

RAMSAR INFORMATION SHEET

FOR WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Date of designation: 04/10/96

Site reference number 7UK103
1 **Compilation date** Feb 1999
2 **Country** UK (England)
3 **Name of wetland** Alde-Ore Estuary
4 **Site centre location:** Latitude: 52 04 58 N Longitude: 01 33 03 E
5 **Altitude** Not being submitted
6 **Area (ha)** 2546.99

7 Overview

The site comprises the estuary complex of the rivers Alde, Butley and Ore, including Havergate Island and Orfordness. There are a variety of habitats including, intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, vegetated shingle (including the second largest and best preserved area in Britain at Orfordness), saline lagoons and semi-intensified grazing marsh. The Orfordness/Shingle Street land form is unique within Britain in combining a shingle spit with a cusped foreland. The site supports nationally-scarce plants, British Red Data Book invertebrates, and notable assemblages of breeding and wintering wetland birds.

8 **Wetland type** Inland wetland. Marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
E	Sand / shingle shores (including dune systems)	33.4
G	Tidal flats	17.7
H	Salt marshes	23.6
J	Coastal brackish / saline lagoons	2
M	Rivers / streams / creeks: permanent	9.8
Sp	Saline / brackish marshes: permanent	5.9
Tp	Freshwater marshes / pools: permanent	3.9
U	Peatlands (including peat bogs swamps, fens)	3.8

9 **Ramsar Criteria** 2a, 3b, 3c
10 **Map of the site** ✓
11 **Compiler** Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Monkstone House
City Road
Peterborough
Cambridgeshire PE1 1JY
UK
Telephone/Fax : +44(0) 1733 562626 / +44(0) 1733 555948

12 Justification of criteria

Ramsar criterion 2a

The site supports a number of nationally-scarce plant species and British Red Data Book invertebrates.

Ramsar criterion 3b

The site supports a notable assemblage of breeding and wintering wetland birds.

Ramsar criterion 3c

During the Breeding Season the site regularly supports internationally important populations of:

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Over winter the site regularly supports internationally important populations of: Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*

13 General location

Nearest town/city: Woodbridge

Alde-Ore Estuary is located on the east coast of Suffolk, east of Woodbridge, stretching between Aldeburgh to the north and Bawdsey to the south.

Administrative Region: Suffolk

14 Physical Features

Soil & Geology	mud, nutrient-rich, sedimentary, shingle
Geomorphology and Landscape	coastal, estuary, intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), lagoon, lowland, shingle bar
Nutrient status	mesotrophic
pH	no information
Salinity	saline / euhaline
Soil	mainly mineral
Water permanence	usually permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Rainy, temperate climate with a mild winter and periodic frost. Mean minimum temperature approximately 7.8°C. Mean maximum temperature approximately 14.7°C. Mean annual precipitation approximately 548.7mm, with a winter maximum.

15 Hydrological values

Shoreline stabilisation and dissipation of erosive forces

16 Ecological features

The main habitat types of the Alde-Ore Estuary are: intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, reedswamp, coastal freshwater, brackish lagoons, semi-improved grazing marsh, brackish ditches and vegetated shingle, the second largest and best-preserved example in Britain.

A unique feature for East Anglian beaches is the abundance on the ground of normally epiphytic lichens.

There is a zonation of shingle vegetation from shifting to more stable areas of grassland and lichen communities.

Areas of saltmarsh succeed to higher saltmarsh and neutral grassland with ditches.

There is a series of brackish lagoons and ditches; and borrow pits.

17 Noteworthy flora

Nationally important species occurring on the site.

Higher Plants.

Althaea officinalis, *Frankenia laevis*, *Lathyrus japonicus*, *Lepidium latifolium*, *Medicago minima*, *Parapholis incurva*, *Puccinellia fasciculata*, *Ruppia cirrhosa*, *Sarcocornia perennis*, *Sonchus palustris*, *Trifolium suffocatum*, *Vicia lutea* and *Zostera angustifolia*.

18 Noteworthy fauna

Birds

Species occurring at levels of international importance (as identified at designation):

During the breeding season the area regularly supports:

Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Larus fuscus* 14070 pairs, representing an average of 11.3% of the breeding population (5 year mean, 1994-1998)
(Western Europe/Mediterranean/Western Africa)

Over winter the area regularly supports:

Avocet, *Recurvirostra avosetta* 766 individuals, representing an average of 1.1%

(Western Europe/Western Mediterranean (breeding))	of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Redshank, <i>Tringa totanus</i> (Eastern Atlantic (wintering))	1919 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)

Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:

During the breeding season the area regularly supports:

Avocet, <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> (Western Europe/Western Mediterranean (breeding))	104 pairs, representing an average of 23.1% of the GB population (5 year mean 1990-1994)
Little Tern, <i>Sterna albifrons</i> (Eastern Atlantic (breeding))	48 pairs, representing an average of 2% of the GB population (5 count mean, 1993-4, 1996-8)
Marsh Harrier, <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	3 pairs, representing an average of at least 1.9% of the GB population (5 year mean 1993-1997)
Sandwich Tern, <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> (Western Europe/Western Africa)	169 pairs, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (5 year mean 1991-1995)

Over winter the area regularly supports:

Black-tailed Godwit, <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> (Iceland (breeding))	268 individuals, representing an average of 3.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Shelduck, <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> (Northwestern Europe)	1059 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Shoveler, <i>Anas clypeata</i> (Northwestern/Central Europe)	106 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Spotted Redshank, <i>Tringa erythropus</i> (Europe/Western Africa)	3 individuals, representing an average of 2.5% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Teal, <i>Anas crecca</i> (Northwestern Europe)	1931 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
White-fronted Goose, <i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i> (Northwestern Siberia/Northeastern & Northwestern Europe)	97 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Wigeon, <i>Anas penelope</i> (Western Siberia/Northwestern/Northeastern Europe)	4366 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)

Nationally important species occurring on the site.

Invertebrates.

Malacosoma castrensis, Campsicnemus magius, Cheilosia velutina, Empis prodomus, Dixella attica, Hylaeus euryscapu, Pseudamnicola confusa, Nematostella vectensis, Gammarus insensibili, Euophrys browni, Baryphya duffeyi, Haplodrassus minor, Trichoncus affinis.

19 Social and Cultural Values

Aesthetic

Aquatic vegetation (e.g. reeds, willows, seaweed)

Archaeological/historical site

Conservation education

Current scientific research

Fisheries production

Livestock grazing

Non-consumptive recreation

Sport fishing

Sport hunting

Tourism

Transportation/navigation

20 Land tenure/ownership

Ownership category	On-Site	Off-Site
Non-governmental organisation	+	+
National/Crown estate	+	
Private	+	+
Public/communal	+	

21 Current land use

Activity	On-Site	Off-Site	Scale
Nature conservation	+	+	Large-Scale
Tourism	+	+	Small-Scale
Recreation	+	+	Small-Scale
Research	+		Small-Scale
Collection of non-timber natural products: commercial	+		Small-Scale
Fishing: recreational/sport	+		Small-Scale
Marine/saltwater aquaculture	+		Small-Scale
Gathering of shellfish	+		Small-Scale
Permanent arable agriculture		+	Large-Scale
Grazing (unspecified)	+	+	Small-Scale
Hunting: recreational/sport	+		Small-Scale
Harbour/port		+	Small-Scale
Flood control		+	Small-Scale
Irrigation (inc agricultural water supply)		+	Small-Scale
Non-urbanised settlements		+	Small-Scale

22 Adverse factors affecting the ecological character of the site

Activity	On-Site	Off-Site	Scale
Erosion	+		Large-Scale
Measures not linked to specific factors	+		Large-Scale

23 Conservation measures taken

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
SSSI	+	

NNR	+	
SPA	+	
Candidate SAC	+	
Land owned by a NGO for nature conservation	+	+
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	
Other	+	

24 Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented
see below

Site vulnerability and management statement

The area is vulnerable to sea-level rise and coastal squeeze. These issues are being addressed through The Environment Agency Local Environment Action Plan, the estuary Management Plan and possibly managed retreat. Human disturbance from recreation is minimal as this is a reasonably robust system. Flood defence policy will need to take into account risks to the site from flooding and of flood control alleviation measures. Shooting is controlled through a management plan. A considerable part of the site is managed sympathetically by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and English Nature.

25 Current scientific research/survey/monitoring and facilities

Fauna.

Numbers of migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders are monitored annually as part of the national Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Environment.

Monitoring estuarine processes.
Saline lagoon survey.
Study on the effects of guano-fication on shingle flora.

26 Current conservation education

None.

27 Current recreation and tourism

Activities.

The site is used informally for walking, boating and angling.
Facilities provided.
River moorings.
Seasonality.
Walking and boating activities are predominantly in spring and summer. Seasonal (winter) wildfowling occurs on the estuary.

28 Functional jurisdiction

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

29 Management authority

English Nature

30 Bibliography

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Reference should also be made to Country Agencies Management Plans for sites that are within National Nature Reserves.

