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**Assessment of Coastal Access Proposals  
between Aldeburgh and Sizewell  
on sites and features of nature conservation concern  
29<sup>th</sup> January 2020**





## Nature Conservation Assessment for Coastal Access Proposals between Aldeburgh and Sizewell

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### About this document

This document should be read in conjunction with the published Reports for the Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea Stretch and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

The Coastal Access Reports contain a full description of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures that have been included. These Reports can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-aldeburgh-to-hopton-on-sea>

An HRA is required for European sites (SPA, SAC and Ramsar sites). The HRA is published alongside the Coastal Access Reports.

This document, the Nature Conservation Assessment (NCA), covers all other aspects (including SSSIs, MCZs and undesignated but locally important sites and features) **in so far as any HRA does not already address the issue for the sites and feature(s) in question.**

The NCA is arranged site by site. Figures 1 and 2 show maps of the designated sites along this stretch of coast.

See Annex 1 for an index to designated sites and features for this stretch of coast, including features that have been considered within any HRA.



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## Introduction

A summary of designated sites and features on this stretch of coast is set out in the table below. The final column indicates whether the feature is considered within the HRA which accompanies the reports for Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea, or whether they are considered in this document. (Any feature which is part of a European designated site will be assessed within the HRA, but some SSSI features may also be included).

### Designated sites and features between Aldeburgh and Sizewell

Designated sites and features	SPA	SSSI	HRA or
			NCA
<b>Sandlings SPA</b>			
Breeding European nightjar ( <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> )	✓		HRA
Breeding woodlark ( <i>Lullula arborea</i> )	✓		HRA
<b>Outer Thames Estuary SPA</b>	✓		
Additional Qualifying Feature: breeding common tern ( <i>Sterna hirundo</i> ) - protection for little and common tern foraging areas	✓		HRA
Additional Qualifying Feature: breeding little tern ( <i>Sterna albifrons</i> ) - protection for little and common tern foraging areas	✓		HRA
Wintering red-throated diver ( <i>Gavia stellata</i> )	✓		HRA
<b>Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI</b>			
Aggregations of breeding birds			
Gadwall ( <i>Mareca strepera</i> )		✓	NCA
Marsh Harrier ( <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> )		✓	NCA
Woodlark ( <i>Lullula arborea</i> )	✓	✓	HRA
Aggregations of non-breeding birds			
Shoveler ( <i>Spatula clypeata</i> )		✓	NCA
White-fronted goose ( <i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i> )		✓	NCA
Assemblages of breeding birds - Lowland damp grasslands		✓	NCA
Assemblages of breeding birds - Lowland open waters and their margins		✓	NCA



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Designated sites and features	SPA	SSSI	HRA or
			NCA
H1 - <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> - <i>Festuca ovina</i> heath		✓	NCA
Lowland ditch systems		✓	NCA
Outstanding dragonfly assemblage		✓	NCA
S4 - <i>Phragmites australis</i> swamp and reed-beds		✓	NCA
SD1 - <i>Rumex crispus</i> - <i>Glaucium flavum</i> shingle community		✓	NCA
U1 b,c,d,f - <i>Festuca ovina</i> - <i>Agrostis capillaris</i> - <i>Rumex acetosella</i> grassland		✓	NCA
Variety of breeding bird species (70)		✓	NCA
Vascular plant assemblage		✓	NCA
W1 - <i>Salix cinerea</i> - <i>Galium palustre</i> woodland		✓	NCA
W2 - <i>Salix cinerea</i> - <i>Betula pubescens</i> - <i>Phragmites australis</i> woodland		✓	NCA
Other features of concern			
Breeding ringed plover, <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> . This species is Red listed on Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (2015 update);			NCA



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### Sandlings SPA

The **Sandlings SPA** is designated for breeding European nightjar (*Caprimulaus europaeus*) and breeding woodlark (*Lullula arborea*).

The qualifying features are assessed as part of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-aldeburgh-to-hopton-on-sea>

### Outer Thames Estuary SPA

The qualifying feature for the **Outer Thames Estuary SPA** is the largest aggregation of wintering red-throated diver (*Gavia stellata*) in the UK, an estimated population of 6,466 individuals which is 38% of the wintering population of Great Britain. The SPA has Additional Qualifying Features: foraging areas for breeding common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and breeding little tern (*Sterna albifrons*). Reference is also made within the HRA.

### Southern North Sea SAC

The Southern North Sea Special Area of Conservation has been considered alongside our proposals and we have concluded that there could not be an impact on the special interest (marine) features due to the spatial separation between them and walkers using the proposed route of the England Coast Path. Reference is also made within the HRA.



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### Assessment of coastal access proposals on:

#### The Haven Local Nature Reserve

The Haven LNR lies wholly within the Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI.

The Haven LNR lies to the north of Aldeburgh and was historically the entrance to a very active sea port and, in common with many other parts locally, it eventually became landlocked as the soft coastline changed shape and new shingle bars developed. Behind the shingle, shallow lagoons and large reedbeds can often be found, many protected as nature reserves in recognition of their special wildlife value.

#### Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI

Is this site also part of a European site? Yes

Note that notified features of the SSSI that are also qualifying features of the European site are omitted from this assessment. Please see table above.

**Aggregations of breeding birds - gadwall (*Mareca strepera*), marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), woodlark (*Lullula arborea*) and Aggregations of non-breeding birds – gadwall, shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*), white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons albifrons*)**

These features are all found on units that are reedbeds, water bodies and floodplain grazing marsh, that are spatially separated from the proposed trail, including by a road, ditches and hedging. We therefore do not consider the proposals for the England Coast Path will have an adverse impact on these features.

**Lowland ditch systems; Outstanding dragonfly assemblage; Lowland dry acid grassland - U1 b,c,d,f - *Festuca ovina* - *Agrostis capillaris* - *Rumex acetosella* grassland; Lowland dry heath - H1 - *Calluna vulgaris* - *Festuca ovina* heath; Lowland wetland including basin fen, valley fen, floodplain fen, waterfringe fen, spring/flush fen and raised bog lag - S4 - *Phragmites australis* swamp and reed-beds; and Wet woodland: W1 - *Salix cinerea* - *Galium palustre* and W2 - *Salix cinerea* - *Betula pubescens* - *Phragmites australis***



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These features are also spatially separated from walkers, by a road, hedges and ditches. We therefore do not consider there will be a detrimental impact on them as a result of our proposals for the England Coast Path.

### **Assemblages of breeding birds - Lowland damp grasslands; Assemblages of breeding birds - Lowland open waters and their margins and Assemblages of breeding birds – variety of species - Variety of breeding bird species (70)**

These features can be expected to be found across the site, but use in particular those units associated with open water bodies and deciduous woodland, which are spatially separated from the proposed trail and margin. We therefore do not consider there will be a detrimental impact on them as a result of our proposals for the England Coast Path.

### **Vascular plant assemblage**

These features are found on a number of units across the site, the majority of which are spatially separated from walkers and will be unaffected by our proposals.

However, two units host this assemblage along the sand/ shingle area at The Haven at sections AHS-1-S003 to AHS-1-S007. This is associated with coastal vegetated shingle and is considered further in this NCA.

### **Coastal vegetated shingle - SD1 - *Rumex crispus* - *Glaucium flavum* shingle community**

This feature occurs across six units of the designated site: two are landward of the road and will be unaffected by our proposals but the remaining four form part of the trail or margin of the England Coast Path.





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The other four units are covered by the trail and margin proposed as part of the England Coast Path.

### Little tern, common tern and ringed plover

Areas of Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI provide potential habitat for:-

- **Little tern** currently identified as a conservation priority - Amber listed in Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (2015 update); Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 - protected under Schedule 1; EC Birds Directive - listed in Annex 1 and as a migratory species.
- **Common tern** - currently identified as a conservation priority in the following: Amber listed in Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (2015 update); EC Birds Directive - listed in Annex 1 and as a migratory species.
- **Ringed plover** – Red listed in Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (2015 update); EC Birds Directive - listed in Annex 1 and as a migratory species.

These birds nest on shingle and vulnerable to disturbance/trampling if visitor pressure was to increase.

The features are not interest features of the SSSI and are not currently recorded as nesting on the SSSI, but we recognise and support the additional conservation effort being made on the Leiston to Aldeburgh SSSI to provide a safe nesting area for little tern and ringed plover by informal fencing of areas of shingle (just north of The Haven).

Their foraging area is also part of the extension to the Outer Thames Estuary SPA which lies adjacent to the entire stretch from Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea and breeding little tern and common tern are additional qualifying features of the SPA which are fully considered in the associated HRA.



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### Assessment of features which may be affected by ECP proposals

#### Market Cross Place to the Sluice (AHS-1-S003 to AHS-1-S006)

The unit has a main shingle vegetated ridge with sparse vegetation in places. There is more stable shingle behind the main shingle ridge. The vegetation (there are many areas of shingle with no vegetation behind the main ridge) grades into short grassland with lichens, plus heathy communities. There is limited evidence of zonation including to other habitats (such as acid grassland, heath etc.) although much zonation has been disrupted by trampling/disturbance and constrained by the car park and road to the west.

Around the memorial sculpture and car park entrance to the beach, there is no vegetation. The intertidal/shoreline area abuts the main ridge with a sharp shingle cliff in places. There is no increase in constraints to shingle mobility in the active foreshore zone apart from a long established pier/groyne to the north of the unit. There is a decrease in the extent of vegetated shingle due to natural change. Loss of vegetated substrate within the unit as a result of anthropogenic activities is of serious concern, there is much trampling throughout the unit. Species composition targets were not met when last assessed, however, there were characteristic species present and a good mosaic of habitats.

Two areas of vegetation have been roped off (with explanatory signage) to act as an exclusion zone and a third is proposed. Working with Natural England, the then Suffolk Coastal District Council (now East Suffolk Council) wardening scheme ran from 2008, supported by a specific leaflet, to raise awareness of the importance of vegetated shingle as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund Touching the Tide project and included undertaking some monitoring. Photographic surveys show no decline in vegetation since 2007. The last assessment found this unit to be in unfavourable condition but 'recovering' due to the mitigation in place. It is 'at risk' due to the high recreational pressure it is under. More detailed monitoring of vegetated shingle is recommended to accurately gauge any loss or development of vegetation, possibly using aerial photography. This will form part of the management discussions between the Responsible Officer in Natural England and the land manager and owners.

These units are already impacted by a high level of access. Any further increase in visitor pressure may increase damage to plant communities especially if new access points or desire lines were to develop.



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### **The Sluice to Haven House (AHS-1-S006 to AHS-1-S009)**

This unit has a main vegetated shingle ridge with sparse vegetation in places. There is more stable shingle behind the main shingle ridge. The vegetation grades into short grassland with lichens, plus heathy communities but there are many areas of shingle with no vegetation behind the main ridge.

Limited zonation was evident during the latest condition assessment, including to other habitats (acid grassland, heath etc.) although much zonation has been disrupted by trampling/disturbance and is constrained by a road to the west. The intertidal/shoreline area abuts the main ridge; a sharp shingle cliff with much erosion and roots of sea kale, etc. showing through exists along the unit length on the beach. There is no increase in constraints to shingle mobility in the active foreshore zone, apart from a long-established pier/groynes to the south of the unit.

There is a decrease in the extent of vegetated shingle due to natural change. Loss of vegetated substrate within the unit as a result of anthropogenic activities is also of serious concern. The whole unit is heavily used by people walking dogs, etc. There is much trampling throughout the unit. The species composition was not met. However, there were many characteristic species present within and outside the quadrat area and a good mosaic of habitats (more acid grassland/heath behind). The last assessment found the unit in this location to be in unfavourable recovering condition following the measures in place through the HLF project to remedy the effect of trampling. Without these measures, the unit is at risk of becoming unfavourable declining condition. Further measures are required such as further demarcation and interpretation at the sluice car park, etc. as discussed by Natural England, RSPB and East Suffolk Council – especially if additional access were promoted on the unit.

More detailed monitoring of vegetated shingle is recommended to accurately gauge any loss or development of vegetation, and the efficacy of mitigation measures, possibly using aerial photography. The Responsible Officer from Natural England will work with our partners as part of the ongoing monitoring arrangements to achieve this.

### **Haven House to Thorpe Road car park (AHS-1-S009 to AHS-1-S012)**

The unit is narrow (a strip between sea and gardens). It comprises a single main shingle vegetated ridge with sparse vegetation in places, plus many areas of shingle with no vegetation behind the main ridge.



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The last assessment found there was limited zonation evident or maintained. Much of the zonation had been disrupted by trampling/disturbance and constrained by gardens to the west. There are no increases in constraints to shingle mobility in the active foreshore. There is a decrease in extent of vegetated shingle due to natural processes (erosion).

The intertidal/shoreline area abuts the main ridge with a sharp shingle cliff in places with much erosion and roots of sea kale, etc. showing through. Species composition targets were not met at the last assessment. However, there were many characteristic species present within and outside the quadrat area. The loss of vegetated substrate within the unit as a result of anthropogenic activities was of serious concern. The whole unit is heavily used by people walking dogs, etc. There is much trampling throughout the unit. The unfavourable recovering condition is due to the measures that were in place through the Touching the Tide HLF project to remedy the effect of trampling on the adjacent unit which had a positive effect. Without these measures, the unit is at risk of becoming unfavourable declining. More protection of features is required with demarcation and interpretation if additional access were proposed on the unit.

### **North End Avenue to Beach View Holiday Park (AHS-1-S022 to AHS-1-S034)**

The unit has open shingle to the front, much trampled in places with limited, more stable shingle behind due to a natural cliff constraining the site particularly to the north and south of the unit. This narrow linear unit widens a little in the middle section.

Only limited zonation was evident to north and south of unit. There is no increase in constraints to shingle mobility in the active foreshore zone, apart from the gabion revetment at the base of the sandy cliff at the southern end of the site.

There has been a loss of vegetated substrate within the habitat as a result of anthropogenic activities. The whole unit is used by people walking dogs, etc. There is much trampling throughout the unit but particularly where there is pedestrian access down the cliffs at the Thorpeness end and the Sizewell/Leiston Caravan park end and on walked routes landward of the main shingle ridge. When assessed, there was evidence of much trampling and several fire sites at the foot of the cliff at Sizewell Hall.

Erosion had led to a loss of vegetated shingle habitat at the southern end of the site. There were many indicator species (sea kale, yellow horned poppy, curled dock, etc.) present over the unit (and abundant in places). Species composition targets were met for the strandline habitat but not



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the more stable shingle. Other species present were red valerian, sea holly and marram grass where sandy (near eroding cliffs). The wardening scheme mentioned above has been running, supported by a specific leaflet, to raise awareness of the importance of vegetated shingle. Evidence of this was not seen on site at the time of assessment. However recent photographs show that partnership working is continuing in order to protect the vegetated shingle (see photographs 1 and 2 on pages 17 and 18).

Further action was identified as being needed, possibly as part of wider strategy, especially if any additional access were created. Working with Natural England, the HLF project, Touching the Tide, delivered a leaflet supporting walks which aimed to protect the vegetated shingle and was supported by monitoring from the then Suffolk Coastal District Council (now East Suffolk Council). The project, started in 2008, has now finished but there remain areas of shingle roped off (see photos mentioned above) in which there was evidence of the establishment of shingle vegetation.

### Current levels of access of potentially affected locations

#### General

Visits to the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB generally are estimated at approximately 225,000 overnight trips and day visits of around 3 million pa. The “Aldeburgh Music” festival at Snape Maltings, attracts around 100,000 visits to its performances per year, 40% coming from outside the area. <sup>1</sup> Research shows that the most common activity by visitors is walking or hiking.

There are multiple access points to the beach, including from boardwalks following Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and via the “scallop”, a memorial to Benjamin Britten, which is located within the SSSI. The RSPB informally erect fencing on areas of shingle to enable vegetation to establish as a remedial measure to resolve the trampling of vegetated shingle.

The following sections mirror the condition assessments above and reflect the individual units of the SSSI.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/Projects--Partnerships/BALANCE/TourismStrategy.pdf>



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### Sections AHS-1-S003-AHS-1-S006

Access levels between Thorpeness village and Aldeburgh town is **high** with off-road parking facilities available along the road linking the town and village. Access is particularly popular to and around the scallop (see photograph 3 on page 19). From the car park opposite Mayor's Field caravan park, southwards into Aldeburgh, the level of use is also **very high**. The route from Thorpeness to Aldeburgh forms part of a promoted circular walk by the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB:

<http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/Publications/Outstanding-Landscapes-Walks/Aldeburgh-Thorpeness-Walk.pdf>

### Sections AHS-1-S006-AHS1-S013

The levels of access in and around Thorpeness are **very high**. There are good parking facilities, toilets and cafes. There is a popular, promoted route between Thorpeness and Aldeburgh (see above). There are also a number of desire lines between car parks and routes to the north or south, including to the scallop and to the intertidal area, although it is challenging to walk any distance on shingle. The walked line which follows the tarmac path in Aldeburgh north across The Haven to the boardwalk at AHS-1-S013, goes through sand/shingle and is marked by a reduced amount of vegetation. There are a number of worn routes but the most walked and/or most direct route is the line of the proposed trail.

Pinch points such as on the seaward side of Haven House, are particularly worn. There is little or no vegetation along the walked route up to AHS-1-S013. There are desire lines away from this route through the vegetation where walkers have sought the intertidal area.

On sections AHS-1-S009 to AHS-1-S012 there is a wide, well-defined area for walkers between Thorpeness and Aldeburgh which avoids the use of Remembrance Road. Remembrance Road has speed restrictions (30mph) on the approach to Thorpeness. It is narrow and there are some very narrow areas of verge available for walkers. Despite this, it is often used by cyclists and families with small children on bikes.



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### Sections AHS-1-S022 to AHS-1-S034

There are a number of walked routes, some of which are on the PRoWs. There are **medium to high levels** of use from Cliff House Caravan Park to North End Avenue. The area is popular with local dog walkers and clients of the caravan parks north of Sizewell Hall. Walkers are attracted to the intertidal area.

There is a well-worn cliff top route landward of the unit which descends slightly around Ness House to occupy a “mid-level” route (neither on cliff top nor on beach). This mid-level route runs adjacent to the unit until the gully access point back up onto the cliff top. This route is on top of, or parallel to the PRoW along the cliff top or base of the cliff. The route continues straight on past Sizewell Hall, not following the PRoW for about 50m.

An access point – a worn gully – leads up onto the cliff top near Thorpeness Common which is well-used by local walkers and dog walkers. The Common is used for Scout camps in the summer and by a camper’s convention, the Thorpeness Regatta, in August. No vehicles are allowed on the common.

There are a number of PRoWs, some of which lead down to the beach at a number of places but are not as well-used as the gully at the north of the Thorpeness Common field. There is a well-worn route parallel to, but landward of, the PRoW on the cliff top which is popular with locals and visitors alike. There is a wooden seat seaward of the proposed trail, although the view from it is somewhat obscured by mature vegetation. Access and egress to this cliff top area is via a worn path at the north end of North End Avenue.

A significant erosion of the cliff top at Thorpeness resulted in a tragic fatality of a walker on the beach in 2017. New signage has been installed to warn walkers of the risks of the eroding coastline at this location.



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### Risk analysis

#### Predicted change in use of site for recreation

We anticipate a **small increase** in the number of users on the trail as a result of our proposals for the ECP and a **negligible increase** in access levels on the margin.

The trail will be largely on currently used routes and PRow – already well-used and very busy. The local population remains steady; new properties tend to be bought as holiday/second homes. Parts of the trail already feature on published and promoted walk leaflets.

As part of our proposals, there will be an upgrade to the route with revetment work between Thorpeness and Sizewell on the mid-level route and a set of steps to ease access to and from the cliff top in Thorpeness. This path will be easier to use and will encourage walkers onto the trail, and away from the sensitive areas of vegetated shingle. It is an attractive area for visitors and there are good facilities in Thorpeness and Aldeburgh, including caravan parks (e.g. Mayor's Field, Cliff House), hotels, places to eat, drink, park and shop.

The margin, where it comprises shingle, is difficult to walk on. But it does get used to access the intertidal area in a number of places, and in particular on the way to view features such as the scallop. The margin at Thorpeness on the beach is similarly used by walkers, that is, mainly to access the intertidal area. It may be that, by being a focal point for visitors to the site, the memorial serves to protect other parts of the vegetated shingle, which are currently recovering behind signed and roped-off areas (see photographs 1 and 2 below).





Photograph 1: Protecting the vegetated shingle - looking north along The Haven



Photograph 2: Protecting the vegetated shingle - sign for the roped-off area of shingle on The Haven



Photograph 3: The Benjamin Britten memorial on the shingle at The Haven

Additional footfall as a result of the ECP which requires mitigation:

- to and around the scallop
- across The Haven
- seaward of the beach front properties near Haven House

Careful thought has been given to what mitigation measures are most likely to succeed on the site, how they should be managed, and where they should be placed on what is already a very busy location. The relative increase in levels of use will be small compared with current levels; ECP walkers will tend to stick to well-signed and currently walked paths.



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In discussion with the Responsible Officer from Natural England (RO) and stakeholders, we have agreed that the most effective location for these measures will connect the divergence of the trail from the tarmac path at Aldeburgh Parish boundary, north to the corner of Haven House. Access between these points is currently spread across the shingle over a wide area. The measures seek to focus footfall over a narrower width by making the trail easy to follow; the route will be easy to see by using a series of discreet low-level waymarkers as a guide to walkers. This will help walkers trying to find the onward route north and south and will encourage the establishment of vegetation by reducing the number of braided routes which have formed across The Haven.

A section of geo-cellular grid will be installed near Haven House to encourage walkers onto the path and discourage dispersed access onto the areas of vegetated shingle. The area identified (approximately 20m long and 2m wide) covers soft sand/shingle which can be difficult to walk on.

An interpretation panel at the start of this section will explain the reasons for the surfacing material and other proposed measures on the site; why access is being managed and what conservation objectives the measures are trying to achieve. Interpretation will be designed to engage users with the information they need to make positive behavioural changes. Simple messages will encourage people to contribute to the cumulative positive effect on the vegetated shingle through their route choice.

These measures will enable some vegetation to re-colonise on the shingle whilst establishing a pattern of use that protects shingle and, after an event resulting in re-sorting of sediment, will allow specialist vegetation to establish.

Work to mitigate current and predicted increases in access include further measures to remedy the effect of trampling which are having a positive effect elsewhere. These include good signage to demarcate paths, interpretation of interest features, and positive messaging to encourage behaviours which would protect it.

More detailed monitoring of vegetated shingle is recommended to accurately gauge any loss or development of vegetation, and the efficacy of mitigation measures, possibly using aerial photography. This will be conducted as part of the current management of the site through partnership working between the RO, land managers and landowners.



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### Assessment of coastal access proposals on:

#### Establishment works

Is SSSI assent needed to implement any specific proposals for establishment works? Yes

Once approval for a coastal access report is received from the Secretary of State, any necessary works can be carried out on the ground to make the trail fit for use and prepare for opening. In this case, works on the ground would be carried out by Suffolk County Council or another Natural England approved person or organisation.

An estimate of the total cost of works needed to establish the trail is given in our coastal access report for the Aldeburgh to Sizewell report (AHS 1). The cost of establishment works will be met by Natural England.

Suffolk County Council (or another Natural England approved person or organisation) are responsible for ensuring they take appropriate steps to protect sensitive features whilst works on the ground are carried out, in line with any recommendations or conditions agreed in advance.

We have held preliminary discussions with Suffolk County Council about the works required and believe that it is feasible for them to be carried out without adverse effect on the designated sites considered in this appraisal. This is on the basis that the following special conditions are observed:

Legally protected species are an important consideration where works involve the destruction or maintenance of existing features, or the construction of new features. Where these species are known to be present, or are likely to be, any works carried out should include appropriate mitigation in line with legislative guidelines.

The main considerations with regard to protected sites and species, and on-site working methods, are summarised in the bullet points and table below.

- European Protected Species are those species of plant and animal listed in Annex IV to EC Directive 92/43/EEC ('the Habitats Directive). For a complete list of European Protected Species in England & Wales refer to Schedules 2, 4 and 5 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010.



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- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, affords protection to wild birds, their eggs, young and nests (the latter whether complete or under construction). Those listed in Schedule 1 of the '81 Act receive additional protection against intentional or reckless disturbance while they are nest building or at a nest containing eggs or young. Dependant young are also protected from intentional or reckless disturbance. The timing of any works on habitats which may support birds (particularly breeding birds), and the methodologies employed, should take these factors into account.
- Plants and animals included in Schedules 5 & 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are protected from killing or injuring, and protection may also apply to their place of shelter.
- Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Under the '92 Act it is an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct a badger sett, or to disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett.
- All bat species, their breeding sites and resting places are fully protected by law and they are European protected species. The presence of bats is often overlooked and it should be remembered that they inhabit crevices in tree trunks and branches as well as built structures (both above and below ground). Where there is uncertainty about their presence, surveys should be carried out beforehand by suitably qualified individuals.
- Activities which may affect any of the above species may require a licence from Natural England's licensing team, from which advice should be sought, as appropriate.

Where necessary, Suffolk County Council or other Natural England approved person or organisation will instigate the SSSI consent/assent process by writing to us to confirm the timing of works and how operations are to be undertaken in line with these conditions. Natural England will provide further advice as necessary.



## Nature Conservation Assessment for Coastal Access Proposals between Aldeburgh and Sizewell

### Conclusion




We, Natural England, conclude that the mitigation measures (interpretation panels, geo-cellular grid and low-level waymarkers across The Haven), alongside existing measures (e.g. temporary fencing to encourage the formation of vegetated shingle and also to encourage nesting ringed plover and little tern) will ensure that there will be no damage to or destruction of the special interest features of the site with the advent of ECP.

We are satisfied that our proposals to improve access to the English coast between Aldeburgh and Sizewell are fully compatible with our duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the notified features of Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI and The Haven Local Nature Reserve consistent with the proper exercise of our functions<sup>2</sup>.

If our proposals are agreed by the Secretary of State and after commencement of the coastal access rights, further restrictions, exclusions or temporary routes may be necessary locally, if situations arise that could not be foreseen initially. People with a legal interest in the land will have powers to apply to us later for directions to restrict or exclude access, and can appeal to the Secretary of State against our decision if they disagree with it.

See also the conclusions of the separate HRA relating to these features and/ or their habitats.

The conclusions of this assessment have been checked by:

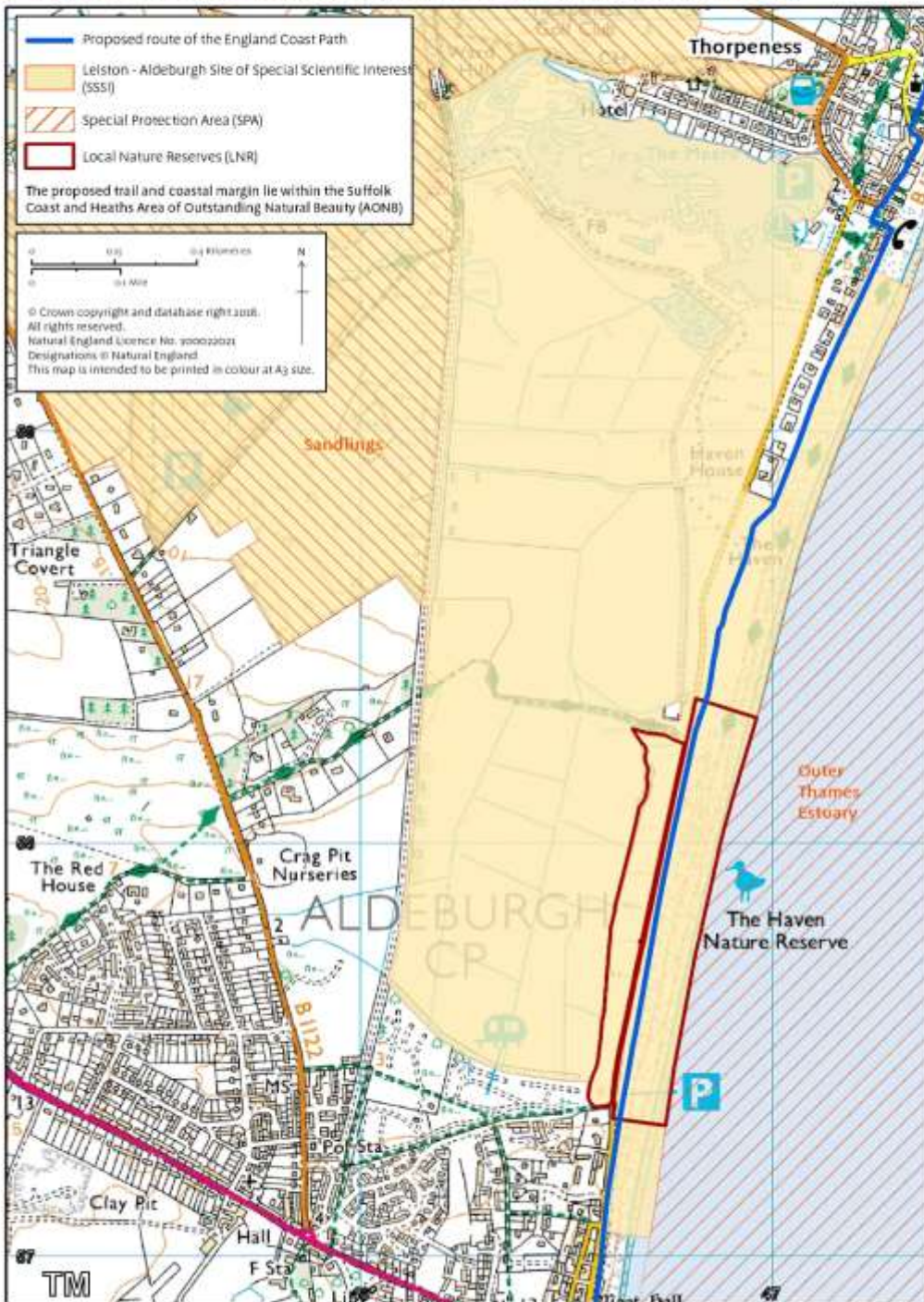
	6 Jan 2020	On behalf of the Coastal Access Programme Team
	6 Jan 2020	Senior Officer with responsibility for protected sites
	6 Jan 2020	Stretch lead Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea

<sup>2</sup> Natural England's functions includes its balanced general purposes for access, nature conservation and landscape under the NERC Act 2006, any specific statutory duties it may have to deliver specific improvements to public access, and the access-related policies and priorities it periodically agrees with Defra.



Key designation - Leiston-Aldeburgh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)





Key designation - Leiston-Aldeburgh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): South



Key designation - Leiston-Aldeburgh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): North

Figure 2



## Nature Conservation Assessment for Coastal Access Proposals between Aldeburgh and Sizewell

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## Nature Conservation Assessment for Coastal Access Proposals between Aldeburgh and Sizewell

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### Glossary of terms

AONB Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

CROW Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)

ECP England Coast Path

HLF Heritage Lottery Fund

HRA Habitats Regulations Assessment

LNR Local Nature Reserve

MCZ Marine Conservation Zones

NCA Nature Conservation Assessment

PRoW Public Right of Way

RO Responsible Officer from Natural England

RSPB Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

SAC Special Area of Conservation

SPA Special Protection Area

SSSI Sites of Special Scientific Interest