

Chapter 4:

Mersea Stone to The Strood, Colchester Road

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

Part 4.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Access steps to Mersea Stone (grid reference: TM 0722 1524)
End Point:	Junction with the Strood crossing trail section (grid reference: TM 0156 1471)
Relevant Maps:	4a to 4d

Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps:

The Trail:

- 4.1.1 Mainly follows existing walked routes on seawalls, including public rights of way.
- 4.1.2 Follows the coastline closely and maintains good views of the sea over saltmarsh and mudflats. There are broad sweeping views in all directions.
- 4.1.3 Includes two sections of new path, at Bowers Hall Farm on a recently repaired section of seawall and at Reeveshall Farm, formalising an existing walked route.

See maps 4b and 4d and associated tables below for details.

- 4.1.4 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)
 - Colne Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 2) SPA
 - Colne Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 2) RAMSAR
 - Colne Estuary SSSI for its geological /wildlife interest
 - Colne Estuary NNR
 - Blackwater, Crouch Roach and Colne Estuaries Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)

■ Scheduled Ancient Monument 1020490 - Saltern (SAM)

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.

- 4.1.5 After advice from specialists we have concluded that our proposals would not be likely to have any significant impact on these features due in the main part to the limited change in access patterns as a result of our proposals.

In reaching this conclusion we have identified a requirement to provide appropriate signage at key locations to explain the importance of these habitats, to encourage people to stay on the trail, to avoid trampling and disturbance of nesting sites and to help prevent dogs from disturbing wildlife.

This proposal is explained further in parts 5 & 9 of the Overview.

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:

- 4.1.6 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. All gates are either kissing gates or pedestrian gates.

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 seawall for its entire length from MSI-4-S001 FP to MSI-4-S020;
- There are some short steep slopes to gain access on and off seawalls.

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.

- 4.1.7 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, ditch, pavement or track to make the extent of the new access rights clearer. See Table 4.2.1 below.
- 4.1.8 Landward boundary of the coastal margin: We have used our discretion not to include land to the landward side of sections MSI-4-S006 to MSI-4-S009, MSI-4-S013FP and MSI-4-S014 in the coastal margin. These sections are sea banks, the landward edge of which would normally form part of

the landward coastal margin by default. However, in these locations we have proposed aligning the landward extent of the margin to the landward edge of the top of the seawall 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.

4.1.9 At Cudmore Grove Country Park, we have used our discretion to propose the inclusion of additional coastal margin to the edge of the borrowdyke, to secure or enhance public enjoyment of this part of the coast. The owner of this land is content for us to propose this.

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'.

4.1.10 Restrictions and/or exclusions: We have proposed to exclude access in places along this section of coast. For details of these directions, see 4.3.5 in the Formal Proposals Section of this report and Part 9 of the Overview.

4.1.11 These directions will not prevent or affect:

- any use people already make of the land locally by formal agreement with the landowner e.g. samphire pickers or by informal permission or traditional toleration;

4.1.12 Any such use continues unaffected by these arrangements.

4.1.13 However the directions are intended to avoid any new public rights being created over the area in question 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.

4.1.14 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

4.1.15 Some physical establishment of the trail would be necessary, in accordance with the general approach described in part 6 the Overview.

- At Bowers Hall Farm scrub clearance will take place on the top of the seawall.
- A sleeper bridge will be installed to enable access on and off the seawall at East Mersea Road.

- Appropriate signage will be provided at key locations to explain restrictions which may be in place, to encourage people to stay on the trail and to help prevent dogs from disturbing livestock

4.1.16 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:

4.1.17 At the time of preparing the report, we do not foresee any other 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 4.2: Commentary on Maps

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

4.2.1 Section Details – Maps 4a to 4d: Mersea Stone to the Strood Crossing

Notes on table:

Column 2 – an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 4.2.2: 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)
4a	MSI-4-S001 FP	Public footpath	Grass	No	Ditch	Additional landward area	Margin
	MSI-4-S002 FP	Public footpath	Grass	No	Various	Additional landward area	Margin
	MSI-4-S003 FP	Public footpath	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-4-S004 FP	Public footpath	Grass	No	Ditch	Additional landward area	Margin
	MSI-4-S005FP	Public footpath	Grass	No	Ditch	Additional landward area	Margin
4b	MSI-4-S006 FP	Public footpath	Grass	No	Landward edge of bank or barrier	Clarity and Cohesion	Margin
	MSI-4-S007	Other existing walked route	Grass	No	Landward edge of bank or barrier	Clarity and Cohesion	Margin
	MSI-4-S008	Other existing walked route	Grass	No	Landward edge of bank or barrier	Clarity and Cohesion	Margin
	MSI-4-S009 FP	Public footpath	Grass	No	Landward edge of bank or barrier	Clarity and Cohesion	Margin
4c	MSI-4-S010 FP	Public footpath	Grass	No	Ditch	Additional landward area	Margin
4d	MSI-4-S011FP	Public footpath	Grass	No	Ditch	Additional landward area	Margin
	MSI-4-S012 FP	Public footpath	Bare soil: Compacted	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-4-S013 FP	Public footpath	Grass	No	Landward edge of bank or barrier	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-4-S014*	Other existing walked route	Grass	No	Landward edge of bank or barrier	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-4-S015*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-4-S016*	Other existing walked route	Grass	No	Road	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-4-S017 RD*	Public highway	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-4-S018*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-4-S019*	Not an existing walked route	Boardwalk or raised walkway	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-4-S020*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	Landward edge of bank or barrier	Clarity and cohesion	Margin

4.2.2 Other options considered: Map 4d: East Mersea Road to the Strood crossing

Map(s)	Section number(s)	Option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option as the route
4d	MSI-4-S016 to MSI-4-S020	We considered options to align the trail around the field edges south of East Mersea Road to link with the trail as described in Chapter 1 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
4d	MSI-4-S014 to MSI-4-S016	We considered aligning along the existing public right of way on the old sea bank crossing the saltmarsh to the Strood crossing.	We opted for the proposed route because the public right of way follows a redundant sea bank which is no longer maintained and has breached in a number of locations, making it impassable.

Part 4.3: Chapter 4 - Formal Proposals

- Below are our formal proposals to the Secretary of State for the length of coast shown on maps 4a to 4d
- They should be read in conjunction with the relevant maps.
- The commentary above explains the practical effect of these proposals.

Formal Proposals – Mersea Stone to The Strood

Proposed route of the trail

4.3.1 The route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps 4a to 4d as the proposed route of the trail.

Landward boundary of coastal margin

4.3.2 Adjacent to route section MSI-4-S016, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the road which, at the time of writing this report, is landward of the other existing walked route shown as the trail on map 4d.

4.3.3 Adjacent to route sections MSI-4-S006 FP to MSI-4-S009 FP, MSI-4-S013FP and MSI-4-S014, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with landward edge of the top of the seawall which is landward of the public footpaths and other existing walked routes shown as the trail on map 4b and 4d.

4.3.4 Adjacent to route sections MSI-4-S001 FP, MSI-4-S002, MSI-4-S004 FP, MSI-4-S005 FP, and MSI-4-S010 FP to MSI-4-S011 FP the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with various features such as the ditch or hedge as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on map 4a, 4c and 4d.

Local restrictions and exclusions

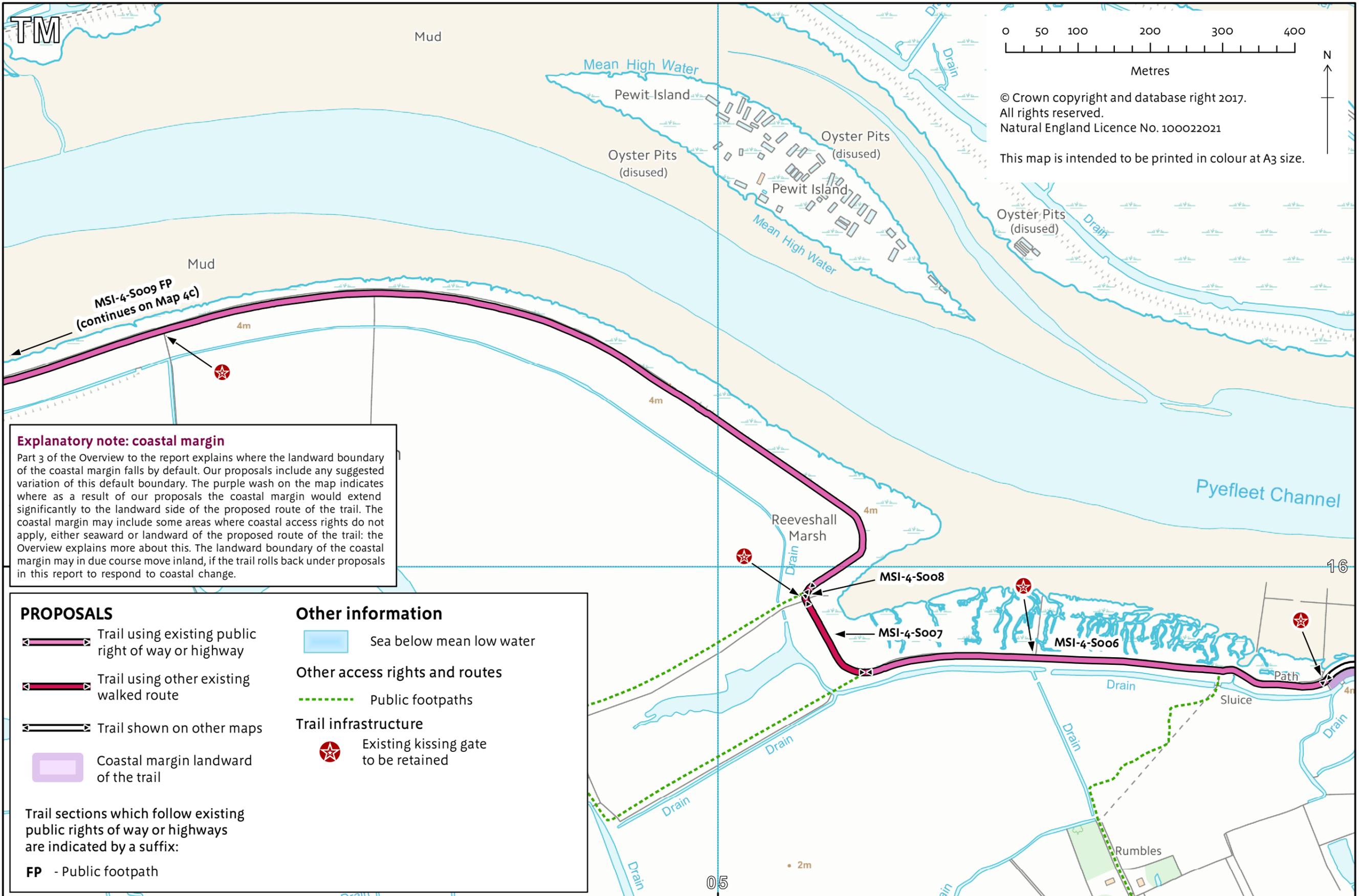
4.3.5 Natural England proposes to exclude access relevant to this length of coast, as follows:

- Access to all saltmarsh and mudflat along the full length of this part of the coast covered by route sections MSI-4-S001 FP to MSI-4-S020 is to be excluded by a Section 25A direction due to its unsuitability for access.
- Access to the slipway used by Colchester Oyster Fishery Ltd covered by route sections MSI-4-S003 FP is to be restricted by an Outline Land Management direction during times when the oyster fishery operations require unrestricted access to the slipway when launching boats and landing catches, to protect their commercial activities.

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

Alternative Routes

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



Explanatory note: coastal margin
 Part 3 of the Overview to the report explains where the landward boundary of the coastal margin falls by default. Our proposals include any suggested variation of this default boundary. The purple wash on the map indicates where as a result of our proposals the coastal margin would extend significantly to the landward side of the proposed route of the trail. The coastal margin may include some areas where coastal access rights do not apply, either seaward or landward of the proposed route of the trail: the Overview explains more about this. The landward boundary of the coastal margin may in due course move inland, if the trail rolls back under proposals in this report to respond to coastal change.

PROPOSALS	Other information
Trail using existing public right of way or highway	Sea below mean low water
Trail using other existing walked route	Other access rights and routes
Trail shown on other maps	Public footpaths
Coastal margin landward of the trail	Trail infrastructure
Trail sections which follow existing public rights of way or highways are indicated by a suffix:	Existing kissing gate to be retained
FP - Public footpath	

Map 4b Reeveshall Marsh (East)

