



England Coast Path Stretch: Tilbury to Southend-on-Sea

Report TSE 3: Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea to Ferry Road, Benfleet

Part 3.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea (Grid reference TQ 7372 8756)
End Point:	Ferry Road, Benfleet (Grid reference TQ 7799 8570)
Relevant Maps:	TSE 3a to TSE 3d

3.1.1 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 Tilbury and Southend-on-Sea

3.1.2 This report covers length TSE 3 of the stretch, which is the coast between Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea and Ferry Road, Benfleet. 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.

3.1.3 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.

3.1.4 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 3.2: Proposals Narrative

The trail:

3.2.1 Generally follows existing walk routes, including public rights of way and tolerated or permitted paths along most of this length.

3.2.2 Is aligned close to the upper tidal limit for a short distance in the northern side of East Haven Creek by the sewage works near Benfleet Marsh. (TSE-3-S014 to TSE-3-S016 incl)

3.2.3 In one area a significant inland route is necessary to take the trail past the operational landfill site south of Pitsea which is currently inaccessible because of health and safety and operational concerns. This route also requires the railway line to be crossed at existing locations. (See Future Change, below and Part 7 of the Overview).

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.

3.2.4 The following designated sites affect this length of coast:

- Pitsea Marsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Holehaven Creek Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

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

3.2.5 Measures to protect the environment

Maps	Route section numbers	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
TSE 3b and 3c	TSE-3-S008 to TSE-3-S012	■ Dogs to be kept on leads all year round under 26(3)(a) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)	To prevent disturbance of wintering and breeding birds in the grazing marshes. See para 3.2.15 below.

3.2.6 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:

3.2.7 There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route. However, the natural coastal terrain is often challenging and this is the case on sections of our proposed route because:

- The trail would follow an uneven grass or bare soil path through meadows, along arable field edges and along the top of seawalls
- There are steps in one location (TSE-3-S012) where it would be necessary to descend/ascend a steep bank.
- The trail will cross the railway lines at Pitsea Hall Road (map 3a)

As the trail is established, obstructions will be reviewed and considered for removal or replacement with more accessible structures.

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

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

3.2.8 **Estuary:** This report proposes that the trail should contain sections aligned on the estuary of the River Thames, extending upstream from the open coast. Natural England proposes to exercise its functions as if the sea included the estuarial waters of that river as far as the Tilbury to Gravesend Ferry as indicated by the extent of the trail shown on map TSE 1a.

See part 5 of the Overview for a detailed analysis of the options considered for this estuary and our resulting proposals

3.2.9 **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 3.3.1 below.

3.2.10 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 3.3.1. 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 3.3.1 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.

3.2.11 **Restrictions and/or exclusions:** We have proposed to exclude and restrict access by direction under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) in certain places along this section of coast.

Exclusion of access to the-saltmarsh/flats along the extent of this report

3.2.12 Access to the saltmarsh/flat in the coastal margin seaward of route sections TSE-3-S001 to TSE-3-S027 is to be excluded all year-round by direction under s25A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as it is unsuitable for public access. The exclusion does not affect the route itself and will have no legal effect on land where coastal access rights do not apply.

3.2.13 The mudflat around the stretch is soft and sinking. It does not provide a safe walking surface and is subject to frequent tidal inundation. RNLI and Coastguard data indicates incidents of people being rescued from the mud. Areas of saltmarsh are often extensive and have deep channels and creeks, some of which would not be readily apparent to walkers and can pose a significant risk.

Exclusion of access to Bowers Marsh RSPB Reserve

3.2.14 Natural England proposes to restrict access for walkers with dogs relevant to this length of coast as follows:

- Dogs must be kept to a lead on the ECP route and seaward margin that is not PROW between route sections TSE-3-S008 and TSE-3-S012 by direction under section 26(3)(a) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) all year round to protect sensitive wildlife (breeding, passage and overwintering birds). The restriction will have no legal effect on land where coastal access rights do not apply.

3.2.15 Protected bird species use the RSPB reserve at Bowers Marsh. All year round. Counts show the presence of wintering dunlin, redshank, grey plover, lapwing, black-tailed godwit, knot, avocet, brent goose, wigeon, shelduck and teal, and the presence of breeding avocet and common tern. The Reserve already observes a dogs on leads policy. The Nature Conservation Assessment and the Appropriate Assessment for the site concluded that allowing access would cause a significant effect by disturbing the internationally-protected bird species using the site. The Assessments will be published alongside this report.

3.2.16 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.

Any such use is not prohibited or limited by these arrangements.

3.2.17 The directions we give are intended to avoid any new public rights being created over the area in question in view of the hidden dangers to which new users of the land would be subject because of the local patterns of tidal inundation, extensive mudflats and areas of soft mud.

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

3.2.18 **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.

3.2.19 Column 4 of table 3.3.1 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 TSE 3a to TSE 3d as the proposed route of the trail.

3.2.20 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 not proposed in tables 3.3.1, the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps TSE 3a to TSE 3d as the proposed route of the trail.

Other future change:

3.2.21 There are also places described in this report where we foresee the need for future changes to the proposed access provisions for particular reasons. These are summarised at part 7 of the Overview.

- At Pitsea Hall Lane, (TSE-3-S001) the start point of this section may need to alter if the right of way to the western side of the road is diverted as a result of any closure of the crossing over the railway lines.
- When Pitsea landfill site is closed and restored, this may present an opportunity to review the trail alignment. The current alignment is proposed as the working landfill site presented a significant barrier to developing an access proposal, when combined with limited accessibility and ground conditions on the land surrounding it. Once restored, this may present with a range of options for consideration including a new route directly on to Canvey Island. The alignment proposed also appreciates that Wat Tyler Country Park is locked, and the public are excluded, during night time hours.
- Fobbing Horse and East Haven barriers may be modified or replaced in the future, and this may present new opportunities to review the trail alignment.

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

Establishment of the trail:

3.2.22 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.

3.2.23 Our estimate of the capital costs for physical establishment of the trail on the proposed route is £8,677 and is informed by:

- information already held by the access authority, Essex County Council
- 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.

3.2.24 The main elements of the overall cost are:

- New signposts and waymarking to clearly indicate the trail route.

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

Table 1: Estimate of capital costs

Item	Cost
Signs & interpretation	£7,546
Project management	£1,131
Total	£8,677 (Exclusive of any VAT payable)

3.2.25 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, there will be suitable liaison 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:

3.2.26 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).

3.2.27 We estimate that the annual cost to maintain the trail will be £2387.44 (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 3.3: Proposals Tables

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

3.3.1 Section Details – Maps TSE 3a to TSE 3d: Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea to Ferry Road, Benfleet

Key notes on table:

1. Column 2 – an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 3.3.2: 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 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.
4. 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
TSE 3a	TSE-3-S001FW*	Public footway (pavement)	No	No			
TSE 3a	TSE-3-S002RD*	Public highway	No	No			
TSE 3a	TSE-3-S003FW8	Public footway (pavement)	No	No			
TSE 3a	TSE-3-S004FP*	Public footpath	No	No			
TSE 3a	TSE-3-S005FP*	Public footpath	No	No			
TSE 3a	TSE-3-S006FP*	Public footpath	No	No			
TSE 3a	TSE-3-S007FP*	Public footpath	No	No			
TSE 3b	TSE-3-S008FP*	Public footpath	No	No			
TSE 3b	TSE-3-S009RD*	Public highway	No	No			

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
TSE 3b	TSE-3-S010*	Other existing walked route	No	No			
TSE 3b	TSE-3-S011FP*	Public footpath	No	No			
TSE 3c	TSE-3-S012FP*	Public footpath	No	No			
TSE 3c	TSE-3-S013FP*	Public footpath	Yes - normal	No			
TSE 3c	TSE-3-S014FP*	Public footpath	Yes - normal	Yes - bank			
TSE 3c	TSE-3-S015*	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			
TSE 3c	TSE-3-S016*	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
TSE 3c	TSE-3-S017*	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
TSE 3c	TSE-3-S018FP*	Public footpath	Yes - Normal	No			
TSE 3c	TSE-3-S019FP*	Public footpath	Yes - normal	No			
TSE 3c	TSE-3-S020FP*	Public footpath	Yes - normal	No			
TSE 3c	TSE-3-S021FP*	Public footpath	No	No			
TSE 3d	TSE-3-S022*	Other existing walked route	No	Yes - bank			
TSE 3d	TSE-3-S023FW*	Public footway (pavement)	No	Yes - bank			
TSE 3d	TSE-3-S024RD*	Public highway	No	No			
TSE 3d	TSE-3-S025FW*	Public footway (pavement)	No	No			
TSE 3d	TSE-3-S026RD*	Public highway	No	No			

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
TSE 3d	TSE-3-S027FW*	Public footway (pavement)	No	No			

3.3.2 Other options considered: Maps TSE 3a to TSE 3d: Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea to Ferry Road, Benfleet

The proposed alignment from Pitsea Train station TSE-3-S001 to TSE-3-S027 has been proposed as a cumulative response to the land use constraints to the south of this alignment. We investigated and considered a range of options as laid out in the table below. Had any of the options that involved utilising the flood barriers or crossing through the marshes and landfill been able to be proposed, then the whole of report 3 alignment would be very different and may not have included any of the sections as proposed.

A proposal to cross Fobbing Horse Barrier would also have removed the need for Tilbury to Southend-on-Sea report 2 sections TSE-2-S0018 to TSE-2-S046.

Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
<p>We considered various routes along Pitsea Hall Lane and across Pitsea and Bowers Marshes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pitsea and Bowers marshes are important wildlife refuge areas and are seasonally inundated. ■ Pitsea marshes is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, of special note at the largest reedbed in south Essex. ■ Bowers marsh is a RSPB reserve, of special interest for its wintering and ground nesting birds, which would be susceptible to increased disturbance. (as spreading room the area is proposed for a dogs on lead restriction, see 3.2.15 of this report) ■ An alignment considered through the marshes on the south side of the railway line would have been parallel to the public right of way to the north. The southern alignment would have been seasonally wet, crossed many ditches and required significant infrastructure investment. ■ Current land uses and constraints ruled these areas out of further consideration.
<p>We considered aligning the trail from Pitsea train station, along Pitsea Hall Road, along the service road for the landfill site and either passing on through this site to the flood barrier mentioned below, or passing across Bowers Marsh, as above.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The working landfill site was considered to be excepted land. ■ Due to the high number of lorry movements around the entrance and working machinery across the site, with the unfinished/unrestored nature of the land use no alignment option could be found that satisfied the criteria as laid out in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access scheme

Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
<p>We considered using the flood barriers at Fobbing Horse (please see report 2, TSE-2-S017) to cross Vange Creek and East Haven Creek. This would take the trail direct on to Canvey Island.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unless a major engineering operation were undertaken to affix steps and gantries to the outside of Fobbing Horse barrier (across Vange Creek), the only way to utilise the structure as a crossing would be to allow the public access to the internal machinery and workings of the barrier. Use of the current access was ruled out as a health and safety consideration and as a 'building' could be considered excepted land. The cost of attaching steps or slopes and gantries to the outside was expected to be extremely high and could impact adversely on the international wildlife designations of this area. ■ The land between the two barriers over the two creeks is a working landfill site and therefore currently excepted land (see above for consideration of using the landfill site)
<p>We considered aligning the trail from Pitsea train station along Pitsea Hall Road and around Wat Tyler County Park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Wat Tyler Country Park is only open during daylight hours (latest closure 6.00pm). Gates are locked and walkers are encouraged to leave before closing or risk a charge. ■ As adjacent land for an onward journey of the trail is working landfill (see above). Therefore any proposed alignment would loop around Wat Tyler and return to Pitsea Train station for the current proposed alignment. ■ The park is publically accessible and would be within spreading room by virtue of the proposed alignment.

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.

Part 3.4: Maps

3.4.1 Map Index

Map reference	Map title
TSE 3a	Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea to Bowers Hall Pumping Station
TSE 3b	Bowers Hall Pumping Station to South-east of Great Mussels
TSE 3c	South-east of Great Mussels to Train Station, Benfleet
TSE 3d	Train Station, Benfleet to Ferry Road, Benfleet
Directions Map TSE E3	Proposed direction under S25A CROW

PROPOSALS

Trail Sections

- Trail using existing public right of way or highway
- Trail using other existing walked route
- Trail not using existing walked route
- Alternative route
- Trail shown on other maps
- Approved or open England Coast Path

Maps that show sections of the trail that follow the existing South West Coast Path as currently walked and managed use the following trail categories. Information on the existing status and infrastructure is not shown.

- Trail using existing South West Coast Path
- Alternative or optional alternative route using existing South West Coast Path

Trail sections which follow existing public rights of way or highways are indicated by a suffix:

- BW** - Public bridleway
- BY** - Public byway
- CP** - Cycletrack (pedestrian)
- CT** - Cycletrack (cycles only)
- FP** - Public footpath
- FW** - Public footway (Pavement)
- RB** - Restricted byway
- RD** - Public road

Coastal Margin

Explanatory note

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.

- Coastal margin landward of the trail
- Coastal margin landward of the trail which is existing access land

Other Information

Other access rights and routes

- Public bridleways
- Public byways
- Public footpaths
- Restricted byways
- South West Coast Path
- Sustrans national routes
- Existing access land

Infrastructure types

For status of each, where shown on map, see colour codes below

Bridges:

- Clapper bridge
- Footbridge
- Quad bike bridge
- Sleeper bridge
- Vehicle bridge

Stiles:

- Ladder stile
- Lift-up stile
- Squeeze stile
- Step stile
- Stone stile

Gates:

- Bristol gate
- Field gate
- Gateway with no gate
- Kissing gate
- Pedestrian gate
- Wheelchair gate

Miscellaneous:

- Barrier
- Boardwalk
- Bollard
- Cattle grid
- Culvert
- Cycle chicane
- Drainage
- Drop-kerb
- Gap in fence
- Hurdle
- Interpretation panel
- Ramp
- Revetment
- Stepping stones
- Steps

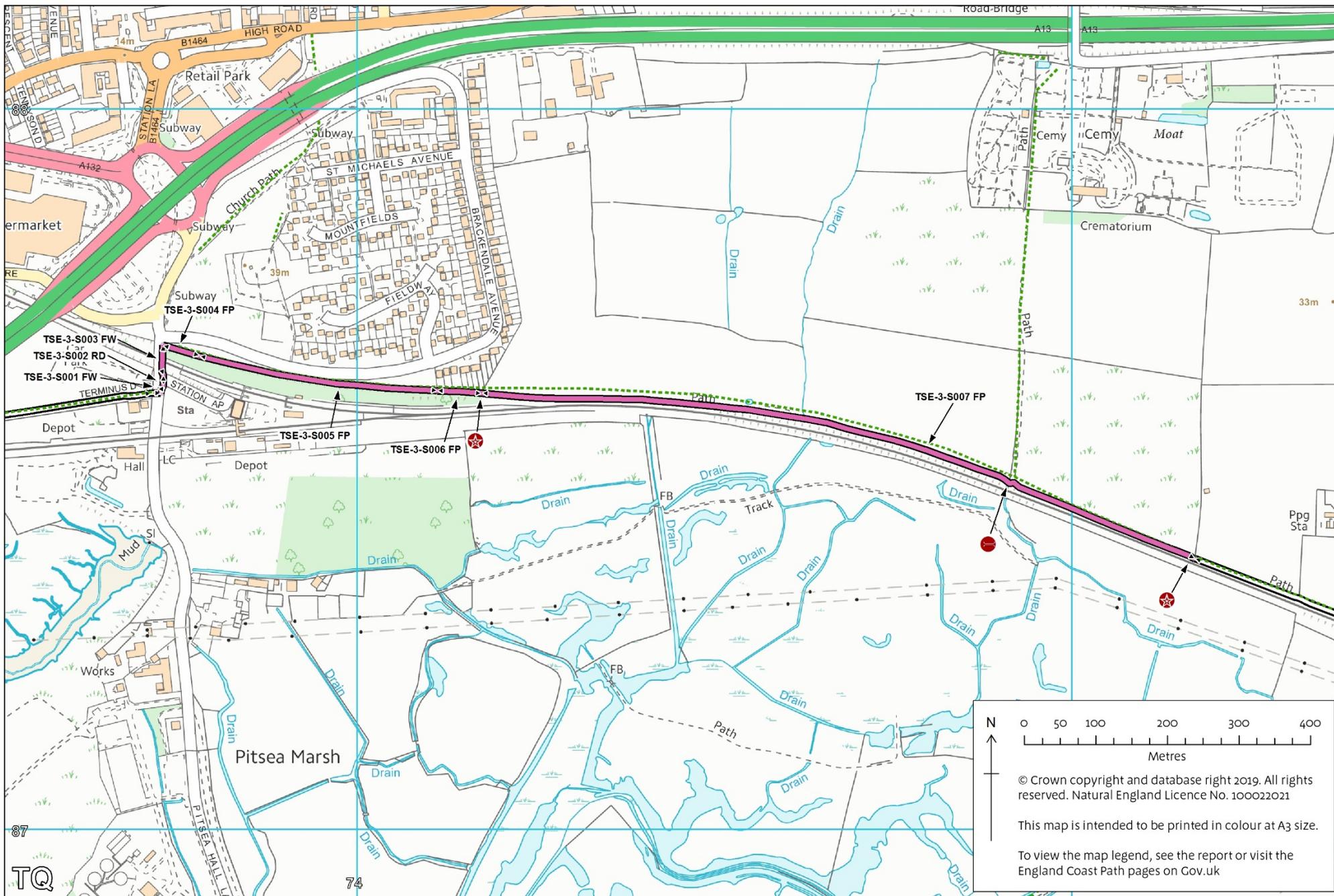
Infrastructure status

Each symbol shown on the map is colour coded as appropriate, as in this example for a set of steps:

- Existing steps to be retained
- New steps required
- Existing steps to be removed

* Please note that the items in this legend may not all be present on an individual map or report.

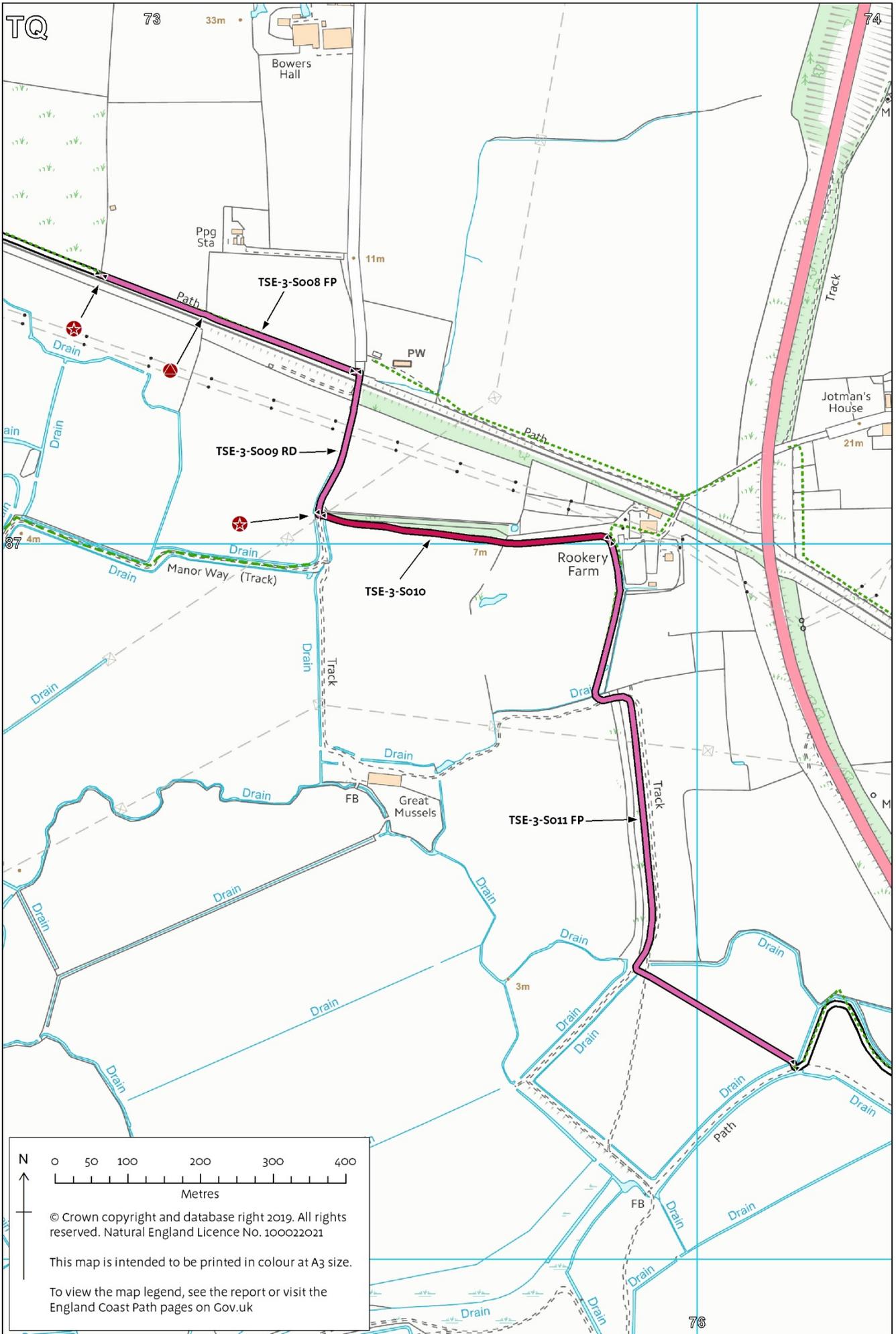
Map TSE 3a - Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea to Bowers Hall Pumping Station



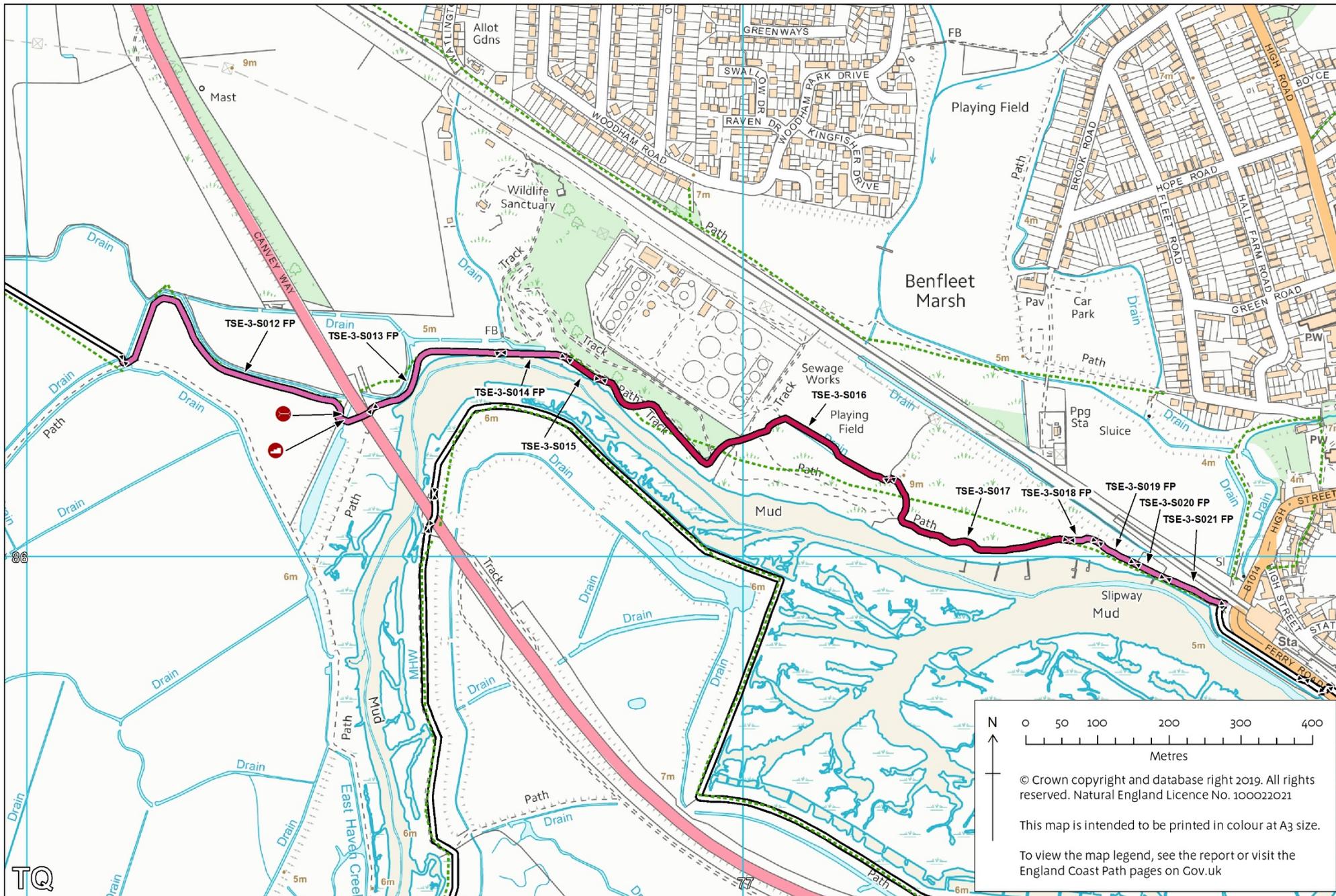
Map TSE 3a - Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea to Bowers Hall Pumping Station

Map TSE 3b - Bowers Hall Pumping Station to south-east of Great Mussels

Map TSE 3b - Bowers Hall Pumping Station to south-east of Great Mussels

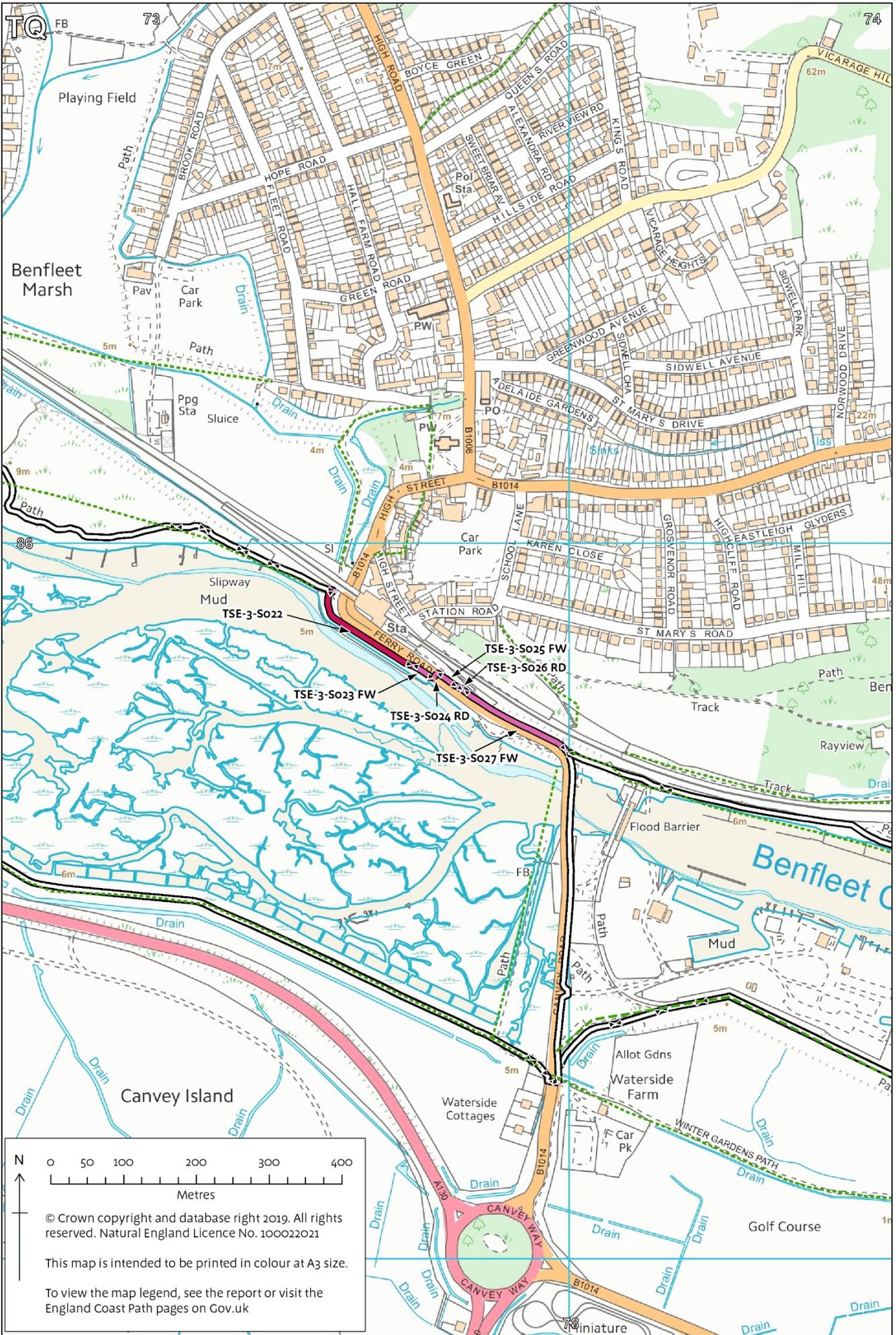


Map TSE 3c - South-east of Great Mussels to Train Station, Benfleet



Map TSE 3c - South-east of Great Mussels to Train Station, Benfleet

Map TSE 3d - Train Station, Benfleet to Ferry Road, Benfleet



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Metres

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This map is intended to be printed in colour at A3 size.

To view the map legend, see the report or visit the England Coast Path pages on Gov.uk

