

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATIONS IN THE ALDE AND ORE ESTUARY AREA

General character of the site

This estuary, made up of three rivers, is the only bar-built estuary in the UK with a shingle bar. This bar has been extending rapidly along the coast since 1530, pushing the mouth of the estuary progressively south-westwards. The eastwards-running Alde River turns south, at Slaughden, along the inner side of the Orfordness shingle spit. It is relatively wide and shallow, with extensive intertidal mudflats on both sides of the channel in its upper reaches and saltmarsh accreting along its fringes. The Alde subsequently becomes the south-west flowing River Ore, which is narrower and deeper with stronger currents. The smaller Butley River, which has extensive areas of saltmarsh and a reedbed community bordering intertidal mudflats, flows into the Ore shortly after the latter divides around Havergate Island. The mouth of the River Ore is still moving south as the Orfordness shingle spit continues to grow through longshore drift from the north. There is a range of littoral sediment and rock biotopes (the latter on sea defences) that are of high diversity and species richness for estuaries in eastern England. Water quality is excellent throughout. The area is relatively natural, being largely undeveloped by man and with very limited industrial activity. The estuary contains large areas of shallow water over subtidal sediments, and extensive mudflats and saltmarshes exposed at low water. Its diverse and species-rich intertidal sand and mudflat biotopes grade naturally along many lengths of the shore into vegetated or dynamic shingle habitat, saltmarsh, grassland and reedbed.

The **Natura 2000** citation states that the area is;

The estuary is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for mudflats and sandflats not covered at low tide. The area is considered to support a significant presence of Atlantic salt meadows (*Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae*) and consists of 70% is tidal river, estuary, mudflat and lagoons, 25% is saltmarsh and salt pastures, 5% is seen as shingle and islets

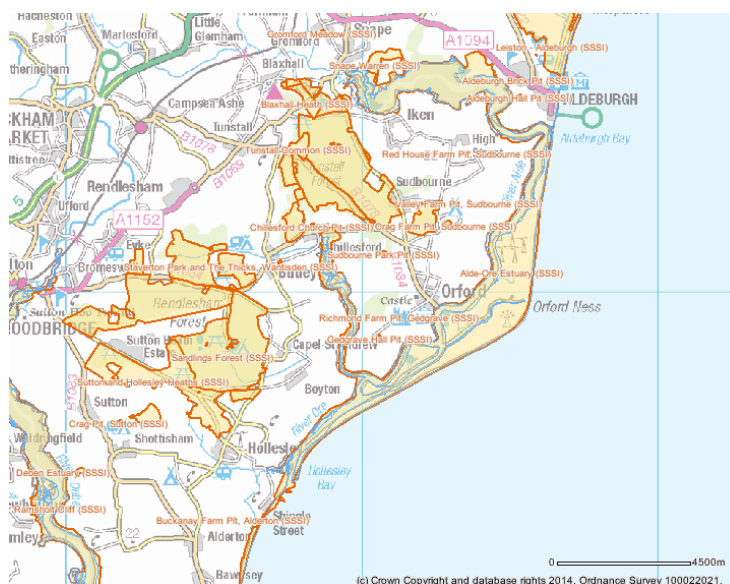
1 THE ESTUARY IS WITHIN A DESIGNATED AREA

1.1 The estuary is contained within the **Suffolk Heritage Coast**, designated in 1973. The 1992 Heritage Coast Policy set national targets for all Heritage Coast, namely the provision of a semi-natural strip along the coast, accommodating a coastal path, the clearance of eyesores and meeting standards for water and beach cleanliness.

1.2 The estuary area is included within **the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**. The primary purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area and to protect its flora and fauna, geological interest and landscape features. However, in pursuing this primary purpose account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and the economic and social needs of local communities.

2 THE ESTUARY IS A DESIGNATED AREA IN ITS OWN RIGHT

2.1 Alde-Ore Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)



Alde-Ore Estuary SSSI is designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), for its diverse and outstanding interests including geology, geomorphology, breeding and wintering birds, estuaries, saltmarsh, mud flats, vegetated shingle, coastal lagoons, scarce plants and invertebrate features. The SSSI boundary includes the Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries, Hazelwood Marshes Havergate Island, Orfordness and Shingle Street (the boundary is contiguous with the Alde-Ore Estuary Ramsar Site and Alde-Ore Estuary SPA)

2.2 Other SSSI designated sites:

There are several other SSSI within the AOEP Boundary Plan, many of these are small geological sites and some may be outside the final plan boundary. These could be identified on a map and include:

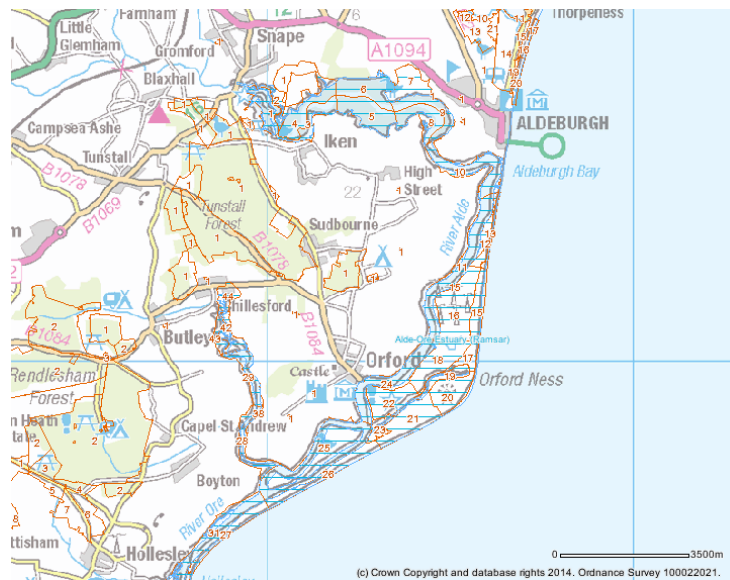
Aldeburgh Brick Pit SSSI	Sandlings Forest SSSI
Aldeburgh Hall Pit SSSI	Sandlings SPA
Bawdsey Cliff SSSI	Round Hill Pit, Aldeburgh SSSI
Buckanay Farm Pit, Alderton SSSI	Sudbourne Park Pit SSSI
Chillesford Church Pit SSSI	Sudbourne Park Pit SSSI
Crag Farm Pit, Sudbourne SSSI	Tunstall Common SSSI
Crag Farm Pit, Sudbourne SSSI	
Crag Pit, Aldeburgh SSSI	
Deben Estuary SPA	
Deben Estuary Ramsar	
Deben Estuary SSSI	
Ferry Cliff, Sutton SSSI	
Ferry Cliff, Sutton SSSI	
Frithy And Chadacre Woods SSSI	
Gedgrave Hall Pit SSSI	
Gromford Meadow SSSI	
Leiston to Aldeburgh SSSI	
Neutral Farm Pit, Butley SSSI	
Red House Farm Pit, Sudbourne SSSI	
Red House Farm Pit, Sudbourne SSSI	
Richmond Farm Pit, Gedgrave SSSI	
Snape Warren SSSI	

2.3 Alde-Ore Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA)



Alde-Ore Estuary SPA is designated under the EC Habitats Directive for its breeding and wintering birds, plus waterbird and seabird assemblages. The SPA boundary includes the Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries, Hazelwood Marshes Havergate Island, Orfordness and Shingle Street

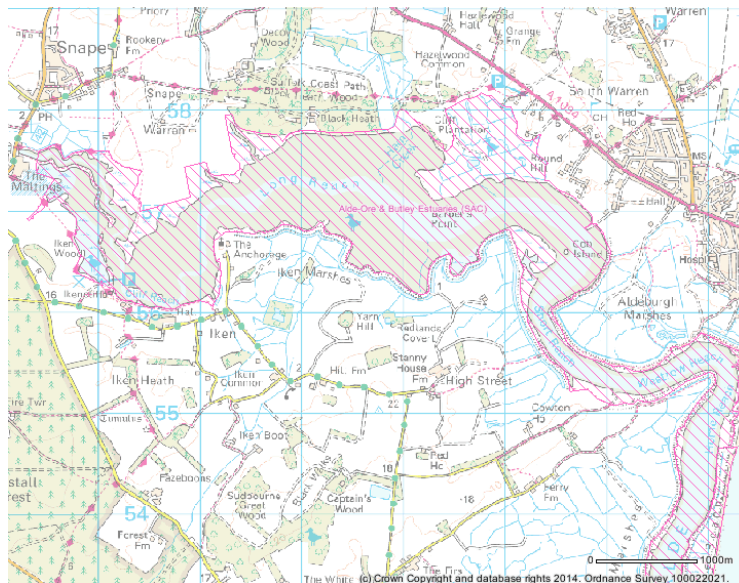
2.4 Alde-Ore Estuary Ramsar Site



Alde Ore Estuary Ramsar Site is designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. It is designated for its nationally-scarce plant species, assemblages breeding and wintering wetland birds, and internationally importance numbers of breeding Lesser black-backed gull, and wintering Avocet and Common redshank. The boundary includes Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries, Hazelwood Marshes Havergate Island, Orfordness and Shingle Street

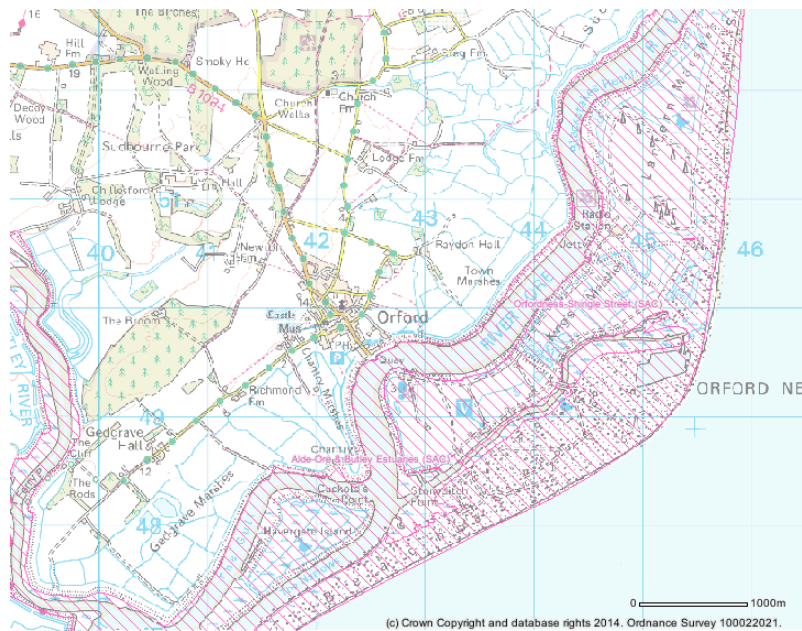
For info the UK Government has stated that, as a matter of policy (Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), listed Ramsar sites should be afforded the same level of protection as SPAs or SACs. There should not be any difference between the way that European and Ramsar sites are treated in project management and decision making (PPS9, 2005).

2.5 Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC)



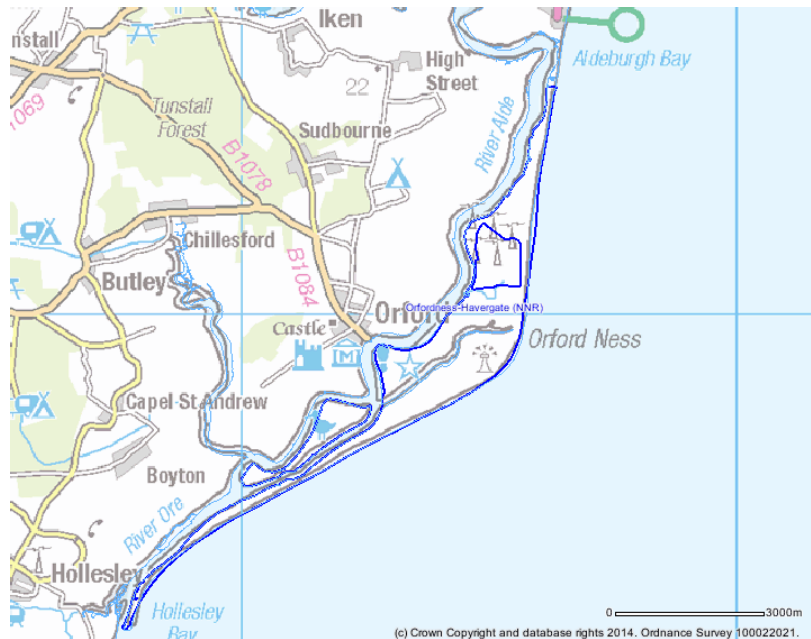
Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries SAC is designated under EC Habitats Directive for its estuaries, intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh features. Its boundary includes Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries, and Havergate Island.

2.6 Orfordness – Shingle Street SAC



Orfordness – Shingle Street SAC is designated under the EC Habitats Directive for its coastal lagoons, perennial and annual shingle vegetation features. The SAC boundary includes Orfordness and Shingle Street.

3. NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE



This covers the southern 8km of Orfordness spit, together with the RSPB owned and managed Havergate Island

4 OTHER SITES OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPORTANCE

- 4.1 **County Wildlife Sites:-** pasture and saltmarsh at Oxley Marshes(Hollesley)
- semi improved pasture at Hollesley
 - grazing marsh at Ferry Farm (northern end of Home Reach, western side of e river)
 - part of Aldeburgh Town marshes
 - grazing marsh on the northern side of the estuary, to the west of Aldeburgh Town Marshes

4.2 **RSPB Reserves:** Snape Wetlands (formerly Abbey Farm and Botany Farm)
Snape Warren
Havergate Island
Hollesley query the new one? Boyton and Hollesley Marshes are two coastal reserves in the lower reaches of the Alde-Ore Estuary.

Both are coastal grazing marshes with shallow pools and flood during the winter. They are important for a variety of breeding wading birds and wintering ducks and geese, as well as many grassland insects and flowers. They are also great for watching birds of prey, owls, butterflies and dragonflies.

4.3 **Suffolk Wild Life Trust:** Hazelwood Marsh (was freshwater marsh, future state under discussion); Simpson's Saltings 26 hectare reserve mainly saltmarsh and rare plants such as Sea Heath.

4.4 **National Trust:** recently created bird reserve area (almost opposite Orford)

4.5 The entire estuary and much of its hinterland was contained within the Suffolk River Valleys ESA which was designated in 1988 and extended in 1993 by MAFF