

Saltmarsh and Intertidal Flats

Landscape Sensitivity & Change

This is a flat, open landscape with long views within it, and across the adjacent Coastal Levels. It is therefore highly sensitive to any interruption of the horizontal plane by built structures of any scale. The proliferation of development on the adjacent slopes, including associated land use change to pony paddocks and gardens, can have a significant effect on the setting of, and views from, this landscape.

The characteristic land cover is of mud and low vegetation that is wild, un-grazed and unfenced. Depending on the condition of the adjacent land some parts of this landscape have a profound sense of isolation and wildness. It is important to try and maintain these key characteristics when managing change in and around this landscape.

This landscape is a key characteristic of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and, in combination with the landscape types around it, contributes to the special character of the AONB. Furthermore, much of this landscape is part of, or adjacent to, protected and ecologically sensitive sites, including European Designated Sites.

Key Forces for Change

- Sea level rise.
- Changes of land management and land use adjacent to this landscape especially the changes to the quantity, scale and style of built development.
- Large-scale infrastructure projects related to Sizewell and the port of Felixstowe.

Development Management

Conserve the setting of this landscape

The construction of new buildings on the coastal slope, or changes of land use, may have an adverse affect on the setting of this landscape. If these changes are to be permitted the highest standards of design and effective mitigation strategies should be applied to minimise the detrimental impact on both the visual amenity and landscape character of this landscape type.

Construction of buildings that project above the skyline should be avoided if at all possible, while repositioning the proposal or adding a planting scheme behind the building can be partially successful. However, reducing the height of the development may also be required and should be considered even if this entails significant level changes.

Even if it does not puncture the skyline, the majority of new building is likely to be visible from the Saltmarsh and Intertidal Flats. Therefore, construction related to existing clusters and the use of sympathetic and unobtrusive materials is always to be preferred.

Manage the impact of large-scale infrastructure projects

Very large-scale infrastructure projects that have an overriding public interest may take place in, or adjacent to, this landscape. However, these will require comprehensive management and long-term planning to minimise the landscape and visual impact during both the construction and operational phases of the project.

Although large-scale construction will cause a significant visual change, this landscape together with the associated Coastal Levels and the beach (Coastal Dunes and Shingle Ridges), have some capacity to accommodate large-scale structures. This is because of their open and simple nature. However, it is important to minimise the impact of lighting and associated small-scale clutter which will detract significantly from the visual and experiential qualities of this landscape, as well as the special character of the AONB.

Installation of flood or sea defence structures

Wherever possible the landscape and visual impact of these structures should be minimised. The use of sympathetic materials and low, unobtrusive structures will reduce the impact of these interventions. However, they may put at risk natural processes that maintain this landscape type and others such as Coastal Dunes and Shingle Ridges.

Land Management Guidelines

- Wherever possible maintain the processes that allow the formation of this landscape type.
- Maintain the structural diversity of upper lower and middle saltmarsh habitats within this landscape.
- Minimise disturbance on important wader feeding areas within estuaries.
- Minimise the impact of erosion caused by boat wash.