the area was dominated by heathland developed on glacial sandy soils. During the 20th century, large areas of heath were planted with blocks of commercial conifer forest and others were converted to arable agriculture. Lack of traditional management has resulted in the remnant areas of heath being subject to successional changes, with the consequent spread of bracken, shrubs and trees, although recent conservation management work is resulting in their restoration. The heaths support both acid grassland and heather-dominated plant communities, with dependant invertebrate and bird communities of conservation value. Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i> and Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> have also adapted to breeding in the large conifer forest blocks, using areas that have recently been felled and recent plantation, as well as areas managed as open ground.</p> | | | | |
| <p>Sandlings SPA</p> <p>EU Site code: UK9020286</p> | 3,391.80 | <p><u>Qualifying Features</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A224 <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>; <p>European nightjar (Breeding) A246 <i>Lullula arborea</i>; Woodlark (Breeding)</p> | <p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <p>The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features</p> <p>The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features</p> <p>The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely</p> <p>The population of each of the qualifying features, and, The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in species distribution Inappropriate scrub control Deer Air pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition <p>Public Access / Disturbance</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|--|---|---|
| <p>Southern North Sea</p> <p>The Southern North Sea SAC lies along the east coast of England, predominantly in the offshore waters of the central and southern North Sea, from north of Dogger Bank to the Straits of Dover in the south. This site stretches from the central North Sea (north of Dogger Bank) to the Straits of Dover in the south, covering an area of 36,951 km², making it the largest SAC in UK and European waters at the point of designation in 2019.</p> <p>The Southern North Sea SAC is an area of importance for harbour porpoise, supporting an estimated 17.5% of the UK North Sea Management Unit (MU) population. Approximately two-thirds of the site, the northern part, is recognised as important for porpoises during the summer season, whilst the southern part supports persistently higher densities during the winter.</p> | | | | |
| Southern North Sea SAC EU Code: UK0030395 | 3695054 | Qualifying features potentially affected: Annex II species: <u>Harbour porpoise</u> <u>(<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>)</u> | The conservation objectives (CO) for the Southern North Sea SAC are: to ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for harbour porpoise in UK waters. In the context of natural change, this will be achieved by ensuring that: CO 1. Harbour porpoise is a viable component of the site. CO 2. There is no significant disturbance of the species. | <p>Entanglement / Bycatch: Potential Mortality Injury</p> <p>Contaminants: Effects on water and prey quality Bioaccumulation through contaminated prey ingestion</p> <p>Anthropogenic underwater sound: Mortality Internal injury Disturbance leading to behavioural changes Habitat changes/loss</p> <p>Reduction in prey resource: Reduction in food availability Increased competition Displacement from natural range</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|--|--|--|
| | | | CO 3. The condition of supporting habitats and processes, and the availability of prey is maintained. | Collision with vessels or installations: Mortality Injury |
| Staverton Park & The Thicks, Wantisden | | | | |
| <p>This site is representative of old oak <i>Quercus</i> spp. woods, and its ancient oaks have rich invertebrate and epiphytic lichen assemblages. Despite being in the most 'continental' part of southern Britain, the epiphytic lichen flora of this site includes rare and Atlantic species, such as <i>Haemotomma elatinum</i>, <i>Lecidea cinnabarina</i>, <i>Thelotrema lepadinum</i>, <i>Graphis elegans</i> and <i>Stenocybe septata</i>. Part of the site includes an area of old holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> trees that are probably the largest in Britain. The site has a very well-documented history and good conservation of woodland structure and function</p> | | | | |
| <u>Staverton Park and The Thicks, Wantisden SAC</u> EU Code: UK0012741 | 84.28 | Qualifying features potentially affected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>H9190</u>. Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains; Dry oak-dominated woodland | Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Forestry and woodland management Disease Public Access / Disturbance Deer Hydrological changes Air Pollution impacts of atmospheric nitrogen deposition |
| The Stour and Orwell estuaries | | | | |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|----------------|--|---|---|
| <p>These estuaries straddle the eastern part of the Essex/Suffolk border in eastern England. The estuaries include extensive mud-flats, low cliffs, saltmarsh and small areas of vegetated shingle on the lower reaches. The mud-flats hold <i>Enteromorpha</i>, <i>Zostera</i> and <i>Salicornia</i> spp. The site also includes an area of low-lying grazing marsh at Shotley Marshes on the south side of the Orwell. In summer, the site supports important numbers of breeding Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, while in winter they hold major concentrations of water birds, especially geese, ducks and waders. The geese also feed, and waders roost, in surrounding areas of agricultural land outside the SPA. The site has close ecological links with the Hamford Water and Mid-Essex Coast SPAs, lying to the south on the same coast.</p> | | | | |
| <p><u>Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA</u></p> <p>EU Code: UK9009121</p> | <p>3676.92</p> | <p><u>Qualifying Features</u> potentially affected:</p> <p>Annex I species:</p> <p>Over winter: Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i></p> <p>This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species: Over winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> • Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> • Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> • Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> • Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> | <p>With regard to the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (“the Qualifying Features” listed below);</p> <p>Avoid the deterioration of the Habitats of the qualifying features, and the significant disturbance of the qualifying features, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving the aims of the Birds Directive.</p> <p>Subject to natural change, to maintain or restore:</p> <p>The extent and distribution of the Habitats of the qualifying features;</p> <p>The structure and function of the Habitats of the qualifying features;</p> <p>The supporting processes on which the Habitats of the qualifying features rely;</p> | <p>Coastal squeeze – Coastal defences are present along most of the Orwell coastline to mitigate for impacts from climate change, such as rising sea level. Unless changes are made to the management of the coastline, Habitats supporting qualifying SPA birds will be lost or degraded through coastal squeeze, sedimentation and reduced exposure.</p> <p>Public access/disturbance – Stour and Orwell Estuaries is subject to land- and water-based activities, including boating and water sports; walking; bait-digging; fishing; wildfowling; and military overflight training. These activities are likely to impact Habitats supporting breeding and overwintering water birds. A better understanding of which species and Habitats are most susceptible; which types of activity are most disturbing; and which locations and times of year are</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|--|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> • Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> • Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> <p>The area qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> • Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> • Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> • Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> • Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> • Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> • Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> • Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> • Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> | <p>The populations of the qualifying features;</p> <p>The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p> | <p>most sensitive is required to ensure the Estuaries are appropriately managed.</p> <p>Changes in species distribution – Declines in the number of bird species present at Orwell coastline have occurred. This is likely to be the result of changes in population and distribution on an international scale, due to climate change.</p> <p>Invasive species – An increase in <i>Spartina anglica</i> may be affecting the growth of <i>Spartina maritima</i>, a key habitat feature for qualifying bird roosting and feeding areas of saltmarsh and mudflat.</p> <p>Planning permission: General – The issue of development in combination with other factors is not fully understood. To ensure management is appropriate to the SPA a better understanding of the sensitivities relating to each habitat, species and location to different types of development is required. Difficult issues highlighted by the SIP include; a) Assessing the cumulative effects of numerous, small and often ‘non- standard’ developments. B) Development outside the SPA boundary can have negative</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> • Dark-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> • Wigeon <i>Mareca penelope</i> • Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i> • Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> • Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> • Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i> • Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> | | <p>impacts, particularly on the estuaries' birds. C) Assessing the indirect, 'knock-on' effects of proposals. D) Pressure to relax planning conditions on existing developments.</p> <p>Air pollution: impact from atmospheric nitrogen deposition – Atmospheric nitrogen deposition exceeds the relevant critical loads for coastal dune Habitats used by breeding terns and hence there is a risk of harmful effects.</p> <p>Inappropriate coastal management – Due to the presence of existing hard sea defences, such as sea walls there is little scope for adaptation to rising sea levels. Any freshwater Habitats behind failing seawalls are likely to be inundated by seawater, which would result in the loss of this habitat within the SPA.</p> <p>5. Fisheries: Commercial and estuarine – Commercial fishing activities can be very damaging to inshore marine Habitats and the bird species dependent on the communities they support. Any 'amber or green' categorised</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|---|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | | | commercial fishing activities in Habitats Marine Sites are assessed by Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA). This assessment takes into account any in-combination effects of amber activities and/or appropriate plans or projects. |
| <u>Stour and Orwell Estuaries Ramsar site</u> EU Code: UK11067 | 3676.92 | Ramsar criterion 2 Contains seven nationally scarce plants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stiff Saltmarsh-grass <i>Puccinellia rupestris</i> • Small Cord-grass <i>Spartina maritime</i> • Perennial Glasswort <i>Sarcocornia perennis</i> • Lax-flowered Sea Lavender <i>Limonium humile</i> • Eelgrasses <i>Zostera angustifolia</i>, <i>Z. marina</i> and <i>Z. noltei</i>. | There are no Conservation Objectives set for Ramsar sites. | Similar to Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA (See above). A key threat identified by RIS was erosion. Erosion – Natural coastal processes exacerbated by fixed sea defences, port development and maintenance dredging. Erosion is being tackled through sediment replacement for additional erosion that can be attributed to port development and maintenance dredging. A realignment site has been created on-site to make up for the loss of habitat due to capital dredging. General background erosion has not been tackled although a Flood Management Strategy for the site is being produced. |



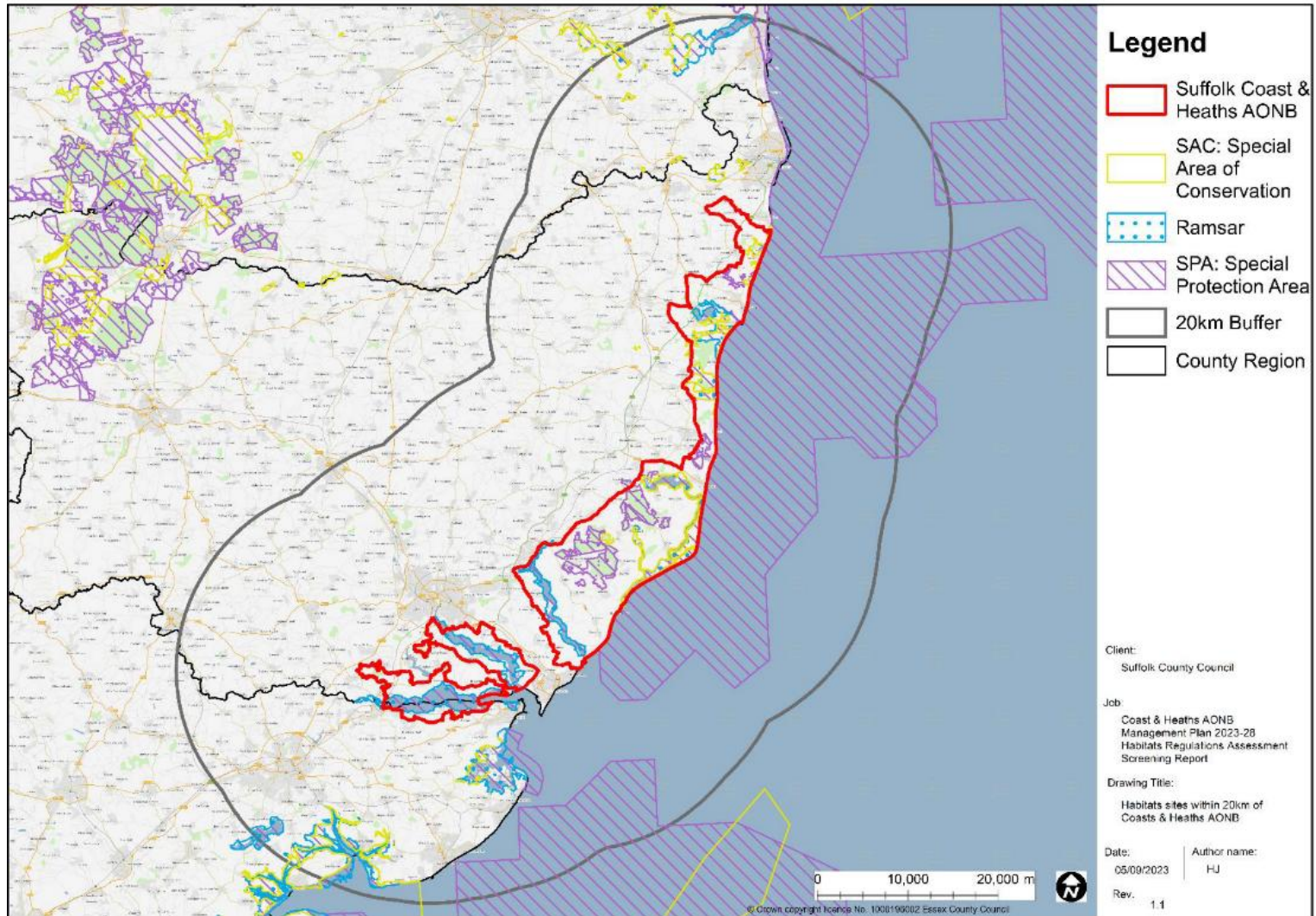
| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | <p>Ramsar criterion 5</p> <p>Assemblages of international importance; species with peak counts in winter; 63,017 waterfowl.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 6</p> <p>Species/ populations occurring at levels of international importance:</p> <p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redshank, <i>Tringa totanus</i> • Species with peak counts in winter: • Dark-bellied Brent Goose, <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> • Northern Pintail, <i>Anas acuta</i> • Grey Plover, <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> • Red Knot, <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i> • Dunlin, <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> | | <p>The notes in the RIS for Ramsar sites of factors affecting site's ecological character are not considered as necessary for HRA screening purposes. The assessment under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations is strictly limited to the qualifying features which meet the Ramsar criteria. Where the qualifying features of a Ramsar site would or could be adversely affected by a plan or project, the tests at Appropriate Assessment would need to be based on Article 4 of the Ramsar Convention, which allows a Contracting Party (in this case the UK government) to delete or restrict the boundaries of sites only "in its urgent national interest".</p> |



| Site name | Area (ha) | Qualifying Features | Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs) | Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity |
|-----------|-----------|---|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Black-tailed Godwit, <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> | | |



Appendix 4. Habitats Sites within 20km of the Coasts and Heaths AONB





Place Services

Essex County Council

County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1QH

T: +44 (0)333 013 6840

E: enquiries@placeservices.co.uk

www.placeservices.co.uk

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Essex County Council