# England Coast Path Stretch: Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea



**Report AHS 1: Aldeburgh to Sizewell** 

#### Part 1.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Fort Green car park, Aldeburgh (grid reference: TM 4647 5599)
End Point:	Sizewell beach car park (grid reference: TM 4757 6300)
Relevant Maps:	AHS 1a to AHS 1e

- 1.1.1 This is one of a series of linked but legally separate reports published by Natural England under section 51 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which make proposals to the Secretary of State for improved public access along and to this stretch of coast between Aldeburgh and Hopton-on-Sea.
- 1.1.2 This report covers length AHS 1 of the stretch, which is the coast between Aldeburgh and Sizewell. It makes free-standing statutory proposals for this part of the stretch, and seeks approval for them by the Secretary of State in their own right under section 52 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- 1.1.3 The report explains how we propose to implement the England Coast Path ("the trail") on this part of the stretch, and details the likely consequences in terms of the wider 'Coastal Margin' that will be created if our proposals are approved by the Secretary of State. Our report also sets out:
  - any proposals we think are necessary for restricting or excluding coastal access rights to address particular issues, in line with the powers in the legislation; and
  - any proposed powers for the trail to be capable of being relocated on particular sections ("roll-back"), if this proves necessary in the future because of coastal change.
- 1.1.4 There is also a single Overview document for the whole of this stretch of coast, explaining common principles and background. This and the other individual reports relating to the stretch should be read in conjunction with the Overview. The Overview explains, among other things, how we have considered any potential environmental impacts of improving public access to this part of the coast, and this report, and other separately published assessments we refer to, then provides more detail on these aspects where appropriate.

# **Part 1.2: Proposals Narrative**

#### The trail:

- 1.2.1 Generally follows existing walked routes, including public rights of way, along most of this length.
- 1.2.2 Mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea.
- 1.2.3 Is aligned on the beach or foreshore in three locations:
  - across The Haven from section AHS-1-S003 (Map AHS 1a) north towards the boardwalk in Thorpeness at section AHS-1-S013 (Map AHS 1c);
  - from the cliff top route about 520m south of Ness House to the foreshore at Thorpe Ness at section AHS-1-S026 (Map AHS 1d); and
  - at section AHS-1-S036 (Map AHS 1e) from the cliff top near Cliff House, Sizewell to Coastguard Lookout at section AHS-1-S042 (Map AHS 1e).

See part 1.3 for details.

1.2.4 Follows a route similar to the existing Suffolk Coast Path but departs from this in places in order to be closer to and gain views of the sea.

#### Protection of the environment:

In this part of the report, we explain how we have taken account of environmental protection objectives in developing our proposals for improved coastal access.

- 1.2.5 The following designated sites affect this length of coast:
  - Southern North Sea Special Area of Conservation(SAC)
  - Outer Thames Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA)
  - Sandlings Special Protection Area (SPA)
  - Leiston to Aldeburgh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its wildlife interest

The following table brings together design features included in our access proposals to help to protect the environment along this length of the coast.

# 1.2.6 Measures to protect the environment

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
AHS 1a to AHS 1e	AHS-1-S001 to AHS-1-S042	To mitigate for any potential risks associated with increased numbers of users to the special interest features of vegetated shingle and ground nesting birds, a number of measures are proposed: clear, effective signage to demarcate preferred routes for walkers to take; interpretation of interest features and positive messaging to encourage behaviours which would protect them.  A section of geo-cellular grid will be installed between sections AHS-1-S007 and AHS-1-008 (Map AHS 1b) near Haven House to encourage walkers onto the path and discourage dispersed access onto the areas of vegetated shingle.  Clear signposting of the route of the trail across The Haven between the tarmac surfaced path at section AHS-1-S006 and section AHS-1-S007 (Map AHS 1b) at Haven House will be achieved through the use of discreet, short wooden waymarkers.  Establishment works between sections AHS-1S026 and AHS-1-S029 (Maps AHS 1d and 1e) to create the England Coast Path will also include revetment work on the "mid-level route" section at the northern end of the SSSI. This will make the route more pleasant for walkers and encourage them to use the trail rather than the vegetated shingle.  A new set of steps at section AHS-1-S025 (Map AHS 1d) linking this mid-level route to the cliff top near Thorpeness Common will also encourage people away from the sensitive areas on the beach. This will form part of the establishment works.	Risk to establishing vegetated shingle and ground-nesting birds.

- 1.2.7 Natural England is satisfied that the proposals for coastal access in this report are made in accordance with relevant environmental protection legislation. For more information about how we came to this conclusion, see the following assessments of the access proposals that we have published separately:
  - A Habitats Regulations Assessment relating to any potential impact on the conservation objectives of European sites.
  - Our Nature Conservation Assessment, in which we document our conclusions in relation to other potential impacts on nature conservation.

Part 6b of the Overview includes some contextual information about protecting the environment along this length of coast.

## Accessibility:

- 1.2.8 There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route. However, the natural coastal terrain is often challenging for people with reduced mobility and this is the case on sections of our proposed route because:
  - the trail would follow a section of beach which in places comprises soft sand/ shingle (sections AHS-1-S006 to AHS-1-S012 on Maps AHS 1b and 1c and sections AHS-1-S037 to AHS-1-S042 on Maps AHS 1d and 1e);
  - there is a section on a private road which has an uneven surface (section AHS-1-S021, Map AHS 1c);
  - the trail would follow an uneven grass or bare soil path along the cliff top (sections AHS-1-S022 to AHS-1-S024 on Maps AHS 1c and 1d);
  - there are steps where it would be necessary to link the cliff top section of route to the beach at Thorpeness (section AHS-1-S025 on Map AHS 1d); and
  - there is a steep descent back onto the beach near Cliff House at Sizewell (section AHS-1-S037 on Map AHS 1e).

See part 6a of the Overview - 'Recreational issues' - for more information.

## Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

#### 1.2.9 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 1.3.1 below.

1.2.10 The Proposals Tables show where we are proposing to alter the default landward boundary of the coastal margin. These proposals are set out in columns 5b and 5c of table 1.3.1. Where these columns are left blank, we are making no such proposals, so the default landward boundary applies. See the note relating to Columns 5b & 5c [above Table 1.3.1] explaining what this means in practice.

See also part 3 of the Overview - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for a more detailed 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.

#### 1.2.11 Restrictions and/or exclusions:

There are no local restrictions or exclusions on this stretch of the coast between Aldeburgh and Sizewell other than that (set out in more detail in 1.2.14)

However "national restrictions" apply to coastal access rights as set out in Schedule 2 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (and amended by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009)

- 1.2.12 These directions will not prevent or affect:
  - any existing local use of the land by right: such use is not covered by coastal access rights;
  - any other use people already make of the land locally by formal agreement with the landowner, or by informal permission or traditional toleration; or
  - use of any registered rights of common or any rights at common law or by Royal Charter etc.
- 1.2.13 Any such use is not prohibited or limited by these arrangements.

See part 8 of the Overview - 'Restrictions and exclusions' - for a summary for the entire stretch.

#### 1.2.14 Other factors affecting access:

Access to the coastal margin adjacent to route sections AHS-1-S004 to AHS-1-S007 (Map AHS 1b) at The Haven, public access will be unavailable when management of the vegetated shingle and ground nesting birds is taking place. This arrangement would continue without any local restriction on the new access rights to give effect to it formally.

#### 1.2.15 Coastal erosion:

Natural England is able to propose that the route of the trail would be able to change in the future, without further approval from the Secretary of State, in response to coastal change. This would happen in accordance with the criteria and procedures for 'roll-back' set out in part 7 of the Overview.

Natural England may only propose the use of this roll-back power:

- as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes or encroachment by the sea;
   or
- in order to link with other parts of the route that need to roll back in direct response to such changes.
- 1.2.16 Column 4 of table 1.3.1 indicates where roll-back has been proposed in relation to a route section. Where this is the case, the route, as initially determined at the time the report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on Maps AHS 1a to AHS 1e as the proposed route of the trail.
- 1.2.17 If at any time in the future any part of a route section upon which roll-back has been specified needs, in Natural England's view, to change in order for the overall route to remain viable, the new route for the part in question will be determined by Natural England without further reference to the Secretary of State. This will be done in accordance with the criteria and procedures described under the title 'Roll-back' in part 7 of the Overview and section 4.10 of the Coastal Access Scheme. If this happens, the new route will become the approved route for that section for the purposes of the Order which determines where coastal access rights apply.

On sections for which roll-back is <u>not</u> proposed in table 1.3.1, the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps AHS 1a to AHS 1e as the proposed route of the trail.

## Other future change:

1.2.18 Plans are being developed for a further nuclear power plant at Sizewell. During construction, there will be periods during which the main route between sections AHS-1-S040 and AHS-2-S010 (Maps AHS 1e and 2a) will not be available on its original alignment. The developer, in conjunction with Natural England and the Access Authority, Suffolk County Council (SCC), will ensure that a temporary route, seaward of the power plant, is made available and signed at such times.

There will also be periods during both construction and operation of Sizewell C when the main route and the associated coastal margin will not be available for use. Plans include a temporary route landward of the power plant for use on these occasions. The developer will work with SCC and Natural England to ensure closures are kept to a minimum, the route is well-signed and that walkers are informed of the operation of the temporary route well before reaching the site.

See parts 7 - 'Future changes' of the Overview for more information.

#### Establishment of the trail:

1.2.19 Below we summarise how our proposed route for the trail would be physically established to make it ready for public use before any new rights come into force.

Establishment works will only start on this length of coast once these proposals have been approved by the Secretary of State. The works may therefore either precede or follow the start of establishment works on other lengths of coast within the stretch, and detailed in their separate reports.

- 1.2.20 Our estimate of the capital costs for physical establishment of the trail on the proposed route within Report AHS 1 is £18,113 and is informed by:
  - information already held by the access authority, Suffolk County Council, in relation to the management of the existing Suffolk Coast Path and public rights of way;
  - the conclusions of our deliberations in relation to potential impacts on the environment; and
  - information gathered while visiting affected land and talking to the people who own and manage it about the options for the route.
- 1.2.21 There are three main elements to the overall cost:
  - A number of signs will need replacing, including interpretation boards as part of our mitigation measures. A new interpretation board will be installed between sections AHS-1-S007 and AHS-1-S008 (Map AHS 1b and 1c).
  - A section of geo-cellular grid will be installed to encourage footfall over a certain section and protect features between sections AHS-1-S007 and AHS-1-S008 (Map AHS 1b and 1c).
  - There will be significant lengths of new revetment installed and some replacement of old revetment between sections AHS-1-S-026 and AHS-1-S028 (Map AHS 1d).

Table 1 shows our estimate of the capital cost within Report AHS 1 for each of the main elements of physical establishment described above.

**Table 1: Estimate of capital costs** 

Item	Cost
Signs & interpretation	£4,351
Steps	£4,000
Clearance of vegetation	£320
Revetment	£5,600
Surfacing works	£1,200
Project management	£2,642

Total £18,113 (Exclusive of any VAT payable)

1.2.22 Once the Secretary of State's decision on our report has been notified, and further to our conversations with land managers during the route planning stage, Suffolk County Council will liaise with affected land owners and occupiers about relevant aspects of the design, installation and maintenance of the new signs and infrastructure that are needed on their land. Prior to works being carried out on the ground, all necessary permissions, authorisations and consents will be obtained. All such works would conform to the published standards for National Trails and the other criteria described in our Coastal Access Scheme.

#### Maintenance of the trail:

- 1.2.23 Because the trail on this length of coast will form part of the National Trail being created around the whole coast of England called the England Coast Path, we envisage that it will be maintained to the same high quality standards as other National Trails in England (see The New Deal; Management of National Trails in England from April 2013: details at Annex A of the Overview).
- 1.2.24 We estimate that the annual cost to maintain the trail within Report AHS 1 will be £2,710 (exclusive of any VAT payable). In developing this estimate we have taken account of the formula used to calculate Natural England's contribution to the maintenance of other National Trails.

# Part 1.3: Proposals Tables

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

# 1.3.1 Section Details: Maps AHS 1a to AHS 1e: Fort Green car park, Aldeburgh to Sizewell beach car park

Key notes on table:

- 1. Column 2 an asterisk (\*) against the route section number means see also table 1.3.2: Other options considered.
- 2. Column 4 'No' means no roll-back is proposed for this route section. 'Yes normal' means roll-back is proposed and is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future as any coastal change occurs.
- 3. Column 4 'Yes see table 1.3.3' means roll-back is proposed, but refer to that table below about our likely approach to implementing it for this route section. This is because a more complex situation exists in this case and consideration must be given to how roll-back may happen in relation to excepted land, a protected site etc.
- 4. Column 5a Certain coastal land types are included automatically in the coastal margin where they fall landward of the trail if they touch it at some point. The relevant land type (foreshore, cliff, bank, barrier, dune, beach, flat or section 15 land see Glossary) is shown in this column where appropriate. "No" means none present on this route section.
- 5. Columns 5b and 5c Any entry in these columns means we are proposing to align the landward boundary of the coastal margin on this route section with the physical feature(s) shown in 5b, for the reason in 5c. No text here means that for this route section the landward edge of the margin would be that of the trail itself or if any default coastal land type is shown in 5a, that would be its landward boundary instead.

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 7 of Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
AHS 1a	AHS-1-S001	Public footway (pavement)	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1a	AHS-1-S002 and AHS-1- S003	Public highway	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Path	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1b	AHS-1- S004* and AHS-1- S005*	Public highway	Yes - see table 1.3.3	Yes - beach			
AHS 1b	AHS-1- S006* and AHS-1- S007*	Other existing walked route	Yes - see table 1.3.3	Yes - beach			

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 7 of Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
AHS 1c	AHS-1- S008* and AHS-1- S009*	Other existing walked route	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1c	AHS-1- S010*	Public footpath	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1c	AHS-1- S011*	Other existing walked route	Yes - see table 1.3.3	Yes - beach			
AHS 1c	AHS-1- S012* and AHS-1- S013*	Public footpath	Yes - see table 1.3.3	Yes - beach			
AHS 1c	AHS-1- S014*	Public footpath	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Track	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1c	AHS-1- S015*	Public highway	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1c	AHS-1- S016* and AHS-1- S017*	Byway open to all traffic	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Road	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1c	AHS-1- S018* and AHS-1- S019*	Byway open to all traffic	No	No	Road	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1c	AHS-1- S020*	Public highway	No	No	Road	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1c	AHS-1- S021*	Other existing walked route	No	No	Road	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1d	AHS-1- S022* to AHS-1- S024*	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
AHS 1d	AHS-1- S025*	Other existing walked route	Yes - normal	Yes - bank			

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 7 of Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
AHS 1d	AHS-1-S026	Other existing walked route	Yes - normal	Yes - cliff			
AHS 1d	AHS-1-S027	Other existing walked route	Yes - see table 1.3.3	Yes - cliff			
AHS 1d	AHS-1-S028	Public footpath	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Hedge bank	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1e	AHS-1-S029 and AHS-1- S030	Public footpath	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1e	AHS-1-S031	Other existing walked route	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1e	AHS-1-S032 to AHS-1- S034	Public footpath	Yes - see table 1.3.3	No	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	
AHS 1e	AHS-1-S035 and AHS-1- S036	Public footpath	Yes - see table 1.3.3	Yes - dune			
AHS 1e	AHS-1-S037 and AHS-1- S038	Public footpath	Yes - Normal	Yes - dune			
AHS 1e	AHS-1-S039	Public footpath	Yes - Normal	Yes - dune			
AHS 1e	AHS-1-S040	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	Yes - dune			
AHS 1e	AHS-1-S041 and AHS-1- S042	Public footpath	No	Yes - dune			

# 1.3.2 Other options considered: Map(s) AHS 1a to AHS 1e: Fort Green car park, Aldeburgh to Sizewell beach car park

Maps	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
AHS 1b and AHS 1c	AHS-1-S004 to AHS-1- S014	<ul> <li>We considered aligning the trail:</li> <li>along the main road from Aldeburgh into Thorpeness</li> <li>behind the seafront properties at Thorpeness</li> <li>on the landward side of Aldeburgh Road inside the RSPB reserve</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>it is closer to the sea and maintains views of the sea;</li> <li>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;</li> <li>the walking experience was more pleasant as walkers are separated from traffic;</li> <li>the route follows the existing Suffolk Coast Path;</li> <li>the route landward of the seafront properties on public rights of way remains as an alternative route for walkers with dogs who are subject to local restrictions between 1st May and 30th September made by East Suffolk Council but does not give views of the sea;</li> <li>the route on the landward side of Aldeburgh Road would be pleasant but we concluded that it would not strike the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme.</li> </ul>
AHS 1c to AHS 1d	AHS-1-S013 to AHS-1- S025	We considered aligning the trail on the beach	<ul> <li>We opted for the proposed route because:</li> <li>there would have been a long, avoidable section of challenging walking on soft sand/shingle;</li> <li>the cliffs are particularly prone to slumping along this section; private gabions and "pillows" have been installed to protect properties on the cliff top;</li> <li>it provides an easier means of accessing the onward cliff top sections;</li> <li>it avoids fragile vegetated shingle on the designated site;</li> <li>under our proposals, the public footpaths would remain available for people to use as part of the spreading room, but would not form part of the designated trail.</li> </ul>

Maps	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
AHS1d and AHS1e	AHS-1-S026 to AHS-1- S035	We considered using the public rights of way seaward of the proposed trail	<ul> <li>We opted for the proposed route because:</li> <li>the proposed route is easier to walk on;</li> <li>there are better views of the sea;</li> <li>it avoids fragile vegetated shingle on the designated site;</li> <li>under our proposals, the public footpaths would remain available for people to use as part of the spreading room, but would not form part of the designated trail.</li> </ul>

Note: Any public rights of way not forming part of the proposed trail would remain available for people to use under their pre-existing rights.

# 1.3.3 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: Map(s) AHS 1a to AHS 1e: Fort Green car park, Aldeburgh to Sizewell beach car park

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Feature(s) or site(s) potentially affected	Our likely approach to roll-back
AHS 1a	AHS-1-S001 to AHS-1- S003	Buildings and curtilage  – seafront properties in Aldeburgh	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the excepted land (e.g. buildings, curtilage, gardens etc.), we will choose a route landward of it, following discussions with owners and occupiers.
AHS 1b	AHS-1-S004 to AHS-1- S007	Aldeburgh/Thorpeness Road and Leiston- Aldeburgh SSSI	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the excepted land (e.g. the road), we will choose a route landward of it, following discussions with owners and occupiers.
			■ If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of a designated site (e.g. SSSI), we will choose a new route after detailed discussions with the relevant experts and with any potentially affected owners or occupiers, which will either (a) pass through the site, if appropriate or (b) if necessary, be routed landward of it.
			In reaching this judgement we will have full regard to the need to seek a fair balance between the interests of potentially affected owners and occupiers and those of the public.
AHS 1c to AHS 1e	AHS-1-S008 to AHS-1- S017 and AHS-1-S027 to AHS-1- S033	Buildings and curtilage, gardens, orchards and children's activity site.	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the excepted land (e.g. buildings, curtilage, gardens etc.), we will choose a route landward of it, following discussions with owners and occupiers.
AHS 1e	AHS-1-S034 to AHS-1- S036	Caravan park	■ If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the specified caravan park, we will choose a new route after detailed discussions with all relevant interests, either (a) to pass through the site on a different access track, or (b) if this is not practicable, to pass somewhere on the landward side of it.
			In reaching this judgement we will have full regard to the need to seek a fair balance between the interests of potentially affected owners and occupiers and those of the public.

In relation to all other sections where roll-back has been proposed, any later adjustment of the trail is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future as any coastal change occurs.

# **Part 1.4: Proposals Maps**

# 1.4.1 Map Index

Map reference	Map title
AHS 1a	Fort Green car park, Aldeburgh to Church Farm Road
AHS 1b	Church Farm Road to The Haven
AHS 1c	The Haven to North End Avenue
AHS 1d	North End Avenue to Sizewell Hall
AHS 1e	Sizewell Hall to Sizewell beach car park



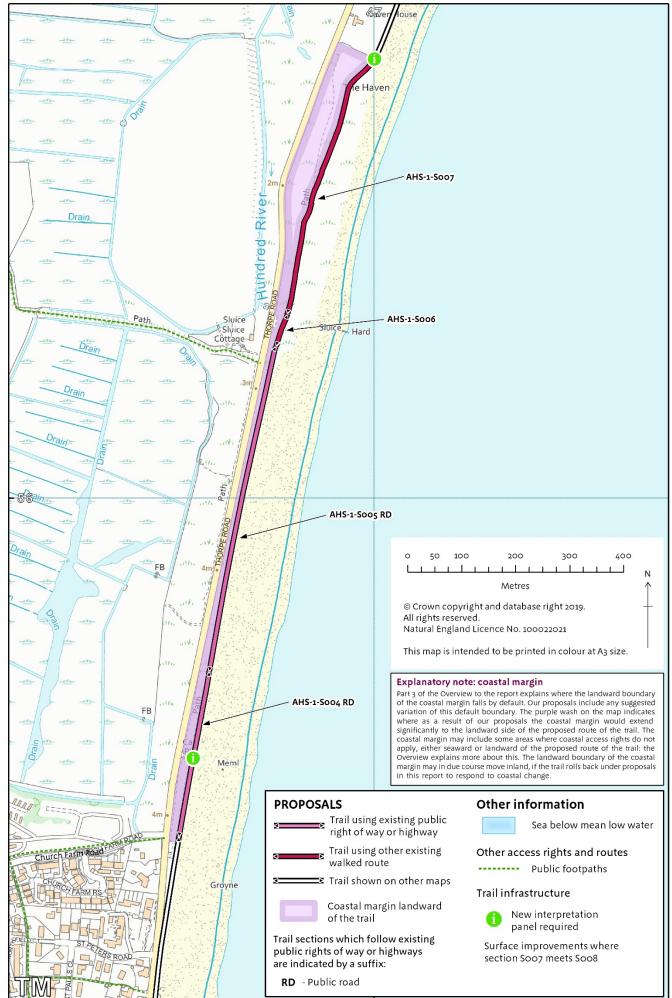


FW - Public footway (Pavement)

RD - Public road

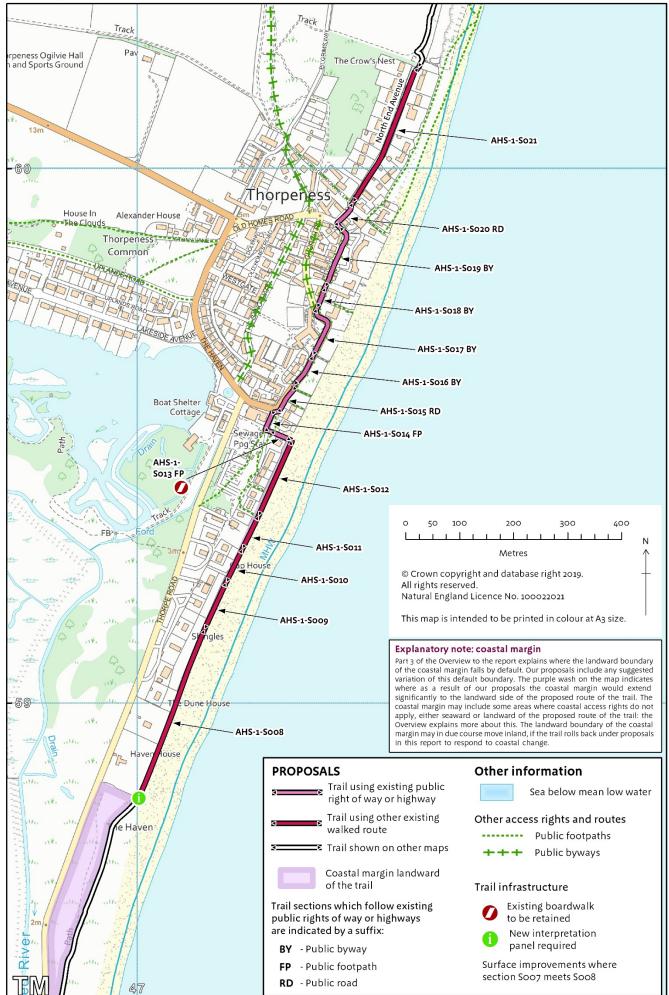


#### Map AHS 1b - Church Farm Road to The Haven



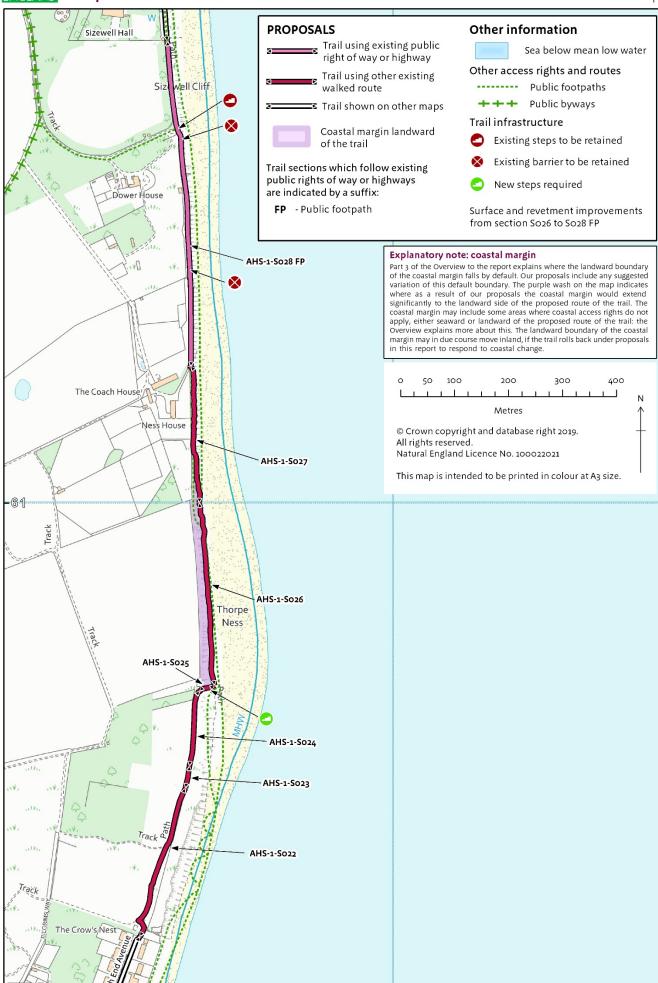


#### Map AHS 1c - The Haven to North End Avenue





#### Map AHS 1d - North End Avenue to Sizewell Hall



## Map AHS 1e - Sizewell Hall to Sizewell beach car park

