

Chapter 1:

The Strood and the Strood road crossing to North of West Mersea

England Coast Path: Mersea Island - Natural England's Proposals

Part 1.1: Introduction

Start Point:	The Strood (grid reference: TM 0127 1519) (Junction with the Salcott to Jaywick Stretch)
End Point:	Southern end of Firs Chase Saltmarsh (grid reference: TM 0137 1318)
Relevant Maps:	1a to 1b

Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps:

The Trail:

- 1.1.1 Generally follows existing walked routes, on public rights of way, along this length.
- 1.1.2 Follows the coastline closely and maintains good views of the sea and Strood Channel.
- 1.1.3 Includes sections of new path at Wellhouse Farm between Colchester Road and East Mersea Road and on the access track to arable fields, to link with the existing public right of way on the seawall. See map 1a and associated tables below for details.
- 1.1.4 This part of the coast includes the following sites, designated for nature conservation or heritage preservation (See maps C1, C2 and C3 of the Overview):
 - Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Blackwater Estuary (Mid Essex Coast Phase 4) Special Protection Area (SPA)
 - Blackwater Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4) RAMSAR site
 - Blackwater Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its geological /wildlife interest
 - Blackwater, Crouch Roach and Colne Estuaries Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)

We have assessed the potential impacts of access along the proposed route (and over the associated spreading room described below) on the features for which the affected land is designated and on any which are protected in their own right.

1.1.5 The levels and patterns of public access along this length of coast would be unlikely to change significantly as a result of our proposals and we have therefore concluded that our proposals would not be likely to have any significant impact on these features.

In relation to those nature conservation sites listed above, refer to our published Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal for more information.

See part 5c of the Overview - 'Protection of sensitive features'- for more information.

Accessibility:

1.1.6 Generally, there are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route, which makes use of existing surfaced paths wherever these meet the criteria in the Coastal Access Scheme. However, there are places where it may not be entirely suitable for people with reduced mobility because:

- The trail would follow an uneven grass or bare soil path along the top of the seawall; MSI-1-S007 and MSI-1-S012FP to MSI-1-S013 FP.
- There are places where it will be necessary to ascend/descend slopes onto and off the seawall and banks; MSI-1-S006 and MSI-1-S0012 FP
- There will be a set of steps installed at Wellhouse Farm to enable access on to the bank; MSI-1-S008.

See part 5b of the Overview - 'Recreational issues' - for more information.

Where we have proposed exercising our discretion:

The discretions referred to below are explained in more detail in the Overview.

1.1.7 Landward boundary of the coastal margin: We have used our discretion on some sections of the route to map the landward extent of the coastal margin to an adjacent physical boundary such as a fence line, pavement or track to make the extent of the new access rights clearer. See Table 1.2.1 below.

1.1.8 We have used our discretion not to include land to the landward side of section MSI-1-S012 in the coastal margin. This section is sea bank, the landward edge of which would normally form part of the landward coastal margin by default. However, in this location we have proposed aligning the landward extent of the margin to the landward edge of the top of the sea bank in order to make the extent of people's rights clearer and more cohesive on the ground. In particular;

- The landward edge of the aligned path on the top of the sea wall presents an easily identifiable line for users to follow, while;
- The landward face of the sea wall varies in profile and in places merges directly into land without coastal access rights with the effect of making the landward extent of the default coastal margin unclear.

See Table 1.2.1 below.

See also part 3 of the Overview - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for an explanation of the default extent of the coastal margin and how we may use our discretion to adjust the margin, either to add land or to provide clarity. See also Annex C of the Overview - 'Excepted land categories'.

- 1.1.9 Restrictions and/or exclusions: We have proposed to exclude access in places along this section of coast. For details of these directions, see 1.3.6 in the Formal Proposals Section of this report and Part 9 of the Overview.
- 1.1.10 These directions will not prevent or affect:
- any use people already make of the land locally by formal agreement with the landowner, or by informal permission or traditional toleration;
- 1.1.11 Any such use continues unaffected by these arrangements.
- 1.1.12 However the directions are intended to avoid any new public rights being created over the area in question (mudflats and saltmarsh) in view of the hidden dangers of deep creeks and soft mud to which new users of the land would be subject because of the local patterns of tidal inundation.
- 1.1.13 Access rights to the spreading room would be subject to the national restrictions on coastal access rights listed in Annex D of the Overview. These restrictions would not apply to public rights of way.

See part 9 of the Overview - 'Restrictions and exclusions' - for details.

Establishment and ongoing management of the trail

- 1.1.14 Some physical establishment of the trail would be necessary at this location, in accordance with the general approach described in part 6 the Overview.
- A new 'sleeper' bridge will be installed on trail section MSI-1-005 and
 - A new 'sleeper' bridge and steps at MSI-1-008.
 - At Firs Chase some work will be carried out to improve the surface of the trail along a length of approximately 150m on MSI-1-S014 FP as it is currently uneven and slippery when wet.
 - An interpretation panel will be placed at Firs Chase Caravan Park explaining the Section 25A exclusion on the saltmarsh and mudflats.
 - Scrub clearance and heavy vegetation cutting will take place to create a new access at Wellhouse Farm to provide a safe off-road route (MSI-1-S006 and MSI-1-S007) connecting this section with the section described in Chapter 4. New route signage will also be put in place.
- 1.1.15 Ongoing management and maintenance would be necessary in accordance with the general approach described in part 7 of the Overview.

See parts 6 - 'Physical establishment of the trail' and 7 - 'Maintenance of the trail' of the Overview for more information.

Future Change:

- 1.1.16 At the time of preparing the report, we do not foresee any need for future changes to the access provisions proposed for the length of coast described in this chapter.

See parts 5f - 'Coastal processes' and 8 - 'Future changes' of the Overview for more information.

Part 1.2: Commentary on Maps

See Part 3 of Overview for guidance on reading and understanding the tables below

1.2.1 Section Details – Maps 1a & 1b: Strood Crossing to Southern Strood Channel

Notes on table:

Column 2 – an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 1.2.2: Other options considered.

1	2	3	4	5	6a	6b	7
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 8 of Overview)	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 9 of Overview)
1a	MSI-1-S001 RD	Public highway	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of trail	Not Used	Margin
	MSI-1-S002 FW	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-1-S003 FW	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-1-S004 RD*	Public highway	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of trail	Not Used	Margin
	MSI-1-S005*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	Landward edge of trail	Not Used	Margin
	MSI-1-S006*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	Landward edge of trail	Not Used	Margin
	MSI-1-S007*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	Various	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-1-S008*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	Various	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-1-S009 RD*	Public highway	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of trail	Not Used	Margin
	MSI-1-S010	Not an existing walked route	Gravel	No	Landward edge of trail	Not Used	Margin
	MSI-1-S011	Not an existing walked route	Bare soil: Compacted	No	Landward edge of trail	Not Used	Margin
	MSI-1-S012 FP	Public footpath	Grass	No	Landward edge of bank or barrier	Clarity and Cohesion	Margin
1b	MSI-1-S013 FP	Public footpath	Bare soil: Compacted	No	Ditch	Additional landward area	Margin
	MSI-1-S014 FP	Public footpath	Bare soil: Compacted	No	Landward edge of Trail	Not Used	Margin

1.2.2 Other options considered: Maps 1a: The Strood crossing and north Strood Channel

Map(s)	Section number(s)	Option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option as the route
1a	MSI-1-S004 RD to MSI-1-S009 RD	We considered options to align the trail around the field edges landward of the Reservoirs, between Colchester Road and East Mersea Road, to link with the trail as described in Chapter 4 of this report.	We opted for the proposed route because it is closer to and maintains views of the sea. We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme.

Part 1.3: Chapter 1 - Formal Proposals

- Below are our formal proposals to the Secretary of State for the length of coast shown on maps 1a to 1b.
- They should be read in conjunction with the relevant maps.
- The commentary above explains the practical effect of these proposals.

Formal Proposals – The Strood and the Strood road crossing to North of West Mersea

Proposed route of the trail

1.3.1 The route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps 1a to 1b as the proposed route of the trail.

Landward boundary of coastal margin

- 1.3.2 Adjacent to route sections MSI-1-S002 FW and MSI-1-S003FW, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the pavement shown as the trail on map 1a.
- 1.3.3 Adjacent to route section MSI-1-S012 FP the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the top of the seawall as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on map 1a.
- 1.3.4 Adjacent to route section MSI-1-S013 FP the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the ditch as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on map 1b.
- 1.3.5 Adjacent to route section MSI-1-S007 and MSI-1-S008, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the top of the sea bank (where this exists) in MSI-1-S007 and the default width for the remainder of MSI-1-S007 and for MSI-1-S008 the coastal margin coincides with the hedge where it is present and it is 2m wide where there is not hedge as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on map 1a.

Local restrictions and exclusions

- 1.3.6 Natural England proposes to exclude access relevant to this length of coast, as follows:
- Access to all saltmarsh and mudflat along the full length of this part of the coast seaward of route sections MSI-1-S001 RD to MSI-1-S014 FP is to be excluded by a Section 25A direction due to its unsuitability for access.

Please refer to Part 9 of the Overview for further details.

Alternative Routes

1.3.7 There are no proposals for alternative routes in relation to this length of coast.



