

Coastal Dunes & Shingle Ridges

Landscape Sensitivity & Change

This is an open landscape made up of fragile landforms that are in a constant state of evolutionary change. The views, both out to sea and often inland, are open and occasionally desolate.

The landscape type is by nature narrow, but it is open to views both in and out. It is therefore profoundly affected by changes in the adjacent landscapes and seascapes. The characteristic qualities of openness, wildness and isolation found in much of this landscape are dependent, to a great extent, on the condition and character of the land that frames it.

There are concentrated areas of human activity and development particularly associated with holiday resorts. In these areas the beach is essentially part of the townscape. However large parts of the shoreline have little human intrusion, except for occasional large-scale structures, such as the Cobra Mist site or the power stations at Sizewell. It is especially in these areas that new development requires careful control to protect the special character of this landscape, which is a key part of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

In addition to the sensitivity of the landscape there are several highly sensitive habitats, including vegetated shingle and saline lagoons. These are particularly vulnerable to recreational pressures as well as to sea level rise.

Key Forces for Change

- Sea level rise, which in the absence of space for the natural coastal processes to take place, will create a situation of "coastal squeeze" leading to the total or partial loss of these landforms.
- Small-scale clusters of low-rise development on the coastal slope, coastal levels or beach.
- The pressure of recreational activity and access.
- Further development of the Sizewell Nuclear power station site and other large-scale infrastructure projects.
- The decline of traditional inshore fishing from the beach.
- The construction of wind turbines offshore.

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 Saltmarsh and Intertidal Flats, 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, as this 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 Saltmarsh and Intertidal Flats.

Support the continuation of traditional economic activities

Wherever possible small-scale shore based fishing should be supported and the huts and other structures should be maintained as they are characteristic features of this landscape type.

Land Management Guidelines

- Safeguard fossil landforms such as the shingle ridges of Orford Ness.
- Safeguard the characteristic coastal processes of this landscape type whenever possible.
- Minimise human disturbance to vegetated shingle and other sensitive habitats.