

Chapter 2:

West Mersea Town (North of West Mersea Town to Anglian Water sewage works)

England Coast Path: Mersea Island - Natural England's Proposals

Part 2.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Southern end of Firs Chase Saltmarsh (grid reference: TM 0137 1318)
End Point:	Anglian Water sewage works (grid reference: TM 0283 1248)
Relevant Maps:	2a to 2b

Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps:

The Trail:

- 2.1.1 Generally follows existing walked routes, including public rights of way and public highway (footways and roads) along most of this length.
- 2.1.2 Mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea.
- 2.1.3 Includes 18 sections of new path, through the town of West Mersea on the (privately owned) pavements, at Coast Road Car Park, St Peter's Meadow and West Mersea beach. See maps 2a and 2.b and associated tables below for details.
- 2.1.4 Is aligned on the beach or foreshore at West Mersea Beach. See parts 2 and 3 for details.
- 2.1.5 Follows a route similar to the existing Public Right of Way on the beach but departs from this in places in order to create a route above the Mean High Water mark that will be accessible for longer periods of time and not be inundated by high tides.
- 2.1.6 This part of the coast includes the following sites, designated for nature conservation or heritage preservation (See maps C1, C2 and C3 of the Overview):
 - Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Blackwater Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4) Special Protection Area (SPA)
 - Blackwater Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4) RAMSAR site

- Blackwater Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Blackwater, Crouch Roach and Colne Estuaries Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)
- Coastal Fish Weirs, Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) at West Mersea 570m south east of St Peter's Well.

We have assessed the potential impacts of access along the proposed route (and over the associated spreading room described below) on the features for which the affected land is designated and on any which are protected in their own right.

- 2.1.7 After advice from specialists we have concluded that our proposals would not be likely to have any significant impact on these features. In reaching this conclusion we have identified that it would be necessary to place some information signs, at St Peter's Meadow, in order to avoid an increase in trampling of vegetation to St Peter's Meadow saltmarsh.

This proposal is explained further in parts 5 & 9 of the Overview.

In relation to those nature conservation sites listed above, refer to our published Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal for more information.

See part 5c of the Overview - 'Protection of sensitive features'- for more information.

Accessibility:

- 2.1.8 There are no artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route, which makes use of existing surfaced paths wherever these meet the criteria in the Coastal Access Scheme.

However, there are places where it may not be entirely suitable for people with reduced mobility because:

- The trail would follow the public right of way and new routes along a sandy beach for some distance; MSI-2-S030 FP to MSI-2-S035 FP.
- There are a few steps and an incline at St Peters Meadow; MSI-2-S027FP to MSI-2-S028 FP, although an alternative access route to the beach is available close by using a board walk seaward of MSI-2-S024.

See part 5b of the Overview - 'Recreational issues' - for more information.

Where we have proposed exercising our discretion:

The discretions referred to below are explained in more detail in the Overview.

- 2.1.9 Landward boundary of the coastal margin: We have used our discretion on some sections of the route along the beach 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 2.2.1 below.

See also part 3 of the Overview - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for an 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. See also Annex C of the Overview - 'Excepted land categories'.

- 2.1.10 Restrictions and/or exclusions: We have proposed to exclude access in places along this section of coast. For details of these directions, see 2.3.9 and 2.3.10 in the Formal Proposals Section of this report and Part 9 of the Overview.
- 2.1.11 These directions will not prevent or affect:
- any 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 rights at common law or by Royal Charter etc
- 2.1.12 Any such use continues unaffected by these arrangements.
- 2.1.13 However the directions are intended to avoid any new public rights being created over the area in question (mudflats and saltmarsh) in view of the hidden dangers of deep creeks and soft mud to which new users of the land would be subject because of the local patterns of tidal inundation.
- 2.1.14 Access rights to the spreading room would be subject to the national restrictions on coastal access rights listed in Annex D of the Overview. These restrictions would not apply to public rights of way.

See part 9 of the Overview - 'Restrictions and exclusions' - for details.

- 2.1.15 Other factors affecting access: At route sections MSI-2-S030 FP and MSI-2-S031, between Monkey Beach and Beach Road, public access may be interrupted from time to time for short periods when extreme high tides cover the entire beach. During such times a number of routes are available through the streets of West Mersea. This arrangement would continue without any local restriction on the new access rights to give effect to it formally.

Establishment and ongoing management of the trail

- 2.1.16 Some physical establishment of the trail would be necessary, in accordance with the general approach described in part 6 the Overview.
- New interpretation panels will be installed at sections MSI-2-S008, MSI-2-S024, and MSI-2-S029
- 2.1.17 Ongoing management and maintenance would be necessary in accordance with the general approach described in part 7 of the Overview. The overall need for this is likely to be greater than on some other parts of the stretch, recognising that it will be necessary for the route to roll back from time to time in response to coastal processes, as described below.

See parts 6 - 'Physical establishment of the trail' and 7 - 'Maintenance of the trail' of the Overview for more information.

Future Change:

- 2.1.18 Part of the route of the trail on this length of coast would be able to change without further approval from the Secretary of State in response to coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes, or encroachment by the sea. This would happen in accordance with the criteria and procedures for 'roll back' set out in part 8 of the Overview. See tables 2.2.3 below for details of the sections likely to be affected in the foreseeable future.

See parts 5f - 'Coastal processes' and 8 - 'Future changes' of the Overview for more information.

Part 2.2: Commentary on Maps

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

2.2.1 Section Details – Maps 2a: West Mersea, east of Beach Road

Notes on table:

Column 2 – an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 2.2.2: Other options considered.

Column 5 – ‘Yes – see table 2.2.3’ means refer to that table below about our likely approach to roll-back on this part of the route.

1	2	3	4	5	6a	6b	7
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 8 of Overview)	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 9 of Overview)
2a	MSI-2-S001 FP	Public footpath	Tarmac	No	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-2-S002 FP	Public footpath	Tarmac	No	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-2-S003 FP	Public footpath	Tarmac	No	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-2-S004 FP	Public footpath	Tarmac	No	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-2-S005 FP	Public footpath	Tarmac	No	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	MSI-2-S006 FP	Public footpath	Gravel	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S007 RD	Public highway	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S008	Other existing walked route	Concrete	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S009	Other existing walked route	Concrete	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S010	Other existing walked route	Concrete	No	Edge of pavement	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S011 FW	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	No	Edge of pavement	Not Used	Margin
	MSI-2-S012RD	Public Highway	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S013	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	Edge of pavement	Not Used	Margin
	MSI-2-S014 FW	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	No	Edge of Pavement	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S015	Other existing walked route	Gravel	No	Edge of Pavement	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S016	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	Edge of Pavement	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S017	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S018 FW	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	No	Edge of Pavement	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S019	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	Edge of Pavement	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S020	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	Edge of Pavement	Not used	Margin

1	2	3	4	5	6a	6b	7
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 8 of Overview)	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 9 of Overview)
2a	MSI-2-S021	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	Edge of Pavement	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S022	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	Edge of Pavement	Not used	Margin
	MSI-2-S023*	Public Footpath	Bare soil: Compacted	No	Fence Line	Both	Margin
	MSI-2-S024*	Other existing walked route	Grass	No	Fence line	Both	Margin
	MSI-2-S025*	Other existing walked route	Grass	No	Fence line	Both	None
	MSI-2-S026*	Other existing walked route	Bare soil: Compacted	No	Fence line	Both	None
	MSI-2-S027*	Other existing walked route	Boardwalk or raised walkway	No	Fence Line	Both	None
	MSI-2-S028 FP*	Public footpath	Bare soil: Compacted	Yes – see table 2.2.3	Wall	Both	None
	MSI-2-S029 FP*	Public footpath	Sand	Yes – see table 2.2.3	Wall	Both	None
	MSI-2-S030 FP*	Public footpath	Sand	Yes – see table 2.2.3	Landward edge of beach or flat	Not used	None
	MSI-2-S031*	Other existing walked route	Sand	Yes – see table 2.2.3	Landward edge of beach or flat	Not used	None
2b	MSI-2-S032 FP*	Public Footpath	Sand	No	Landward edge of beach or flat	Not used	None
	MSI-2-S033 FP*	Public footpath	Sand	No	Landward edge of beach or flat	Not used	None
	MSI-2-S034 FP*	Public footpath	Sand	No	Landward edge of beach or flat	Not used	None
	MSI-2-S035 FP*	Public footpath	Sand	No	Landward edge of beach or flat	Not used	None
	MSI-2-S036 FP*	Public footpath	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	None

2.2.2 Other options considered: – Maps 2a and 2b

Map(s)	Section number(s)	Option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option as the route
2a	MSI-2-S024 to MSI-2-S027	We considered aligning the trail along the existing public footpath that runs along the boardwalk to the beach from St Peter's Meadow as shown on the map.	We opted for the proposed route because it provided better views of the sea and the estuary. Under our proposals, the public footpath would remain available for people to use as part of the spreading room, but would not form part of the designated trail.
2a	MSI-2-S028 FP and MSI-2-S031	We considered aligning the trail along the existing highways that run through the town of West Mersea.	We opted for the proposed route because it provided better views of the sea and the estuary, is coastal in feel and there is an existing Public Right of Way along the entire beach. Under our proposals, where we have chosen to align higher up the beach than the Public Right of Way, the public footpath would remain available for people to use as part of the spreading room, but would not form part of the designated trail.
2b	MSI-2-S032 FP	We considered aligning the trail along the existing Public footpath that runs along the beach	We opted for the proposed route because it provided a route that is less susceptible to tidal inundation. Under our proposals, where we have chosen to align higher up the beach than the Public Right of Way, the public footpath would remain available for people to use as part of the spreading room, but would not form part of the designated trail
2b	MSI-2-S033 FP to MSI-2-S035 FP	We considered aligning the trail through 'Pocket Park' onto and along Victoria Esplanade.	We opted for the proposed route because it is coastal in feel and there is an existing Public Right of Way along the entire beach. It provided a continuous and consistent approach to public access, mirroring the existing patterns of access, and is made with the support of the landowner. Under our proposals, where we have chosen to align higher up the beach than the Public Right of Way, the public footpath would remain available for people to use as part of the spreading room, but would not form part of the designated trail.
2b	MSI-2-S035FP and MSI-2-S036FP	We considered aligning along the existing Public Right of Way on the beach, seaward of the beach huts	We opted for the proposed route because the existing Public Right of Way on the beach is frequently inundated by high tides but there was another Public Right of Way on higher ground behind the beach huts that provides a safe and dry route at all times.

2.2.3 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations– Maps 2a: West Mersea West of Beach Road

Map(s)	Section number(s)	Feature or site potentially affected	How we will manage roll-back in relation to this feature or site
2a	MSI-2-S028 FP to MSI-2-S031	Public footpath and other existing walked route along the beach	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the specified excepted land (e.g. buildings, curtilage, gardens etc), we will choose a route landward of it, following discussions with owners and occupiers.

In relation to all other sections where roll-back has been proposed, the trail is likely to be adjusted to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future.

Part 2.3: Formal Proposals

- Below are our formal proposals to the Secretary of State for the length of coast shown on maps 2a to 2b.
- They should be read in conjunction with the relevant maps.
- The commentary above explains the practical effect of these proposals.

Formal Proposals – West Mersea Town (North of West Mersea Town to Anglian Water sewage works)

Proposed route of the trail

- 2.3.1 In relation to route sections MSI-2-S001FP to MSI-2-S027 and MSI-2-S032FP to MSI-2-S036FP, the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps 2a and 2b as the proposed route of the trail.
- 2.3.2 In relation to route sections MSI-2-S028FP to MSI-2-S031, the route, as initially determined at the time the report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on map 2a as the proposed route of the trail.
- 2.3.3 If at any time any part of a route section listed in the previous paragraph needs, in Natural England's view, to change as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes or encroachment by the sea, 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 8 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.

Landward boundary of coastal margin

- 2.3.4 Adjacent to route sections MSI-2-S001 FP to MSI-2-S005 FP, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the wall which, at the time of writing this report, is landward of the public footpath shown as the trail on map 2a.
- 2.3.5 Adjacent to route sections MSI-2-S011 FW; MSI-2-S013 to MSI-2-S016; and MSI-2-S018 FW to MSI-2-S022; the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the pavement shown as the trail on map 2a.
- 2.3.6 Adjacent to route sections MSI-2-S023 FP to MSI-2-S025 and MSI-2-S027 the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the fence, as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on map 2a.
- 2.3.7 Adjacent to route sections MSI-2-S026, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the existing boundary fence which, at the time of writing this report, is landward of the public footpath shown as the trail on map 2a.
- 2.3.8 Adjacent to route sections MSI-2-S028 FP and MSI-2-S029, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the existing boundary wall which, at the time of writing this report, is landward of the public footpath shown as the trail on map 2a.

Local restrictions and exclusions

2.3.9 Natural England proposes to exclude access relevant to this length of coast, as follows:

- Access to all saltmarsh and mudflat along the full length of this part of the coast covered by route sections MSI-2-S001 FP to MSI-2-S024 is to be excluded by a Section 25A direction due to its unsuitability for access.

2.3.10 Natural England proposes to restrict access at certain times relevant to this length of coast, as follows:

- Outline Land Management restrictions at boatyards in the coastal margin of sections MSI-2-S007 RD and MSI-2-S010
- All year round Land Management restrictions at oyster sheds/tanks in the coastal margin of section MSI-2-S012FW

Please refer to Part 9 of the Overview for further details.

Alternative routes

2.3.11 There are no proposals for alternative routes in relation to this length of coast.



