

Local Plan Committee

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall
28 April 2014 at 6.00pm**

This committee deals with

the Council's responsibilities relating to the Local Plan.

**COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE
28 April 2014 at 6:00pm**

Members

Chairman : Councillor Bill Frame.
Deputy Chairman : Councillor Martin Goss.
Councillors Lyn Barton, Elizabeth Blundell, Andrew Ellis,
John Jowers and Kim Naish.

Substitute Members : All members of the Council who are not members of the
Planning Committee.

Agenda - Part A

(open to the public including the media)

	Pages
1. Welcome and Announcements	1
(a) The Chairman to welcome members of the public and Councillors and to remind all speakers of the requirement for microphones to be used at all times.	
(b) At the Chairman's discretion, to announce information on:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• action in the event of an emergency;• mobile phones switched to silent;• the audio-recording of meetings;• location of toilets;• introduction of members of the meeting.	
2. Substitutions	
Members may arrange for a substitute councillor to attend a meeting on their behalf, subject to prior notice being given. The attendance of substitute councillors must be recorded.	
3. Urgent Items	
To announce any items not on the agenda which the Chairman has agreed to consider because they are urgent and to give reasons for the urgency.	
4. Declarations of Interest	
The Chairman to invite Councillors to declare individually any interests they may have in the items on the agenda. Councillors should consult Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 for full guidance on the	

registration and declaration of interests. However Councillors may wish to note the following:-

- Where a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest, other pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest in any business of the authority and he/she is present at a meeting of the authority at which the business is considered, the Councillor must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest, whether or not such interest is registered on his/her register of Interests or if he/she has made a pending notification.
- If a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at a meeting, he/she must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter at the meeting. The Councillor must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held unless he/she has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.
- Where a Councillor has another pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at a meeting and where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgment of the public interest, the Councillor must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held unless he/she has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.
- Failure to comply with the arrangements regarding disclosable pecuniary interests without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence, with a penalty of up to £5,000 and disqualification from office for up to 5 years.

5. Have Your Say!

(a) The Chairman to invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition at this meeting – either on an item on the agenda or on a general matter not on this agenda. You should indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.

(b) The Chairman to invite contributions from members of the public who wish to Have Your Say! on a general matter not on this agenda.

6. Minutes

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To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2014.

- 7. Adoption of Archaeological Strategy for Colchester** **7 - 39**
See report of the Head of Commercial Services (attached).
- 8. Habitats Regulations Assessment – Final Monitoring Report** **40 - 135**
See report of the Head of Commercial Services (attached).
- 9. Colchester Local List** **136 - 139**
See report of the Head of Commercial Services (attached).
- 10. Local Plan Duty to Cooperate Requirements** **140 - 145**
See report of the Head of Commercial Services (attached).

11. Exclusion of the Public

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

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LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE 3 FEBRUARY 2014

Present :- Councillor Bill Frame (Chairman)
Councillors Lyn Barton, Elizabeth Blundell, Andrew Ellis,
Martin Goss, John Jowers and Kim Naish

23. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 16 December 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

24. Have Your Say!

Mrs Whittaker addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in respect of the Government Inspection of the Local Plan Review. Mrs Whittaker explained that she had attended the Inspector's review and had previously requested information on where paper copies of the Committee Papers were available to the public. She was directed to Angel Court and then to the library without success. In response to a request regarding whether the Inspector's review had been advertised in the press, Mrs Whittaker explained that she was informed that such advertisement could not be afforded. Mrs Whittaker requested that the Committee advise her on any legal requirement to publish details of Committee documents in print and whether the date of subsequent meetings could be announced at the end of each meeting.

Ms Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, responded and explained that although the Inspector's review was not advertised using a formal notice, a press release was published as these were believed to generate greater interest. Hard copies of Committee papers were available in the Library and Community Hub, although she accepted that not all the library staff may be aware of their presence. The Place Strategy Manager advised that her team would alert library staff when they placed documents there. Regarding the scheduling of Committee meetings, all the Committee dates were published on the Council website and kept up to date. She believed that, although a great deal of discussion was had at the review, all questions were responded to. She offered to provide a formal, written response to Mrs Whittaker if required.

25. Messing-cum-Inworth Neighbourhood Plan Area

Councillors Jowers (in respect of his membership of Essex County Council Cabinet with Strategic Plan responsibility) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report asking the Committee to formally

approve the Messing-cum-Inworth Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Committee had before it a report in which all information was set out. A map of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan Area and the application letter were attached as appendices to the report.

The report identified that, if adopted, the Neighbourhood Plan would become part of the statutory Local Plan and carry weight within the Planning System. The Neighbourhood Plan Area directly corresponded with the administrative ward area for Messing-cum-Inworth, which was considered appropriate. The Plan had been published for consultation, which ran for six weeks until 2 October 2013 during which no substantive comments were received.

Mr Christopher Downes, Planning Policy Officer, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

The Committee was pleased to see that a small community recognised the value of a neighbourhood plan. The Planning Policy Officer clarified that funding from the DCLP to the Borough Council was allocated per area, not in relation to population, and would be delivered in stages as the plan progressed.

RESOLVED that the Messing-cum-Inworth Neighbourhood Plan Area be formally approved.

26. Magdalen Street Development Brief

Councillors Jowers (in respect of his membership of Essex County Council Cabinet with Strategic Plan responsibility) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report asking the Committee to adopt the Magdalen Street Development Brief. The Committee had before it a report and amendment sheet in which all information was set out. The draft Magdalen Development Brief was attached as an appendix to the report.

The report identified that the Development Brief included a mix of predominately Residential land and White Land (with no allocation) within an indicative layout that, it was believed, would deliver comprehensive redevelopment. The report detailed a number of constraints which would have to be considered alongside any future development on the site including the historic environment, air quality, ground contamination, density and building height. Commercial floor space and the number of residential units were not prescribed in the brief and would be subject to individual site design. The level of affordable housing was expected to reflect policies found in the Local Plan.

Mr Michael Siggs, Clerk to the Winnocks and Kendalls Almshouse Charity and the St Mary Magdalen Hospital Almshouse Charity, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that the charities he represented were examples of community concern for the welfare of older people and

supported the housing needs of people with learning difficulties. Mr Siggs discussed the housing need for people over 65, which was to grow by 2.2 million in the next 20 years. He suggested that accommodation for older people needed to be appropriately designed with strong links to the community and local health and social care providers. Mr Siggs then referred the Committee to the Homes and Communities Agency's prospectus, which emphasised the need for local authorities to work with community led organisations to make sites available to providers of accommodation at nil cost.

Ms Sarah Pullin, Planning Policy Officer, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations and advised of an addition to paragraph 4.9 of the report, which examined in greater detail the matter of open space and the public realm. The Planning Policy Officer highlighted the transport links to the site and the 21st century gateway vision expected from the development. It was further explained that the Council owned land south of the street and had an option for a 125 year lease, at a peppercorn rate, at the rear of the railway site.

The Committee welcomed the project and were pleased to read that tree planting had been proposed within the brief. Concerns regarding car parking facilities and the amount of traffic were expressed by several Members.

RESOLVED that the Magdalen Street Development Brief be adopted.

27. Tendring District Council Draft Local Plan

Councillors Jowers (in respect of his membership of Essex County Council Cabinet with Strategic Plan responsibility) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report asking the Committee to consider the content of the Draft Tendring Local Plan, the implications for Colchester and to provide comments to inform the response to be sent by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Community Safety and Culture. The Committee had before it a report in which information about the Draft Local Plan was set out. A key diagram for Spatial Strategy was attached as an appendix to the report.

The report identified that only the changes made to the Local Plan were included in the consultation. The report also outlined the requirement of the Local Plan to have been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Co-operate as well as legal and procedural requirements. The tests by which the soundness of the Local Plan would be assessed required the Plan to be positively prepared, justified and effective.

Councillor Ray Gamble attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He considered the Duty to Co-operate and what the significant shortfall in Tendring's housing supply would mean for Colchester. He was displeased that Tendring's inability to meet their housing demands would result in Colchester having to provide additional housing. Councillor Gamble suggested that the site allocations of Tendring would put pressure on Colchester's infrastructure and he urged the

Committee to feedback to Tendring their unhappiness.

Councillor Paul Smith attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He explained that the inter-relationship between Colchester and Tendring was significant, with nearly 50% of those living in Tendring working in Colchester. He emphasised that Colchester would benefit from a successful Tendring, which would require Tendring to provide more housing and more employment. Councillor Smith suggested that pressure was being put on Colchester and that what Tendring needed was a critical friend.

Ms Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations. She explained that when Tendring's Local Plan was published for consultation in 2012 the timescales and evidence base of the Plan caused concern. These problems had been somewhat addressed, with updated evidence and an extension of the Plan to cover 15 years. The Place Strategy Manager went on to explain that the Local Plan was broadly split in to two parts for housing purposes, with specifically identified sites within years 1 – 10 and broad areas identified in years 11 – 15. Over the entire period, just over half of the housing target would be achieved. Under the National Planning Policy Framework there was an expectation that neighbouring authorities would meet any shortfall. It was noted that Colchester Borough Council were starting to prepare their own new Local Plan and discussions with neighbouring districts would arise.

The Committee were pleased to see the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Community Safety and Culture was in attendance and hoped the Committee's discussion would be of help. The Committee expressed concern at the lack of infrastructure development included in the Tendring Local Plan and identified that although smaller individual groups of development would not require additional infrastructure in isolation, when considered cumulatively it would be needed. The Committee believed that under the current proposals, Colchester's own infrastructure would be put under strain from Tendring's developments, as many of the sites were on the Tendring / Colchester boundary.

When considering the housing numbers included in the Local Plan, the Committee suggested that catering for just over half of the housing requirement was insufficient and was concerned that the Duty to Co-operate would require Colchester to provide additional housing on top of existing demands.

The Committee examined the changes to Tendring's Local Plan against the tests for soundness and found them lacking. It was asked, if an inspector came to a similar conclusion, what implications this would have for Colchester. The Place Strategy Manager advised that the Council would be under significant pressure to approve any applications received for additional sites, if the housing demand for Tendring was also to be considered. She suggested that, as infrastructure was a cross boundary issue, it would be best for neighbouring boroughs to discuss plans with each other.

The Committee discussed the viability of proposed developments and established that sites in Clacton and Harwich were considered to be unviable and unlikely to be delivered. To improve viability it was suggested that Tendring may wish to revise its

affordable housing policy.

It was considered that the Local Plan was still, in practice, a 10 year plan stretched over 15 years. A member of the Committee advised that Haven Gateway were keen to pursue economic regeneration in the Tendring area and that additional employment and additional housing were interdependent.

The Committee emphasised the need to have an open discussion with Tendring in order to improve the Local Plan outlook for both parties. It was noted that this applied at officer and Councillor level. The Committee hoped to help Tendring with the development of its Local Plan, however also wished to maintain the Council's own timescale.

The Place Strategy Manager summarised that the Committee's areas of concern included the housing numbers identified in the Plan, the Plan timescale, infrastructure and the altered site allocations. It was also suggested that Tendring District Council engage with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Community Safety and Culture finalise a formal Council consultation response based on the Committee discussion.



Local Plan Committee

Item
7

28 April 2014

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Simon Cairns ☎ 508650
Title	Adoption of Archaeological Strategy for Colchester		
Wards affected	All		

The Local Plan Committee is asked to adopt the Archaeology Strategy as strategic planning guidance to highlight the national significance of Colchester's archaeological resource and to promote effective stewardship for the benefit of future generations as an intrinsic facet of sustainable development.

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 The Local Plan Committee is requested to agree the adoption of the Archaeology Strategy for Colchester Borough as planning guidance.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To ensure the Council takes the opportunity to celebrate Colchester's nationally significant archaeological resource and to ensure that the Council remains a leading practitioner of best practice in stewardship of this resource by working in partnership with developers and the heritage sector to enrich the cultural life of the Borough. The archaeological resource can deliver significant economic growth through sustainable heritage tourism and it is important that these opportunities are not prejudiced through ill-conceived development.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 Members may consider the alternative option of rejecting adoption of the document and having no overarching strategy for archaeology. However, officers feel that it is important to seize this opportunity for a strategic approach to stewardship of Colchester's rich archaeological heritage. To reject the Strategy would result in no local guidance to inform developers and interested parties regarding the nature of the archaeological resource.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Archaeological Strategy has been drafted to supplement the relevant policies within the Local Plan. The Core Strategy policies concerned are: UR2 Built design and Character, ENV1 Environment

and SD1 Sustainable Development Locations. Whilst the most relevant Development Policy is DP14 Historic Environment Assets.

- 4.2 The Strategy collates strategic guidance about the nature of the archaeological resource and guidelines for effective stewardship as developed by the Council over a number of years.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 To agree the adoption of the Archaeological Strategy as the Council's strategic planning guidance in relation to management of the archaeological resource and thereafter to review the Strategy, as necessary, to reflect changes to national and local planning policies. The Strategy is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan Action Plan contains a number of priority areas and outcomes to be achieved. Those of relevance to this report are:
- Regenerating the Borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure
 - Improving opportunities for local businesses to thrive, including retail
 - Promoting sustainability and reducing congestion.

7. Equality, Diversity or Human Rights Implications

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Development Framework and is available to view by clicking on this link:- <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/4962/Strategic-Policy-and-Regeneration> or go to the Colchester Borough Council website www.colchester.gov.uk and follow this pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Commercial Services > Local Development Framework.
- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Planning Service and is available to view by clicking on this link:- <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2762&p=0> or go to the Colchester Borough Council website www.colchester.gov.uk and follow this pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Professional Services > Planning

8. Other Considerations

- 8.1 There are no publicity or consultation considerations; or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications to the Council.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

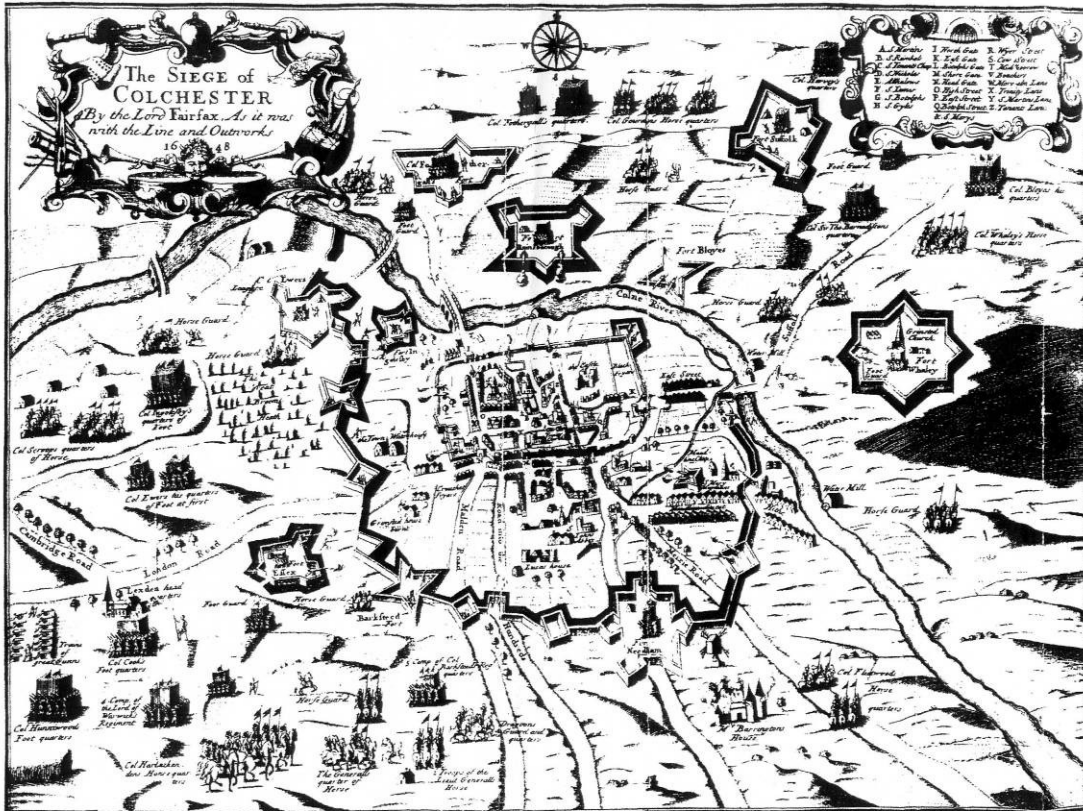
- 9.1 Adoption of the Archaeological Strategy may help to reduce the risk of unsustainable development that harms the historic environment with resulting negative financial implications for the Council in terms of prejudicing future economic growth based on heritage tourism.

10. Disclaimer

- 10.1 The information in this report was, as far as is known, correct at the date of publication. Colchester Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any error or omissions.

Background Papers

1. National Heritage Protection Plan 2011-2015 Link <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/national-heritage-protection-plan/>
2. [Link to guidance concerning](#) Archaeology and Planning in Colchester (CBC Website Planning Pages, Archaeology tab)
3. [Guidance on the implications of scheduled monument status](#) English Heritage



AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRATEGY FOR COLCHESTER BOROUGH.

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Executive Summary.

1. Introduction
2. Strategic Aims and Objectives.
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6. The value of the Historic Environment within the framework of the Council’s overall aims and objectives.
7. Developing an Archaeological Strategy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

Colchester's historic environment plays an important role in the Council's overall vision of making the Borough a place where people want to live, work, visit and invest. Given the national importance of heritage assets in the historic core and the need to ensure the town's continuing and sustainable development there is a pressing need for a detailed strategy to ensure their conservation.

This strategy defines what is meant by the Historic Environment and reviews its character and assesses value for today's residents and for future generations. A number of designated heritage assets have been identified as being of particular significance together with areas within the prehistoric, Roman and Medieval settlement cores where the extent of archaeological potential is as yet unknown. Specific measures for managing these through the development control process are set out.

These are designed to implement the Council's archaeological policies more effectively while at the same time ensuring a flexible and pragmatic approach to what can be varied and complex remains whose extent and importance may not always be initially clear.

Two areas of work are identified as being of crucial importance. Firstly, there is the need to maintain the Urban Archaeology Database (UAD), which is the intensive, local, historic environment record (HER), so that accurate and up-to-date records of the condition, extent and value of different elements within the historic environment so that informed decisions on its management can be made. Secondly, there is a need to disseminate information about the historic environment much more widely, so that the full value of the historic environment and the contribution it makes to the future character of the town will be clear to stakeholders, residents and workers alike, as well as attracting more visitors and tourists to the Borough.

A complementary strategy document detailing policies for conserving and managing the historic built environment and historic areas is in course of preparation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Colchester has an exceptionally long and varied history. This, together with the survival of a wide range of archaeological remains, historic buildings and the influence of early townscapes on the modern town layout makes a vital contribution to the individuality and character of the town. It is a source of civic pride and enjoyment to many residents of the Borough, and makes the area an attractive place in which to live and work. It is an important educational resource and a major factor in drawing visitors to the town.

1.2 By the end of the first century BC Colchester was already a particularly important regional centre. In the Roman period this importance was enhanced and the town became the first capital of Roman Britain, (Fig. 1). The outstanding importance of Colchester is due to its association with the foremost ruler of late Iron Age Britain, Cunobelin, and the establishment of the Roman Imperial cult in the early first century AD. Following the Norman Conquest Colchester was extensively re-developed with the building of the largest Norman keep in Europe, St. John's Abbey and St. Botolph's Priory, still major features of the townscape on Speed's plan of 1610, (Fig. 2). Consequently, Colchester is in many respects exceptional and its archaeology is of national and even international importance.

1.3 The physical remains of this long history, however, are often fragile and ephemeral. Once altered or removed, whether in the course of development, agricultural processes, natural erosion or archaeological excavation, they cannot be replaced. In Colchester, however, high land prices and the requirements of a vibrant community result in constant development pressure. Consequently, the proper management, interpretation and conservation of the town's heritage places a heavy responsibility on the Council and its partners.

1.4. Colchester therefore needs a robust, effective and wide ranging strategy for managing the remains of its historic past for the benefit of today's' community and for future generations. It is important that the strategy is one to which all stakeholders are fully committed. Due to the exceptionally complex nature of the archaeological evidence resulting from the continued occupation of the historic core of Colchester over two millennia, specific archaeological strategies are required for its management. In the context of this strategy the 'historic core' is taken to consist of the area of the pre-Roman settlements at Gosbecks and Sheepen,(including the associated dyke systems), the Roman and later walled town together with the suburbs and cemetery zones, plus the religious houses.

1.5. Although the area covered by this strategy is restricted to the areas outlined above, it is acknowledged that the remainder of the Borough contains important archaeological deposits forming a highly significant element in the Borough's historic environment. This aspect has been surveyed in the Colchester Borough Historic Environment Characterisation Project, (click [here](#)). The important point is that as in any historic town centre, the very complex issues raised by deeply stratified deposits in urban environments, (in

our case especially by the complexities of the Roman town remains), require specific approaches for their proper conservation, excavation and management. These are generally very different to those needed on rural or village sites which are generally less deeply stratified, but which may involve other issues such as the character of the historic landscape, etc.

1.6. While the historic environment encompasses a number of elements including standing buildings, streetscapes and historic landscapes, the management and conservation of buried archaeological remains, however, pose particular problems. This is especially the case in a town like Colchester, where the range, wealth, importance and complexity of buried remains, together with the depth at which they may lie raises complex issues requiring specific skills and expertise.

2.0. STRAEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.

2.1. The overall vision of Colchester Borough Council is that by 2021 Colchester will be a prestigious regional centre. The historic town centre will be the cultural and economic heart of the borough surrounded by thriving suburbs, villages and countryside. New cultural, retail, office and mixed use developments will be delivered through regeneration of the town centre and its' fringe. The focus of new development will be on Colchester town and Stanway. The distinct local character of small and principal villages will be protected and enhanced.

2.2 In order to realise this vision the Council has identified several strategic aims in its Strategic Plan, 2012-2015, (click [here](#)).

2.3 The natural environment, countryside and coastline will be conserved and enhanced to protect the Borough's diverse biodiversity, geology, history and archaeology.

2.4 Development will be directed away from sites of international, national, regional and local importance, areas of landscape conservation importance and land at risk from fluvial and costal flooding. Strategic green spaces will be secured to meet the recreational and health needs of Colchester.

2.5 The Council is committed to enhancing Colchester's unique historic character which is highly valued by residents and an important tourist attraction as highlighted in Colchester Economic Development Strategy 2010-2015, (click [here](#)).

2.6 Buildings, archaeological sites, parklands, the river and other features that contribute positively to the character of the built environment shall be protected from demolition or inappropriate development. Archaeological assessments will be required on proposed developments that possess known archaeological deposits, or where it is considered that there is good reason for such remains to exist.

2.7 The Borough archaeology service which includes development control, museum display, interpretation, provision of publicly accessible monument information, and engagement with metal detector users, (including recording of finds), has an important role to play within the framework of these corporate aims.

3.0. THE EXISTING POLICIES AND GUIDANCE.

3.1 In December 2000 English Heritage published 'Power of Place: the future of the Historic Environment' which included 18 headline recommendations for managing the historic environment in England, and emphasised the strong need for immediate action, (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/power-of-place/>)

The recommendations for actions by local authorities which are particularly relevant to the management of the historic environment in Colchester Borough are:

Recommendation 1: Local authorities to take full account of the historic environment in preparing community strategies required by the Local Government Act 2000.

Recommendation 5: Local authorities develop a joint strategy with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), to ensure that new development enhances the historic environment.

Recommendation 8: The historic environment is placed at the heart of education.

Recommendation 9: Regional and local cultural strategies identify and address previously neglected influences on the historic environment.

Recommendation 13: Local authorities ensure that proper specialist advice on the historic environment is available.

Recommendation 16: Public access to information on the historic environment is facilitated.

3.2 Recently, English Heritage has produced a series of documents for local authorities that offer advice on understanding and managing local authority heritage assets, (<http://www.helm.org.uk/managing-and-protecting/managing-local-authority-heritage-assets/>)

3.3 *Government Policy*. This is set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012), and supersedes Planning Policy Statement 5 (2010), which in turn superseded Planning Policy Guidance Notes 15 & 16. The NPPF explicitly states that 'Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance'.

3.4 Scheduled Monuments. These sites of national importance, which include several in our historic core area, are 'scheduled' by the Secretary of State at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and have statutory

protection under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments Acts of 1913 -1979. It is an offence to carry out any works which could destroy or damage a scheduled monument unless 'Scheduled Monument Consent' has been obtained from the Secretary of State, (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/scheduled-monuments/> for English Heritage guidance).

There are currently 40 Scheduled Monuments within the Borough. A number are in the central urban historic core area, (Fig.8), and include the only known Roman Circus in Britain which was discovered during excavations for the garrison redevelopment and was scheduled in 2007, (Fig. 3), and the extensive town walls: probably the earliest in the country. Other scheduled areas include extensive tracts of land west, east and south of the town centre at Sheepen/Hillyfields, (Fig. 4), the south-east corner of the Roman town, (Fig 5), and Gosbecks, (Fig. 6), which has also been adopted by the Borough as an archaeological park. Within the town wall the Upper Castle Park is also scheduled, containing as it does the remains of the largest Norman keep in Europe situated on top of the foundations of the temple of Claudius with extensive outer defences all adjacent to significant Roman features some of which are visible, (Fig.7).

The complete list of Scheduled Monuments can be viewed on the English Heritage website, (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/scheduled-monuments/>) or (<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/default.aspx>) or on the Borough Councils' planning website through Planning on the Map: C-Maps), and C Maps Plus.

3.5 Of relevance is the European Environmental Assessment Directive, (2001/42ec), which requires a formal environment assessment of the historic environment of certain plans and programmes, including land use and planning.

3.6 *Local Plan Policy.* Section 38 (6) P1 and Compulsory Purchases Act 2004 requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations dictate otherwise. The Local Plan for Colchester consists of:

- A. Core Strategy: (adopted 2008; click [here](#)).
- B. Site allocations and proposals: (adopted 2010; click [here](#)).
- C. Development Control Policies: (adopted 2010: click [here](#)).

The development Plan Documents contains the Council's planning policies on archaeology, (*see below*).

3.7 Colchester Borough Council Policy.

Through its corporate strategic aims (paras.2.2 – 2.7 above), the Council is committed to conserving and enhancing its archaeological resources, to promote interest in, and enjoyment of, the Borough's history and to improving the quality of life for people who live or work in the area. The Borough's Urban Renaissance and Tourism strategy recognises the importance of the heritage and through its economic and tourism strategies aims to develop tourism, an area in which the historic environment clearly has an important role.

Planning policies have been drawn up to protect the historic environment as a whole and to ensure that it is sustainable, especially where important archaeological sites are affected by development. Development management is at the front line of conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Policies are not designed to prevent change, but seek to ensure that change is managed in the interests of today's residents and those of future generations.

The existing policy is set out in the 2010 Development Policies Document. Policy DP14: Urban Renaissance: Historic Environment Assets which states:

Development will not be permitted that will adversely affect a listed building, a conservation area, historic park or garden or important archaeological remains. Development affecting the historic environment should seek to preserve or enhance the heritage asset and any features of specific historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest. In all cases there will be an expectation that any new development will enhance the historic environment in the first instance, unless there are no identifiable opportunities available. In instances where existing features have a negative impact on the historic environment, as identified through character appraisals, the LPA will request the removal of the features that undermine the historic environment as part of any proposed development. Support will be given to the provision of creative and accessible interpretations of heritage assets.

Conservation of the historic environment will also be ensured by:

- (i) Identifying, characterising, protecting and enhancing Conservation areas;
- (ii) Protection and enhancement of existing buildings and built areas which do not have Listed Building or Conservation Area status but have a particular local importance or character which it is desirable to keep. Such buildings or groups of buildings will be identified through a Local List which will be adopted by the Council;
- (iii) Preserving or enhancing Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens through their respective settings, and other features which contribute to the heritage of the Borough: and
- (iv) Known sites of archaeological importance will be clearly identified and protected, and sites that become known, whether through formal evaluation as part of a Planning Application or otherwise, will similarly be protected according to their importance. Heritage Statements and/or Archaeological Evaluations will be required for

proposals related to or impacting on the setting of heritage assets and/or known or possible archaeological sites, so that sufficient information is provided to assess the impacts of development on historic environment assets together with any proposed mitigation measures.

4.0 THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4.1 In 2002 English Heritage published The Review of Policies Relating to the Historic Environment in England. This defined the historic environment as “all the physical evidence for past human activity and its associations that people can see, understand and feel in the present world.” This was superseded by the National Heritage Protection Plan 2011 to 2015; a major strategy that identifies those parts of England’s heritage that matters to most people and are at greater risk and then concentrates efforts on saving them, (click [here](#)). As the oldest recorded town in England Colchester has an unusually rich and varied historic environment. There are reminders of this long history throughout the Borough, but what makes Colchester unique is not just the great antiquity of many of the archaeological and historic remains, but also their extent, their preservation and continuity through many centuries and in many cases their visibility.

4.2 All of this is very largely due to the way in which the town developed. Late in the first century BC settlement grew up south of the river Colne on level ground at Gosbecks and adjacent to the river at Sheepen. With the arrival of the Romans in AD 43, the town of Colchester was established as a colonia for retired soldiers on the higher ridge to the east which today is the town centre

4.3 A century later Colchester had expanded across 108 acres with extensive suburbs and cemetery areas to become a major town of Roman Britain. After the collapse of Roman rule in the early fifth century, settlement was reduced and contained within the town walls with cemetery areas outside. The town was briefly occupied by the Danes in the early Middle Ages as they were expelled in AD 918.

4.4 After the Norman Conquest a castle was constructed north of the High Street as well as several religious buildings mostly outside of the town walls. The absence of local building stone meant that the Castle and many of the monastic buildings were built almost entirely of re-used material from the now demolished town. The medieval town soon expanded and by the end of the twelfth century the plan of central Colchester was well established. The dissolution of the Abbey in 1539 did not affect the plan or size of the contemporary town significantly, although some of the monastic buildings survived demolition in their entirety until damaged in the civil war siege of 1648 after which the town walls were also partly demolished.

The town however remained essentially a focus for the surrounding countryside and grew little as contemporary maps indicate throughout the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, (Figs.9 & 10).

It was only with the coming of the railway in 1843 and the permanent military garrison in the mid nineteenth century that Victorian suburbs developed and the town expanded significantly beyond its historic wall. Industrial development was predominantly concentrated east of the town centre and the military estate permanently established to the south, (Figs.11 & 12.).The early twentieth century also saw further increase in the size of the town which continues today.

4.5 In Colchester the physical evidence for the historic environment falls into five broad categories;

*Buried remains.

*Extant monuments and historic buildings.

*Historic influences (including historic buildings) evident in the existing townscape.

*Objects preserved in museums and private collections.

*Documentary sources – charters, inventories, wills, maps, drawings, and the observations of early antiquarians. The Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service also houses a useful collection of drawings, prints, and photographs showing the growth of the town along with an extensive library.

4.6 This strategy covers the first three categories; i.e. Buried Remains, Extant Monuments and the historic elements in the modern townscape. The management of museum material is dealt with in the Colchester & Ipswich Museums Collections Management Policy, and the documentary archives are housed by the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford and other published material is kept the Local Studies Centre in Colchester Public Library. The Borough Council has local management agreements in place for several scheduled monuments.

5.1 ELEMENTS FORMING COLCHESTER'S HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT.

5.1.1. **Buried Remains.** These are made up of the remains of structures interleaved with layers of soil, building debris and accumulated rubbish. By recording these deposits layer by layer and analysing the associated object the history of the site can be recovered. Pollen, seeds and organic remains can survive for centuries, especially in damp or waterlogged deposits, and can provide valuable information on the economy and natural environment at different stages in the past.

5.1.2 The survival of archaeological remains is greatly influenced by the local topography. In Colchester the Roman, Medieval and post-Medieval settlement was established on higher ground, while the prehistoric settlements were concentrated on the well drained sands and gravels on level ground. Erosion and agriculture has destroyed many of the remains from the prehistoric period, and broadly speaking archaeological remains survive best in areas of the town not intensively developed.

5.1.3 **Early origins.** By the early first century AD Colchester had become an important regional centre demarcated on the west and south by massive defensive earthworks, known locally as dykes.

KEY SITES.

- Late Iron Age Dykes; Sheepen, Lexden, Moat Farm, Kidman's, Gosbecks, Heath Farm. Olivers.
- Late Iron Age Settlement at Gosbecks.
- Late Iron Age Settlement at Sheepen/ Hillyfields.
- Late Iron Age Lexden Cemetery, & tumulus.

5.1.4 In the course of the first four centuries AD Colchester grew to be one of the more successful towns of Roman Britain, and the focus of Imperial state religion and numerous temples have been recognised and recorded. Within the town walls believed to be the earliest constructed in the country in the late first century AD, there are several areas which appear to have remain largely undeveloped in the post Roman period. This makes the town highly important as an archaeological resource. Excavations have probably uncovered no more than about 10% of the area enclosed by the town walls. It is clear that Colchester included the full range of public buildings normally found within any major town in the Roman Empire- temples, shops, workshops, well appointed private houses, etc. The high quality of many of the Roman remains is reflected in the exceptional collection of mosaic floors, wall paintings and objects in the Colchester Museum. In spite of the extensive stone robbing that the town was subjected to in the Middle Ages, many of the Roman buildings survive to some extent, and there are known to be significant archaeological deposits over much of the Roman town. Outside of the town walls extensive cemetery areas have been recorded, and recently, the only known example of a Roman circus in the country was discovered south of the town walls.

5.1.5 Compared to the Roman and medieval periods, comparatively little is known about the town between the collapse of Roman rule in Britain in the early 5th century and the Norman Conquest. Research over the last 40 years has demonstrated that early post Roman and Saxon remains do exist in the form of pagan cemetery areas located outside but near the town walls, and early dwellings within the town walls.

KEY ROMAN & POST ROMAN SITES.

- Site of Roman Colonia.
- Roman cemetery areas.
- Site of Roman circus.
- Berechurch & Triple Dyke.
- Grymes Dyke.
- Gosbecks theatre & temple.
- Military camp.
- Legionary fortress western area of town.
- Various extra-mural temples.
- Lexden Mount.
- Butt Road Christian church
- Early Saxon cemetery areas south of the town.
- Mersea barrow.

MEDIEVAL REMAINS.

5.1.6 The Abbey of St. John. Little archaeological work has so far been completed on the layout of the abbey complex and little is known about the buildings associated with it. The building of the Abbey were first laid out in 1095 and completed in 1115, and that the cloister and other domestic buildings lay to the north of the church. In 1113 the abbey was burnt down, and documentary evidence from the time states that the cloister and other buildings were then relocated to the south of the church which conforms to the normal Benedictine plan found elsewhere. Very recent archaeological investigation has confirmed for the first time the precise location and scale of the church itself, which appears to have been completely demolished: probably in the later 17th century. The abbey was dissolved in 1538 and the site passed to various individuals until eventually acquired by the Lucas family who constructed a mansion and resided there until the mid 17th century. During the siege of the town in 1648 the former abbey was used as a royalist stronghold and sustained considerable damage. With the exception of the extant, but restored gatehouse, the remaining abbey buildings seem to have been demolished in the 1660s. The War Office bought the site in 1860 from the Baring family and it has stayed in military ownership until very recently and it now enjoys scheduled monument status, (Fig. 8).

Very little is known about the buildings which would have comprised the whole abbey complex, such as the refectory, cloisters, hospital, dormitories, etc.

5.1.7. Other Religious Buildings, Priors, Chapels and Hospitals.

Little survives of the towns other medieval religious buildings. The better preserved site is that of St. Botolph's' Priory, though this was extensively damaged during the siege of 1648. The Priory was the first Augustinian house in the country being constructed in the late 11th century, and sits on top of a Roman building of unspecified character. Part of the site is a scheduled monument, (Fig. 8).

5.1.8. Very little survives now on the sites of Greyfriars, Crouch Friars, Mary Magdalen Leper Hospital, or St. Catherine's Hospital in Crouch Street. These religious houses are represented on Speed's plan of Colchester dated 1610, (Fig. 2).

5.1.9. The largest Norman keep in Europe was constructed by William the Conqueror on the site of the Roman temple dedicated to the Emperor Claudius, and survives, though in a reduced form, and with much of the outer bailey earthworks now truncated, though some fine stretches survive north of the keep now located within a public park.

5.2 Historic Elements surviving in the modern Townscape.

5.2.1 The Roman and medieval street plan in the modern town is itself an eloquent record of Colchester's history. Head Street, High Street and North Hill are clearly Roman in origin, but much of the town was subject to street planning by Edward the Elder following his re-conquest of the town in AD917 from the Danes. Some streets, for example Maidenburgh Street, were not laid out until the fourteenth century, and the High Street was clearly diverted to avoid the outer castle southern defensive works. The Roman town walls with its outer defensive ditch continued to be utilised for defensive purposes and the wall was strengthened in the 14th century by the addition of projecting bastions along the Priory Street frontage. The town ditch can now only be seen on the north-east corner of the town wall. Large areas within the town wall remained undeveloped however including that around the royal castle and the south-east corner, the Buryfield, which was common land occasionally used for fairs.

KEY MEDIEVAL SITES.

- St. John's Abbey and Church.
- St. Botolph's Priory
- Castle.
- St. Helena Chapel

6. The Value of the Historic Environment within the framework of the Council's overall Aims and Objectives.

6.1 Tourism and Leisure.

English Heritage data for 2011 records that just over 70% of adults visited an historic site in England during the previous twelve months. The government's Great Campaign aims to attract 4.6 million visitors to the UK over the next 4 years with a tourism spend of £2.3 billion, creating 60,000 jobs.

6.1.2 Colchester is fortunate in possessing a wide range of historic and archaeological sites, and heritage attractions have the potential to be a cornerstone of the local tourism and leisure industry. The latest local figures record that tourism was worth just over £224 million to the local economy and supported the equivalent 5,630 jobs.

6.1.3 Colchester Borough Council recognises the importance of the heritage and is committed to developing its tourist industry. This is reflected in the Council's tourism strategy. Identifying undeveloped tourist assets and raising the profile of Colchester as an historic city can only benefit the Borough's tourist industry. The Museum service is currently updating and standardising information boards in the town centre relating to historic monuments. The Colchester Archaeological Trust will soon be opening an information centre and displaying remains of the Roman circus at their headquarters off Circular Road North. A town centre heritage trail has been established for many years. The redisplay of the Castle Museum will display information for visitors who wish to explore heritage assets elsewhere in the Borough.

6.1.4 Quality of life. The Council recognises the role the Boroughs' heritage can play in raising the quality of life and encouraging social cohesion. Many local residents gain a deep and satisfying 'sense of place' from living in Colchester. A widespread interest in the past is demonstrated in a number of ways, notably by the popularity of television programmes, (e.g. Time Team, Meet the Ancestors, Restoration), and by attendance at local heritage events, (Archaeology Heritage Open Days, Living History events, talks and presentations on heritage matters).

6.1.5 At a local level residents are becoming more alert to changes in their environment in all its forms and better motivated and empowered to participate in community projects and in local decision making.

6.1.6 Archaeology and local history play an important role in the National Curriculum Key (currently key stages 1-3). A new National Curriculum will be introduced in September 2014 and will include a compulsory topic in Local History. Archaeology and local history also play important roles in less formal education. The Essex Society for Archaeological and History Society, the Colchester Archaeological Group and the Friends of Colchester Museums and Colchester Archaeological Trust all organise programmes of lectures and outings and participate in archaeological fieldwork. The Colchester Archaeological Group also conducts fieldwork and organises lectures. The

Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service organises events as part of National Archaeology Days, Heritage Open Days, as well as Living History events at Colchester Castle and elsewhere. There is a thriving branch of the Young Archaeologists Club organised by Colchester Museums. In partnership with the Portable Antiquities Scheme the Museum houses a liaison officer who provides an identification and recording service for local metal detecting groups and individuals.

7. Developing an Archaeological Strategy.

7.1 Development Control.

7.1.1 This is at the front-line of conserving and enhancing the buried archaeological remain. Development Control policies are drawn up to protect the historic environment as a whole, especially where important archaeological and historic sites and buildings are affected by development. The underlying premise guiding the Councils' management of the historic environment is that:

- Archaeological remains form an important environmental resource which, since it is non-renewable, requires careful conservation
- Accurate information is a pre-requisite for the proper management and conservation of this resource.
- Archaeological and historic remains should be preserved for future generations, but at the same time they should be enhanced for the benefit of local residents and visitors.

7.1.2 Against this background the Council's policies aim to:

- Conserve the archaeological and historical resource without stifling present day growth and development.
- Mitigate adverse effects on it through the development control process
- Manage and enhance the resource for the benefit of a wider public.

7.1.3 Current government guidance in the form of the NPPF (2012), aims to secure the conservation of heritage assets whether they are scheduled monuments or not. Not everything is equally important but it is vital that the heritage as a whole is sustainable if it is to continue to be a resource for future generations. Assessing the relative value of buried and hence largely unknown, deposits in different areas of the town and matching them with the appropriate responses in terms of development control is an essential aspect of proper archaeological management.

7.1.4 Effective heritage management requires detailed and reliable information. Archaeological information about Colchester up until the year 1700 is contained in the Colchester Urban Archaeological Database, (UAD), the local intensive heritage environment record. This has formed the basis for a recently produced rigorous academic assessment of the archaeology of

Colchester, (Gascoyne & Radford; 2013). It is essential that the database is kept up to date. The UAD can be searched via the Heritage Gateway web site, (<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/default.aspx>)

7.1.5 The vulnerability of remains varies enormously from site to site. In some areas rare and important deposits are buried beneath later layers. In situations like this it may be possible to adapt foundations to protect significant archaeological deposits while sacrificing a small percentage of overlying, non-critical remains. On the other hand in areas like the Castle Park the reverse is true: here crucially important and unusual remains are likely to lie very close to the surface.

7.1.6 The most realistic way forward for Colchester Borough Council is to adopt specific criteria against which policies can be consistently observed to ensure sustainable development by;

- Exercising stringent controls to maintain the sustainability of key sites as previously identified and areas of high archaeological potential as indicated on C Maps Plus. These areas consist of the area within and adjacent to the town walls, and the town wards of Lexden and Christchurch. All scheduled monument sites and areas including the dykes and Gosbecks are also included, and can be viewed on the planning section of the Borough Council website in planning on the map: (c-maps).
- Controlling and in some cases restricting development on sites with less potential or which are less sustainable.
- Monitoring development, (e.g. by watching briefs and /or recording), on sites which assessment or evaluation indicate are of less or uncertain archaeological potential.

7.1.7 A monument strategy and management plans have been produced by the Museum Service for several archaeological sites most owned or in guardianship of the Borough Council, (click [here](#)). These include a management plan for the Dykes produced in 1997, and for the Mersea Barrow, St. John's Abbey Gate, Town Walls, Roman Circus (click [here](#)), Gosbecks, St. Botolph's Priory, and the Lexden Mount, (click [here](#)). These plans set out clear objectives for the preservation, maintenance and enjoyment of these particular sites, as required under the terms of local management agreements with English Heritage.

7.1.8 The Borough possesses a suite of policy documents which detail the approach to archaeological development control, (click [here](#)), and what standards the Borough expects archaeological contractors to adhere to when undertaking fieldwork within the Borough, (click [here](#)).

References.

Gascoyne, A. & Radford, D. *Colchester, Fortress of the War God: An Archaeological Assessment*. 2013. Oxbow Books.

FIGURES.

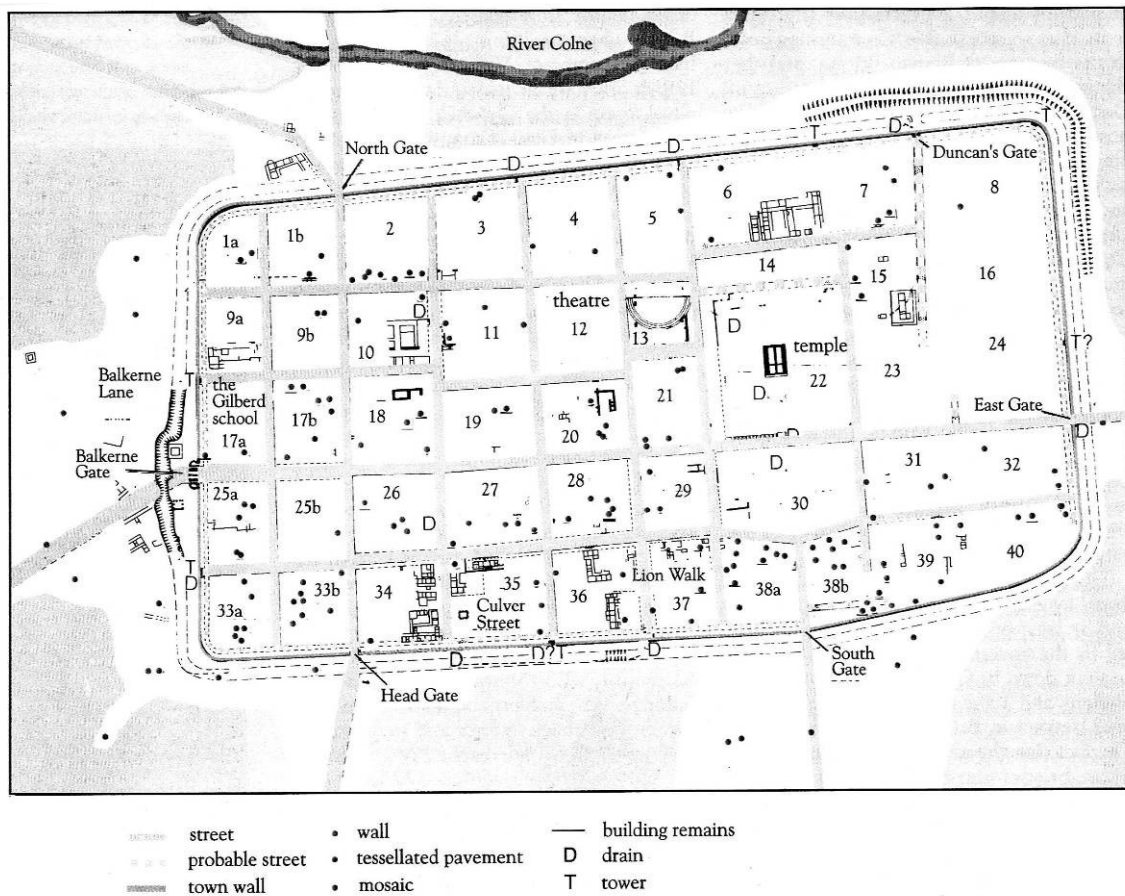


Figure1. Roman Colchester.

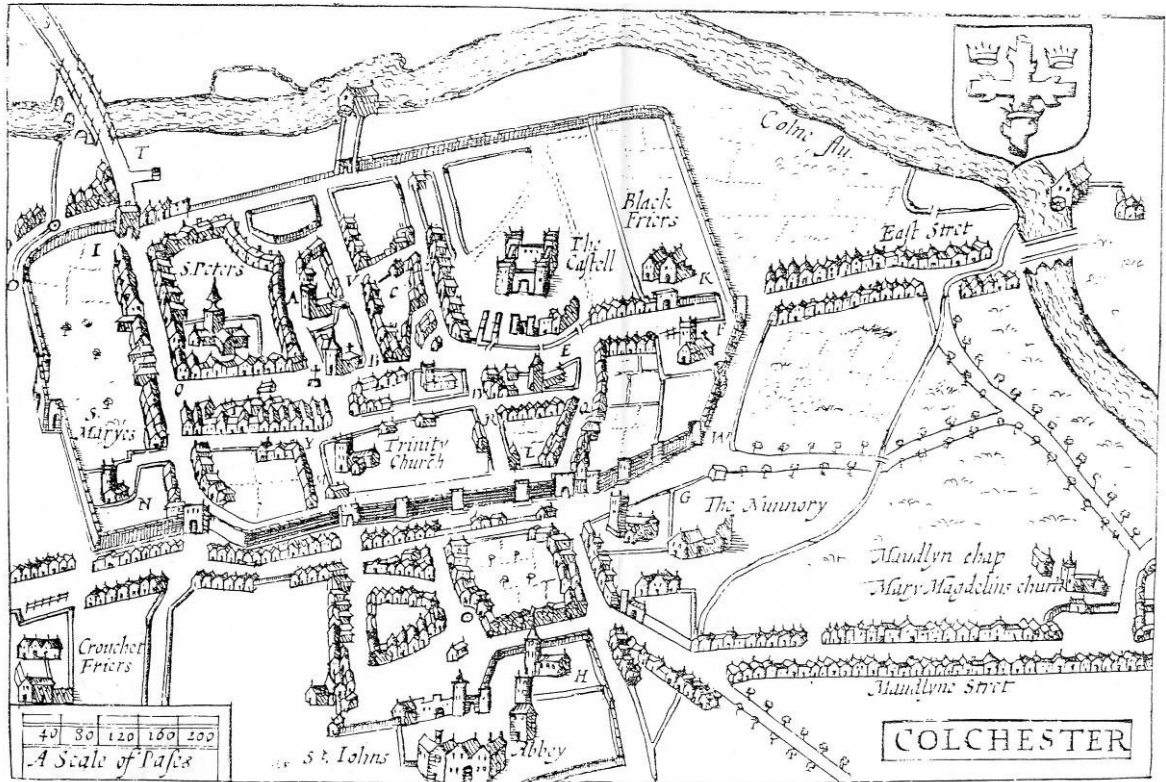


Figure 2. Speeds Plan of Colchester.1610.

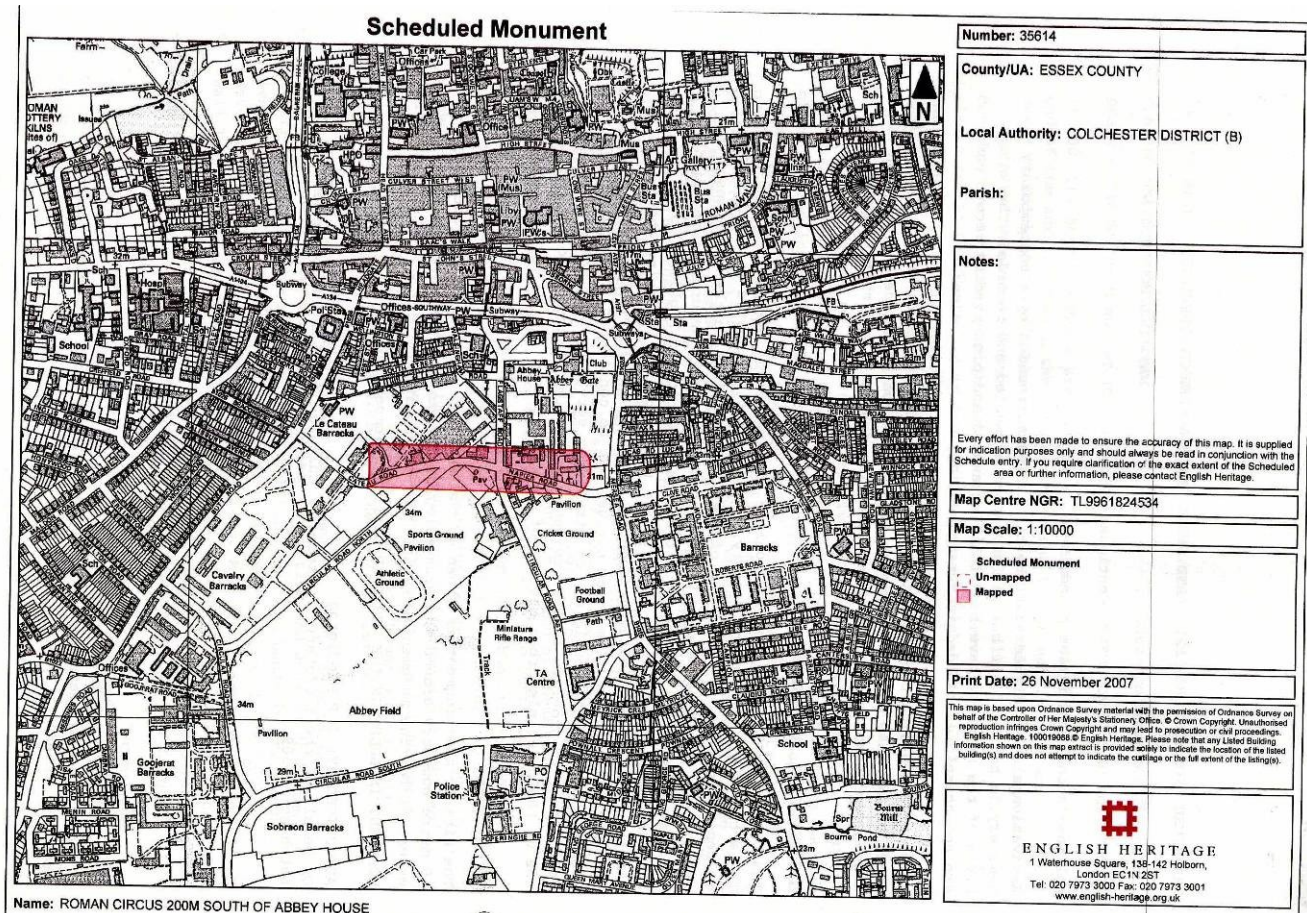
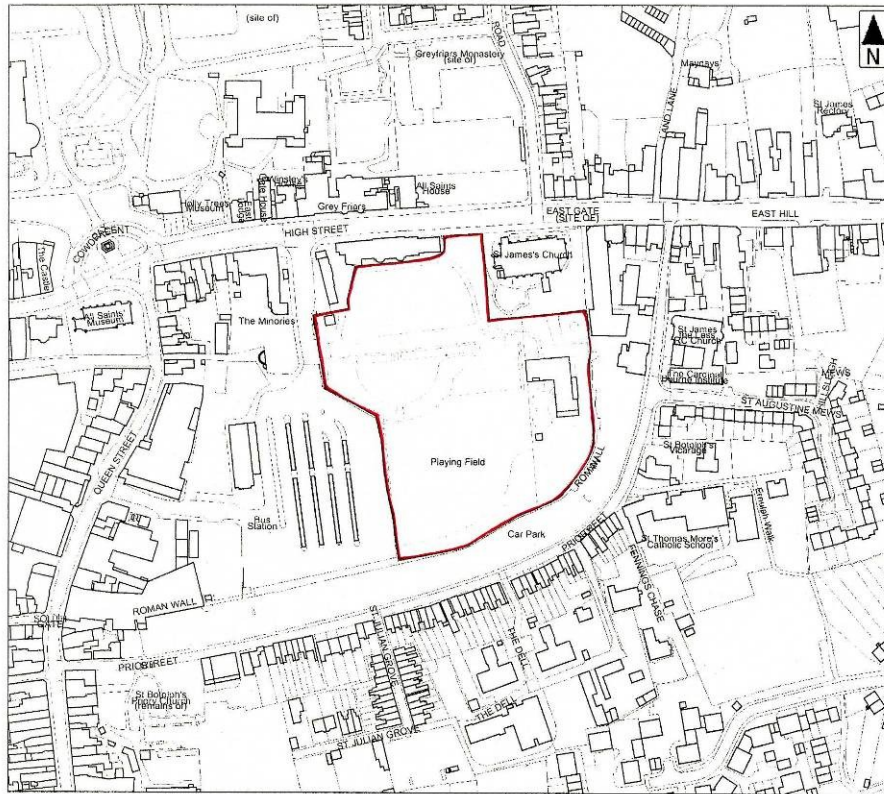


Figure 3. Roman Circus Scheduled Monument.

Scheduled Monument



Name: SE CORNER OF ROMAN TOWN IN EASTHILL HOUSE GARDENS


Number: EX173
County/UA: ESSEX COUNTY
Local Authority: COLCHESTER DISTRICT
Parish: NON-CIVIL PARISH
Notes:
Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this map. It is supplied for indication purposes only and should always be read in conjunction with the Schedule entry. If you require clarification of the exact extent of the Scheduled area or further information, please contact English Heritage.
Map Centre NGR: TM0011725159
Map Scale: 1:2500
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scheduled Monument
Print Date: 18 April 2005
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 ENGLISH HERITAGE 23 Savile Row, London W1S 2ET Tel: 020 7973 3000 Fax: 020 7973 3001 www.english-heritage.org.uk

Figure 5. South-East Corner of Roman Town Scheduled Monument.

Gosbecks SAM

EX57

Compiled by A Richards on 28 March 2007

Colchester Borough Council
Museum Service
Museum Resource Centre
14 Ryegate Road
Colchester
Essex CO1 1YG



Scale 1:19859

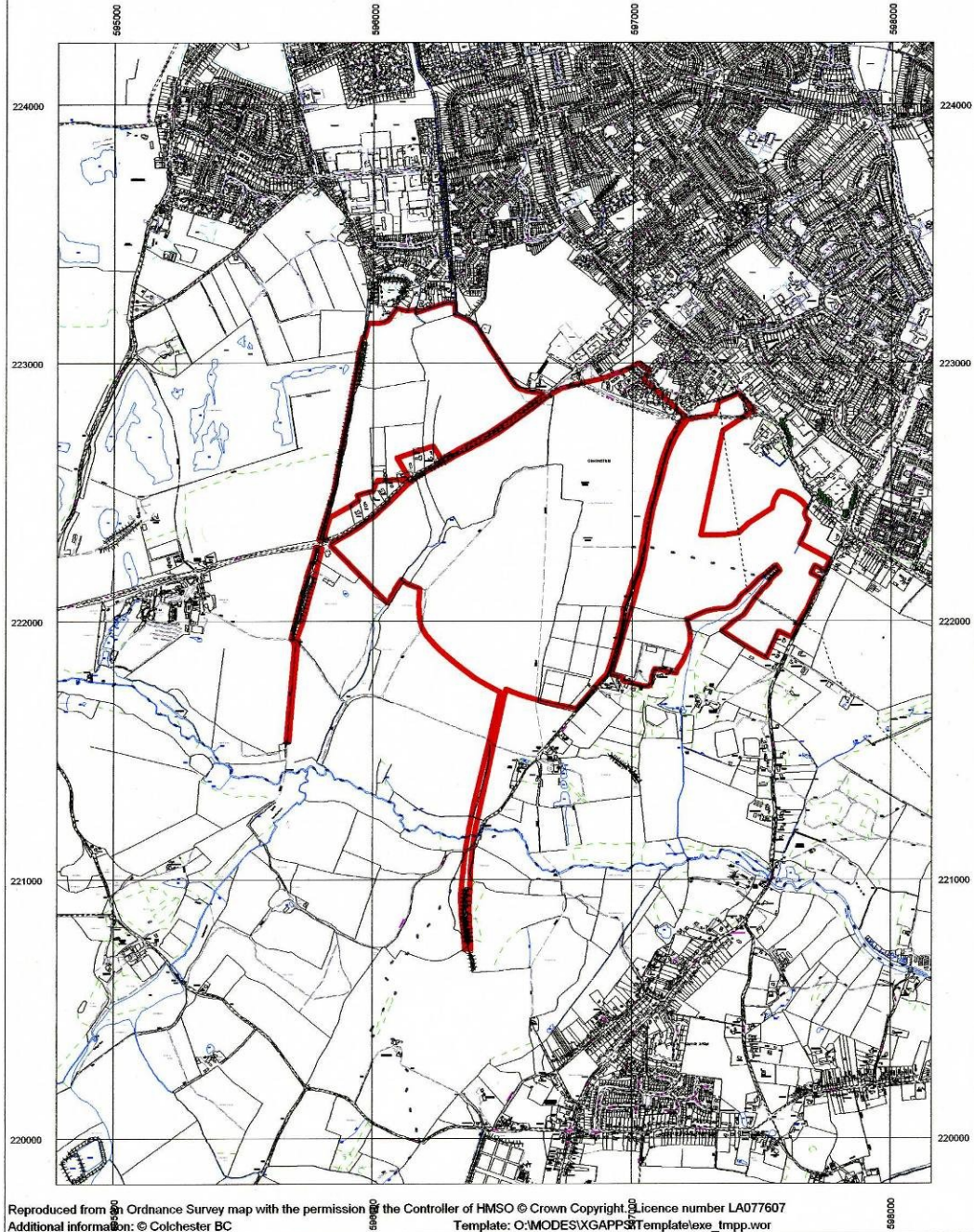


Fig.6. Gosbecks Scheduled Monument.

Castle Park SAM

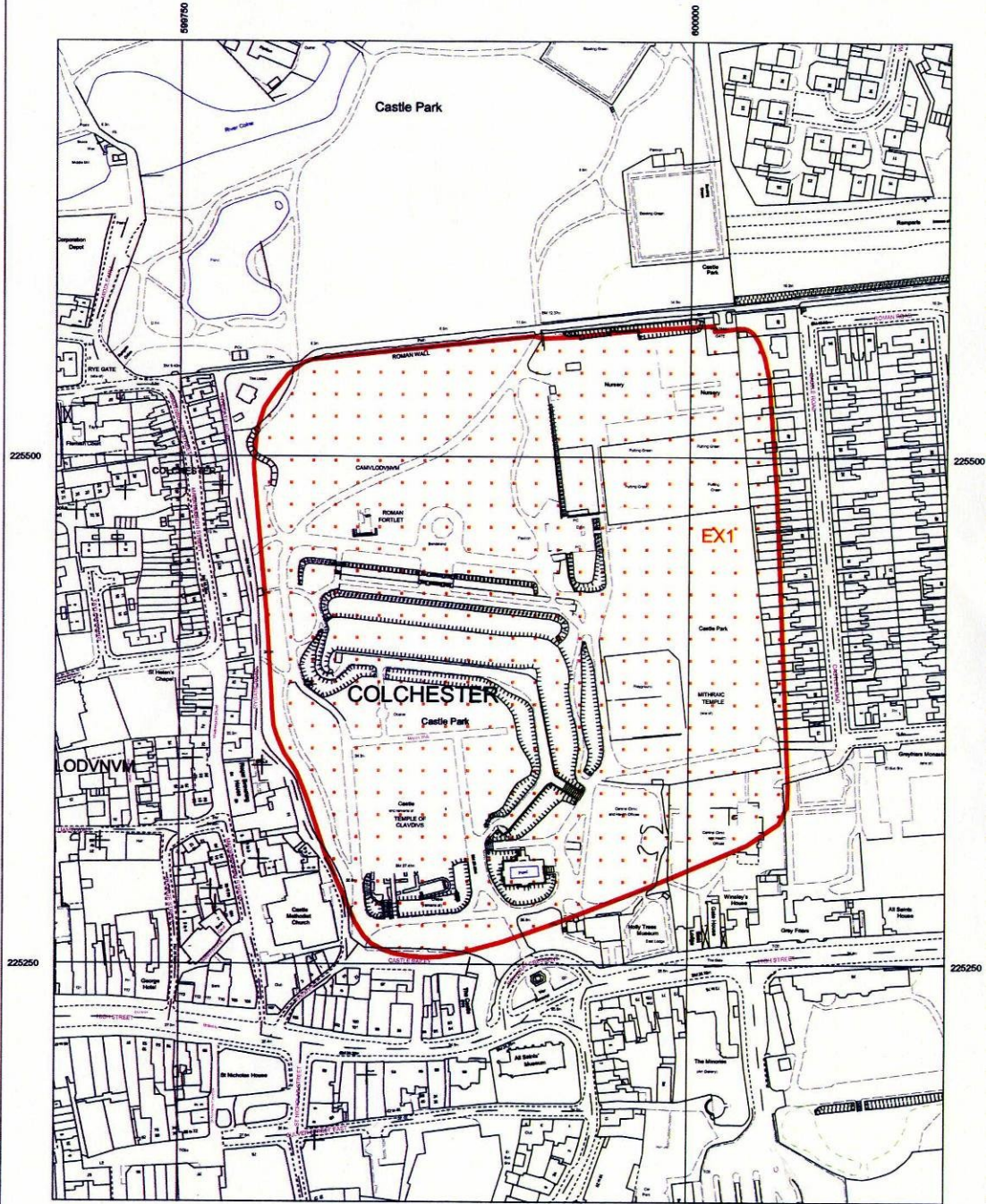
Fig 1

Compiled by A Richards on 30 March 2007

Colchester Borough Council
Museum Service
Museum Resource Centre
14 Ryegate Road
Colchester
Essex CO1 1YG



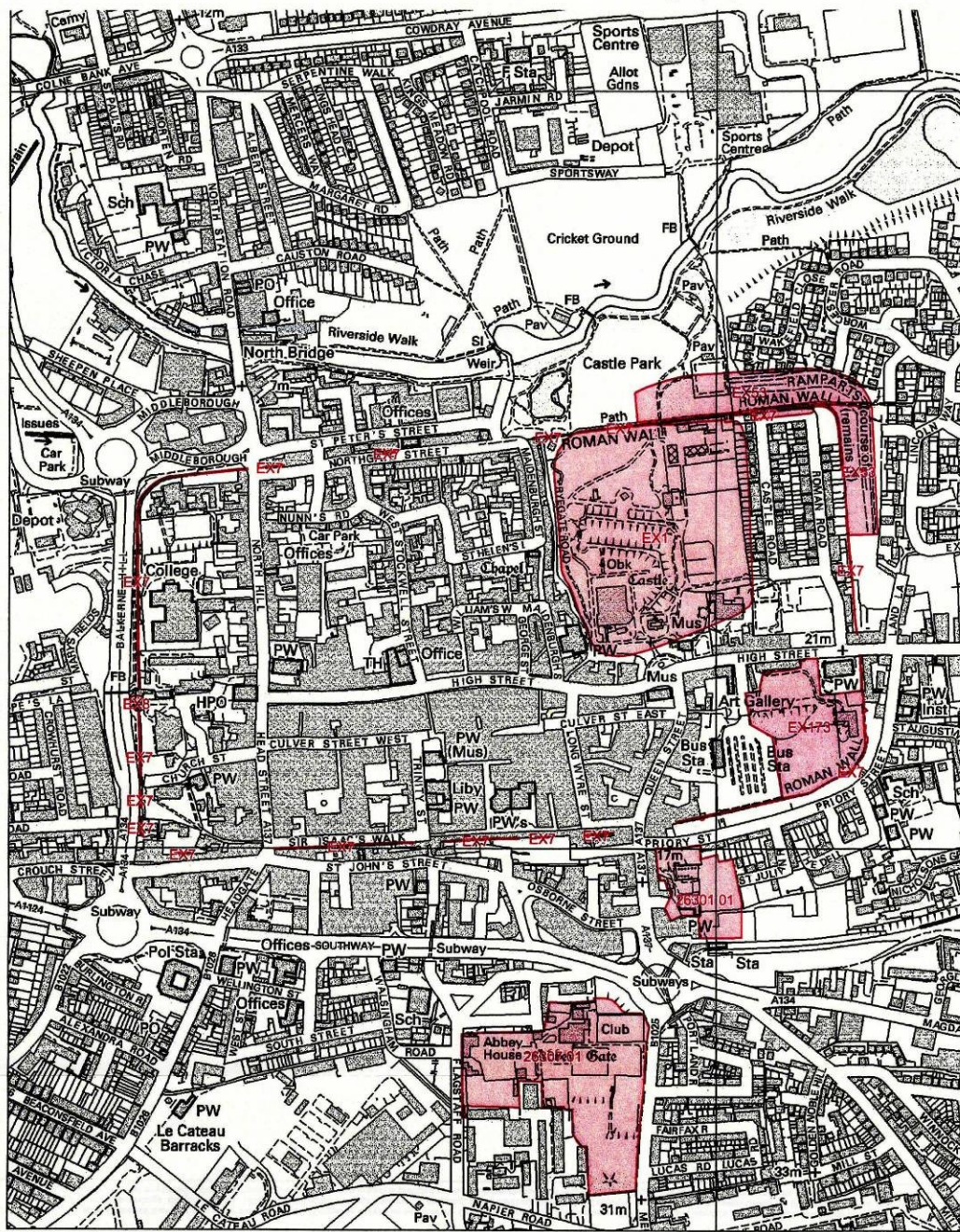
Scale 1:2575



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Additional information: © Colchester BC
Template: O:\MODES\GAPPS\Templates\exe_tmpp.wor

Figure 7. Castle Park Scheduled Monument.

Colchester Monument Numbers 1, 7, 8, 53



Map Scale: 1:7088
 Print Date: 25 January 2007



http://gisweb/website/map_viewer/print_templates/incontext_a4_portrait.html

25/01/2007

Figure 8. Scheduled Monuments in the Town Centre.

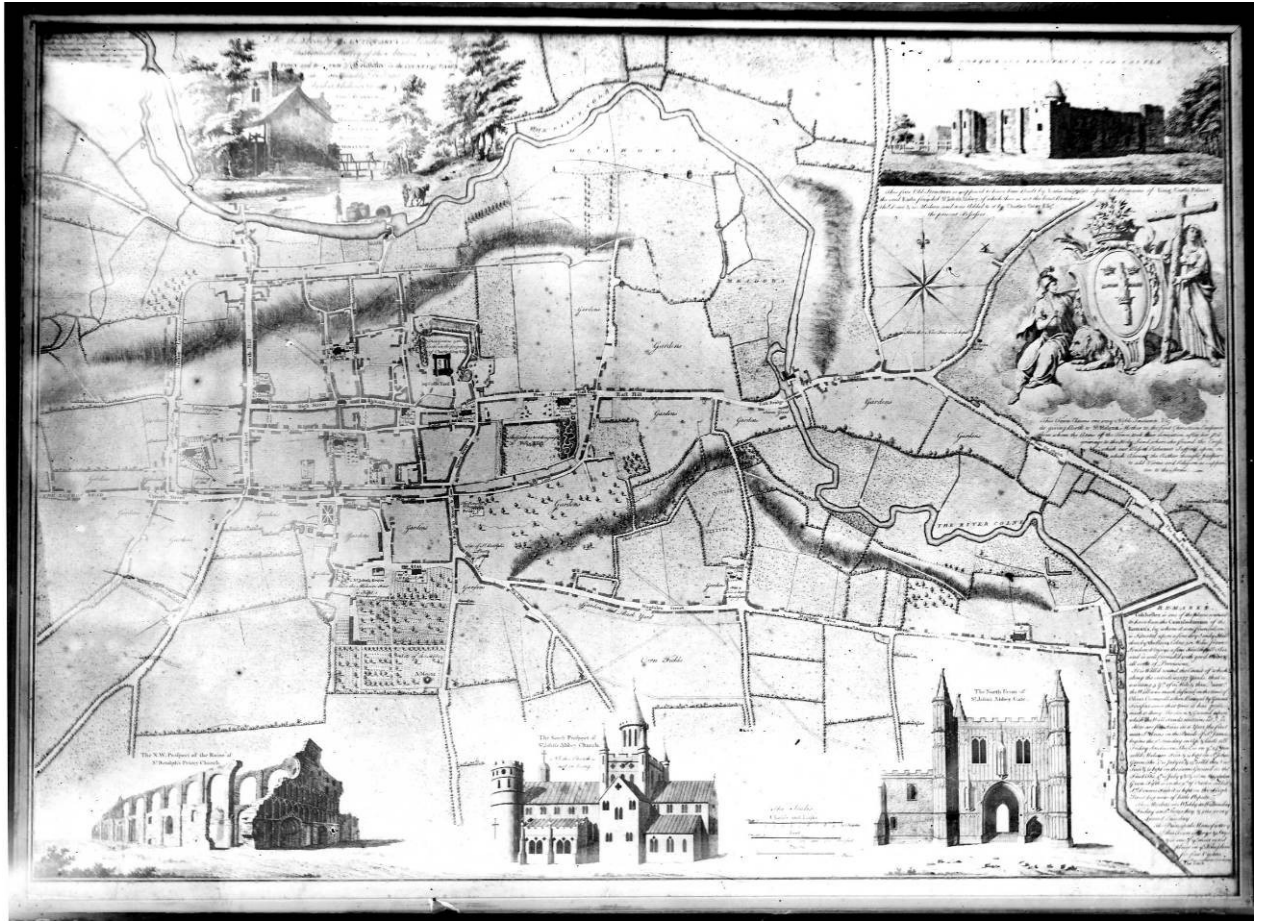


Figure 9. Sparrows Plan of Colchester. 1767.

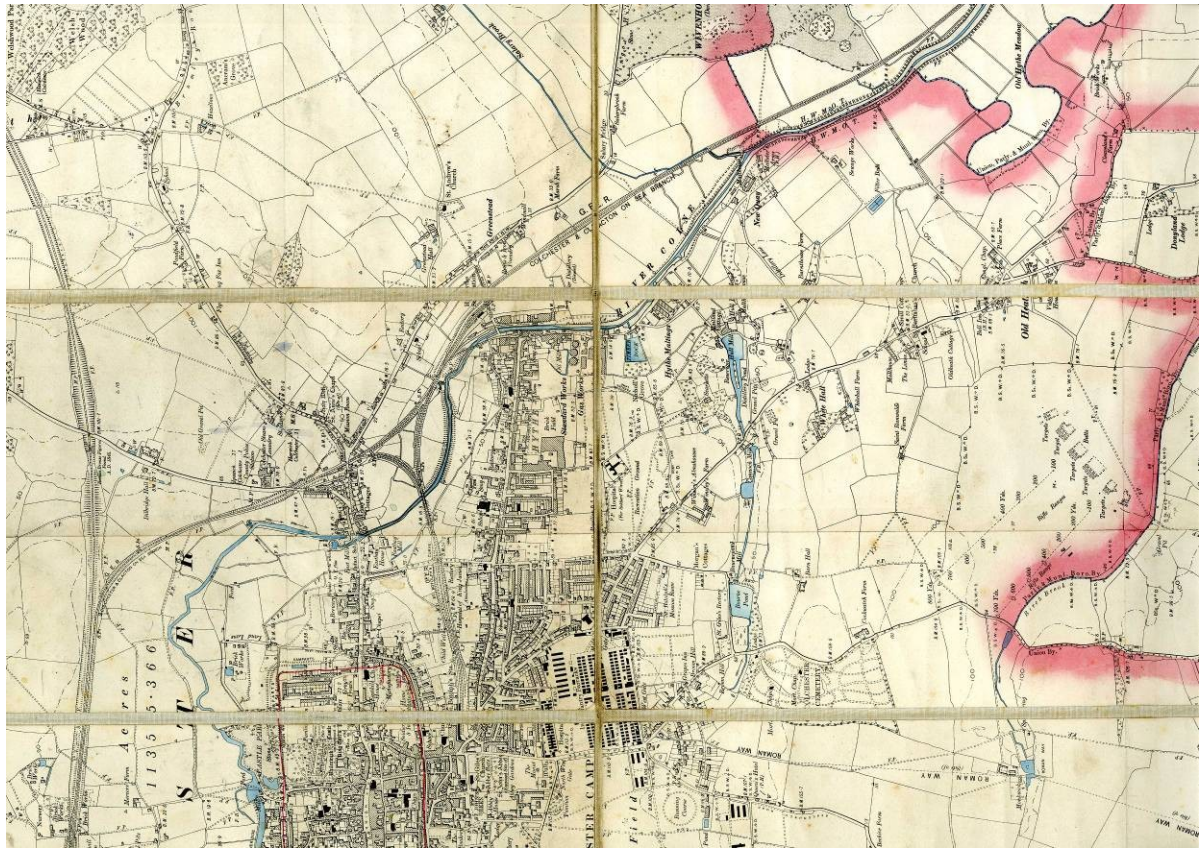


Figure12. East Colchester. Ordnance Survey 1896.

28 April 2014

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Beverley McClean
Title	Habitats Regulations Assessment – Final Monitoring Report		
Wards affected	Birch and Winstree and West Mersea		

The Local Plan Committee is asked to note the findings of the final Habitats Regulations Assessment 3 year Monitoring Report.

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to note the findings of the final Habitats Regulations Assessment 3 year Monitoring Report.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 The report has been prepared to highlight the key findings of the 3 year Habitat Assessment Monitoring project.

3. Alternative Option(s)

- 3.1 There are no alternative options as the project is now complete.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 As part of the development of their Local Plans and in accordance with the Habitat Regulations 2004 (as amended) Colchester Borough Council, Tendring District Council and Braintree District Council completed Appropriate Assessments of their spatial plans. The key purpose of an Appropriate Assessment is to ascertain whether a plan or program will have an adverse affect on the integrity of a Natura 2000¹ site.
- 4.2 In order for Colchester, Tendring and Braintree Councils to be able to conclude no adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites from the growth identified in their Local Plans, an agreement was reached with Natural England for a programme of survey and monitoring of visitors at the Natura 2000 sites within Colchester and Tendring. Colchester Borough Council was contracted to survey and monitor visitors on behalf of Tendring and Braintree Councils throughout the lifetime of the spatial plans. For Colchester this is up to 2021.

¹ Natura 2000 sites are Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation. Special Protection Areas were designated under Article 4 of the EC Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC), (Birds Directive) for rare and vulnerable birds, listed in Annex I to the Directive, and for regularly occurring migratory species. Special Areas of Conservation were designated under EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). Procedures relating to Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation also applies to Ramsar Sites designated under the International Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention, Iran 1971 and amended by the Paris Protocol 1992).

- 4.3 Whilst there are no Natura 2000 sites in Braintree it is still possible that growth and an increase in population in the district, could impact on Natura 2000 sites in Colchester and Tendring. For this reason Braintree was included in the monitoring programme.
- 4.4 The aims and objectives of the monitoring programme were to:
- 1 Establish baseline data about visitor numbers at Natura 2000 sites in Colchester Borough and Tendring District.
 - 2 Investigate visitor trends to Natura 2000 sites in Colchester Borough and Tendring District.
 - 3 Identify whether there is a link between site condition and housing completions.
 - 4 Identify management measures needed to mitigate and manage the impacts of increased visitor numbers.
- 4.5 The first 3 years of the project has only satisfied objective 1 as the purpose of this stage of the project was as to collect baseline data. It is too early in the process to identify trends or identify links between housing growth, changes to visitor numbers impacts on the European sites and mitigation required to address any identified impacts. Future survey analysis will integrate Webs bird count data provided by the British Trust for Ornithology and also involve consultation with boat and sailing clubs thereby contributing to meeting wider project objectives.
- 4.6 The following Natura 2000 sites were surveyed in the Habitats Regulation Assessment Monitoring project: Abberton Reservoir, Blackwater Estuary (Old Hall Marshes, Strood Channel) Colne Estuary (Brightlingsea Marshes and Cudmore Grove), Hamford Water (Kirby Quay and Walton on The Naze) and the Stour Estuary (The Walls and Stour Wood/Estuary).
- 4.7 The project started in November 2010 and concluded in June 2013. Monitoring took place at each of the above sites during November and June each year, to gather information about visitor numbers during sensitive breeding and overwintering periods and the less sensitive summer period.
- 4.8 A brief summary for each site is set out below;

Abberton – The total number of groups recorded at Abberton over the 3 year monitoring period was 141. This reserve mainly attracted people with an interest in wildlife and the key reason for visiting this site was to birdwatch. The new visitor centre which opened in June 2012 has been the biggest single factor influencing changes in the number of groups at the site. As dogs are restricted, no water based recreation is permitted on the reservoir itself and that fact that there are structures on site means that disturbance is unlikely to be significant issue at this location even if visitor numbers increased significantly in the future.

Strood Channel - Between November 2010 and June 2013 only 56 groups were interviewed along the Strood Channel on Mersea Island. This site generally attracted small groups of local residents from Mersea who walked their dogs at this location. Strood Channel is likely to remain a quiet site visited and used principally by local dog walkers and any impacts on the site's integrity from an increase in visitor numbers from new housing is anticipated to be low at this location. During the survey periods while many boats were observed moored up in the channel few were actually recorded under sail or motoring. Strood Channel however attracts jet skiers at the north eastern end and there is a risk that increases in the number of jet skiers using the Strood could increase erosion along the banks of the channel and over a longer period the condition of the site. This should continue to be monitored in future surveys.

Cudmore Grove - At Cudmore Grove Country Park, 236 groups were interviewed between November 2010 and June 2013. It was the busiest site in Colchester Borough. Cudmore Grove has a variety of habitats i.e. the beach, Mersea Flats, and the country park, as well as parking and other facilities (shop and toilets) which may partially explain why this site attracted so many groups. Cudmore Grove is well used by dog walkers and generally for walking and taking exercise. Despite having bird hides on the site it did not attract high numbers of ornithologists. While the Country Park is used year round, it is used more for leisure and recreational uses in the summer months e.g. family birthday parties, picnics, family days out at the beach. Cudmore Grove is also used for health walks by local charities e.g. St Helena's and educational trips. Given the size of the Country Park and diversity of habitats within and adjacent to the park, this location has the greatest capacity of all the sites to absorb greater numbers of people without adversely impacting on the Natura 2000 site.

Old Hall Marshes – Between the November 2010 and June 2013, only 22 groups were recorded at this Natura 2000 site. Like Kirby Quay and the Strood Channel, Old Hall was visited mainly by local dog walkers from Salcott or birdwatchers from Maldon District and Colchester Borough. The lack of facilities, the remoteness of the site and poor public transport links potentially all contribute to the low number of visitors at Old Hall. Low boating levels were recorded during the survey periods along Salcott Channel and Tollesbury Creek. As visitor numbers are currently low and likely to remain so at Old Hall Marshes impacts are also likely to be low in the future. Even if the level of visitors increases in the future, there are measures in place i.e. visitor permits and sea wall path diversions which will help reduce disturbance to birds at the marshes.

Kirby Quay – Only 35 groups were interviewed at Kirby Quay between November 2010 and June 2013. Like Strood Channel, Kirby Quay was used mainly by Kirby residents for dog walking. This site is quite remote and lacks facilities and has poor public transport connections. It is likely that these factors will continue to keep visitor numbers low at Kirby Quay and that it will continue to be used mainly by local residents.

Brightlingsea Marshes – Between November 2010 and June 2013, 312 groups were interviewed at Brightlingsea Marshes. This was the busiest of all the sites visited, with a peak in visitors in November 2012. Brightlingsea Marshes has emerged as an important area for dog walkers and recreational walking. The marshes are not only a popular area for Brightlingsea residents but for residents living in other towns and villages in Tendring District. Brightlingsea Marshes is an important leisure/recreation destination but is less important as a bird watching area. Visitors currently tend to congregate around the café and beach and less so on the marshes themselves and if this does not alter then changes in visitor numbers may not impact adversely on the marshes in the future

The Walls, Manningtree – A total of 279 groups were recorded at the Walls in Manningtree between November 2010 and June 2013. The Walls attracted visitors from a range of destinations but by far, this site attracted principally residents from other neighbouring settlements in Tendring and Suffolk. The Walls is a popular recreational walking area but compared to the other sites in the survey it is not generally a popular dog walking area. In the winter months it also attracted a small number of bird watchers.

Stour Estuary – 218 groups were interviewed at The Stour Estuary between November 2010 and June 2013. As with the other Tendring sites, approximately 50% of the groups surveyed at this location lived within Harwich and outlying villages. The Stour Estuary is an important recreational location for dog walkers and walkers. Only 5% of the groups interviewed visited the Stour Estuary for bird watching which is surprising considering

that Stour Wood, an RSPB owned reserve, formed part of the survey site. While The Stour Estuary has good parking it has few other facilities which may help keep visitor numbers lower than other sites in Tendring i.e. the beaches.

The Naze – Between November 2010 and June 2013, 231 groups were surveyed at Walton on The Naze. This site is well served with facilities including parking, toilets and 2 cafes. The Naze attracts a mix of visitors mainly from Tendring although it is also an important holiday destination. 58% of the groups interviewed at The Naze lived locally in Walton and Frinton. The Naze is well used for dog walking, walking and exercising on a regular basis but it is also used occasionally for educational visits by school groups from London due to the areas eroding cliffs. Like Cudmore the Naze may have the capacity to absorb higher visitor numbers than other Natura 2000 sites without adversely impacting on the integrity of neighbouring Hamford Water.

4.9 Overall conclusions

While the coast is a strong attractor for residents and visitors, many groups surveyed stated that they also make regular use of open spaces close to home. For many groups the proximity of a site relative to where they lived was an important factor in determining which sites they chose to visit. The availability of small sites close to where people live delivers many benefits, one of which is the provision of valuable alternative green spaces for informal recreation. These small local green spaces can help relieve pressure on sensitive coastal locations. Over the survey period 10% of the total visitors surveyed (154 groups) said that they did not have good access to open space close to home. These groups tended to live in urban areas of Colchester, Clacton and Harwich where higher levels of development were occurring. Residents in these areas felt that local open space provision was poor as a result of sites being lost to new development.

- 4.10 It is important that all the above sites continue to be monitored. Over the longer term, where it is demonstrated that increases in visitor numbers associated with new housing growth is adversely impacting the integrity of European sites, it will be important to ensure that adequate new areas of open space continue to be provided to alleviate pressure on the most sensitive coastal locations.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 Following the completion of the 3 years baseline data collection it has been agreed with Natural England, Tendring District Council and Braintree District Council that the visitor monitoring surveys will be repeated biannually i.e. once every two years recommencing in November 2015 until June 2021. This represents the end of the current Local Plan period and the end of the contractual obligation to monitor the impact of housing growth on protected European Sites. This work will provide a small income stream for Colchester Borough Council between 2015 and 2021, assuming Tendring and Braintree Council's wish to continue the previous arrangements.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 Colchester Borough Council's Strategic Plan Action Plan includes a commitment to regenerate the Borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure, be the cleanest and greenest, providing good quality green spaces and improving our local environment. The Habitats Regulations Assessment work will help contribute towards the Council meeting these objectives.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 A draft of the Habitats Regulation Assessment report was issued to Natural England, Tendring and Braintree District Councils for comment prior to the completion of the report.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 None

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 The 3 year baseline monitoring work carried out to date generated a total of £16,014 income. The future work (2015 onwards) may provide a small income stream to Colchester Borough Council however it is not possible to indicate how much this will be at this point in time.

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Development Framework and is available to view on the Colchester Borough Council website by following this pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Strategic Policy and Regeneration > Development Plan.
- 10.2 There are no particular Human Rights implications.

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 None

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 None

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 The completion of the Habitats Regulations Assessment Monitoring programme over time will enable Colchester Borough Council, Tendring District Council and Braintree District Council to meet their obligations to monitoring the impact of growth proposals in their respective Local Plans on the integrity of European Sites in their areas. This will enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place where it increases in visitor numbers at the designated sites associated with growth is found to be having an adverse impact of the European sites.

14. Disclaimer

- 14.1 The information in this report was, as far as is known, correct at the date of publication. Colchester Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any error or omission.

15. Background Documents

- 15.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment Monitoring 3 year report.



**Habitat Regulations Assessment
Survey and Monitoring Programme
Spring 2013**



December 2013

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1. Key Findings

- Across all sites visitor numbers have remained fairly constant.
- The number of visitors at Abberton Reservoir has increased steadily between November 2010 and June 2103. This is likely to be because of the opening of the new visitor centre and expansion of the reservoir.
- Weather affects the number of visitors.
- Over 75% of visitors visit the sites surveyed throughout the year.
- For most of the sites there is generally little difference between the number of visitors during winter and spring.
- Generally there was little difference between visitor numbers during the week and at the weekend with the exception of Stour Estuary.
- There were larger groups sizes at Cudmore Grove and Walton-on-the-Naze.
- Some groups travel in excess of 30 miles to visit at Cudmore Grove and Walton-on-the-Naze.
- The most common purpose of visiting was to walk and dog walk.
- Close to home was the most popular reason for visiting a site.
- The presence of a rare bird significantly increased visitors.
- Old Hall Marshes and Kirby Quay are very quiet sites, predominantly visited by local people walking their dogs.
- Almost a third of total visitors surveyed said that they do not visit alternative sites regularly.
- In terms of alternative sites visited people generally visit sites close to home.
- 10% of total visitors surveyed said that they do not have good access to open space close to home.

2. Introduction

In accordance with the Habitat Regulations 2004 (as amended) Colchester Borough Council, Tendring District Council and Braintree District Council (hereafter the local authorities) have all carried out Appropriate Assessments of their spatial plans. The key purpose of an Appropriate Assessment is to ascertain whether a plan or program will have an adverse affect on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site.

Natura 2000 sites are Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). SPAs are sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC), more commonly known as the Birds Directive. They are classified for rare and vulnerable birds, listed in Annex I to the Birds Directive, and for regularly occurring migratory species. SACs are classified in accordance with EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). Article 3 of this Directive requires the establishment of a European wide network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitat types and 788 species identified in Annexes I and II of the Directive. Ramsar Sites are designated under the International Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention, Iran 1971 and amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although Ramsar Sites are not protected in law by the Birds and Habitats Directives as a matter of policy government has decreed that unless otherwise specified procedures relating to SPAs and SACs will also apply to Ramsar Sites.

The Appropriate Assessments of the local authorities' spatial plans all identified recreational disturbance, as a result of a growing population, as a potential impact on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites. Recreational users can damage habitat and cause severe disturbance to wildlife, particularly nesting birds in spring and feeding and roosting waterfowl in winter. Recreational disturbance can be broken down into direct and indirect impacts.

Direct, physical disturbance relates to actual damage or degradation of habitat from direct human activities. Examples in the context of the local authorities appropriate assessments relates to damage to habitat from walking (trampling of vegetation etc) and the abrasion of intertidal or freshwater habitat from boat use/anchoring etc. Indirect effects to habitats typically occur through visual or acoustic disturbance to fauna from actual human presence. The most obvious example of this in the case of the international sites in Colchester and Tendring is the impact of recreational walking or dog walking both in and around Natura 2000 sites.

In order for the local authorities to be able to conclude no adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites an agreement was reached with Natural England to undertake a programme of survey and monitoring of visitors at the Natura 2000 sites within Colchester Borough and Tendring District. Colchester Borough Council was contracted to survey and monitor visitors on behalf of all the local authorities throughout the lifetime of the spatial plans.

Whilst there are no Natura 2000 sites in Braintree it is still possible that as a result of growth and an increase in population in the district, people will visit Natura 2000

sites in neighbouring boroughs and districts. It was therefore necessary to include Braintree District in the survey and this is acknowledged in Braintree's adopted Core Strategy.

Colchester Borough Council's then Local Development Framework Committee (now the Local Plan Committee) requested that boat number should be recorded as part of the surveys. For each site the number of boats observed was recorded every hour. This is a crude measurement as some of the boats may have been visible for several hours and so may have been double counted. However, this data does give an approximate measure of the number of boats and will be used to show if there are significant increases or decreases in pressures from recreational boating over time as part of the visitor monitoring programme.

This is the year three final report, which marks the end of the three year baseline data collection period. A report was completed earlier this year summarising the results of the winter 2012 survey. In total there are six reports including this one, which together set the baseline for the Habitat Regulations Assessment survey and monitoring programme. These reports should be read together to gain a true understanding of the survey baseline. However, notwithstanding this, this final report attempts to provide a summary of the findings from the baseline period for each site and also overall conclusions.

This report begins by setting out the aim and objectives of the monitoring programme and outlines the methodology (sections 2 and 3). Section 4 summarises the current condition of each area surveyed and includes an analysis of the results of the spring 2013 visitor survey. Section 5 provides a summary of findings for each site over the 3 year period. Section 6 outlines any relevant observations relevant to each of the local authorities and looks at the housing completions of each of the local authorities. Section 7 is the conclusion. This is the baseline and clearly as the monitoring programme progresses more information will be available and trends will begin to be established. Agreement has been reached between Natural England, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring and Braintree District Councils to continue the visitor monitoring surveys every two years. The surveying will re-start again in November 2015.

3. Aim and objectives

The aim of this monitoring programme is to investigate whether housing growth in Colchester, Tendring and Braintree will result in increased recreational disturbance to Natura 2000 sites and/or deterioration in site condition.

The objectives are:

1. Establish baseline data on visitors to Natura 2000 sites in Colchester Borough and Tendring District.
2. Investigate visitor trends to Natura 2000 sites in Colchester Borough and Tendring District.
3. Identify whether there is a link between site condition and housing completions.
4. Identify management measures needed to mitigate and manage the impacts of increased visitor numbers.

This final phase of the 3 year baseline period fulfils the first objective. Objectives 2 and 3 will be addressed as the monitoring programme progresses.

4. Methodology

The overwintering and breeding periods are the most sensitive times of year for the Natura 2000 sites within Colchester Borough and Tendring District. It was therefore agreed with Natural England that visitors should be monitored at these times of year. As this is a visitor survey it was decided to monitor visitors in November and June. This strikes a balance between the most sensitive times of year and more popular visiting times.

To establish a good baseline for the first three years of the monitoring programme visitors have been monitored every November and June. The local authorities and Natural England have agreed that from now on survey work will take place bi-annually. The next survey will therefore take place in November 2015.

The following Natura 2000 sites were identified in the local authorities Appropriate Assessments and monitoring will look at each of these sites:

- Abberton Reservoir
- Blackwater Estuary
- Colne Estuary
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary.

Clearly these are incredibly large sites and it was not possible to monitor visitors to every single part of the sites. Therefore, with the exception of Abberton Reservoir which is a more contained site, surveys took place at two different locations within the sites. Survey sites were selected based on their proximity to key centres of population, extent of the public footpaths network and the availability of car parking. In several cases survey work took place within nature reserves and country parks. However, it is important to note that this monitoring is not attempting to look specifically at visitors to these nature reserves and country parks. It seeks to understand why people visit the Natura 2000 sites and if/how this changes over the lifetime of the local authorities spatial plans. Owing to limited resources the survey work can only ever be a snapshot of visitors.

To ensure that weekday and weekend disturbance was monitored, survey work took place throughout the week. Whilst days were randomly chosen the decision was taken to avoid bad weather days (i.e. heavy rain, very cold temperatures) in order to maximise the response rate. Only the most popular sites were surveyed at the weekend. All half day surveys were carried out between 10am and 2pm to ensure consistency across all sites. The spring 2013 surveys were carried out by six spatial policy officers from Colchester Borough Council. Two of the surveyors were new to the process and this may have introduced an element of inconsistency in terms of how interviews were conducted and the amount of data collected.

Opportunistic/convenience sampling was used, which is a type of non-probability sampling. The sample population was selected on the basis of availability and

convenience. The surveyors walked along public footpaths within the Natura 2000 sites and approached all visitors where possible. It was not possible to interview all groups as some groups were spotted some distance from the surveyor; details of these people were however recorded. On some occasions a group was spotted whilst the surveyor was already interviewing another group and in these instances brief details of the group was recorded. The main difficulty with this type of sampling is that generalisations about the total population cannot be made as it is not representative enough. However, this difficulty will be overcome over the course of the monitoring programme as samples will be taken over several years and at different times of the year.

It is important to note that some of the questions asked were multi-choice and so total answers may not have corresponded to the total number of groups. For example, many of the groups interviewed gave multiple reasons about the purpose of their visit and reasons for visiting a particular site.

In order to determine the degree to which disturbance affected site integrity Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) condition assessment data from Natural England was monitored and used in the studies. It is important to recognise that SSSI site condition [as measured under Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) common standards monitoring methodology] does not equate to site integrity as determined by the Habitats Regulations as condition monitoring is more of a snapshot of the status of the site. Thus, a threat to a site which is not currently manifest in the site's condition could constitute an adverse effect on site integrity, but may not result in a determination of unfavourable condition. Nevertheless, SSSI condition assessment data was of value in the current context and was monitored as part of this programme. Information on SSSI condition has been taken from Nature on the Map and Natural England updates this condition survey every 3-5 years. In the future Wetland Bird Survey data from the British Trust for Ornithology will also be reviewed for each of the sites to help ascertain where localised recreation is an issue.

All survey responses were analysed on SNAP, Colchester Borough Council's electronic survey system.

5. Natura 2000 Sites

Abberton Reservoir

Abberton Reservoir is a large, shallow, freshwater storage reservoir approximately 6 miles south-west of Colchester. It is built in a long, shallow valley and is the largest freshwater body in Essex. It is one of the most important reservoirs in Britain for wintering wildfowl, with a key role as a roost for wildfowl and waders feeding in adjacent estuarine areas. The site is also important for winter feeding and autumn moulting of waterbirds. The margins of parts of the reservoir have well-developed plant communities that provide important opportunities for feeding, nesting and shelter. Abberton Reservoir is important especially as an autumn arrival area for waterbirds that subsequently spend the winter elsewhere. Table 1 below summarises information about the Reservoir.

Site Name	Abberton Reservoir
Designation	Special Protection Area & Ramsar Site
Qualification	The site qualifies as an SPA under Article 4.1 and 4.2 of the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European species of importance listed on Annex 1 of the Directive and of regularly occurring migratory species and under Article 4.2 of the Birds Directive by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl. The site qualifies as a Ramsar Site under criterion 6 of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat.
Date designated	December 1991 (SPA) and July 1981 (Ramsar)
Area	726.2 hectares
General Site Cover	90% Inland water bodies 10% Improved grassland
Soil and geology	Clay, neutral
Geomorphology & landscape	Lowland, valley
Sensitivity	Abberton Reservoir is a public water supply reservoir. Reduced water availability, and increased demand, in recent years has led to generally low water levels; greater numbers of waders therefore use the site, and as a result no decrease in wildfowl has been attributed to low water levels. Water entering the site has elevated nitrate levels, leading in most summers to algal blooms, but there is no evidence of impacts on wildlife. The Water Company has a consultative committee which addresses conservation issues at all its sites, and the Abberton Reservoir Committee (involving Essex Wildlife Trust and Natural England) addresses local issues.

Table 1. Information about Abberton Reservoir SPA.

This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

Over winter;

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, 3,714 individuals representing at least 1.5% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

During the breeding season;

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, 490 pairs representing at least 1.2% of the breeding Northwestern Europe population (5 year mean, 1993-1997)

Over winter:

Gadwall *Anas strepera*, 518 individuals representing at least 1.7% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, 654 individuals representing at least 1.6% of the wintering Northwestern/Central Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Teal *Anas crecca*, 5,326 individuals representing at least 1.3% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population

Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance.

The area qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl.

Over winter, the area regularly supports 39,155 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Coot *Fulica atra*, Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*, Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Pintail *Anas acuta*, Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, Teal *Anas crecca*, Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*.¹

There is an Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) Visitor Centre at Abberton Reservoir that is accessible from the B1026. There is no public access around the reservoir itself however there are a number of permissive routes around the reserve leading to bird hides which provide excellent wildlife and bird watching opportunities.

Planning permission was granted to extend Abberton Reservoir in 2009 and works were completed in spring 2012. The work includes a new Essex Wildlife Trust Visitor Centre along with new permissive Rights of Way and a range of habitat enhancement projects.

While the improvements to facilities have the potential to increase recreational opportunities and visitor numbers at Abberton Reservoir, the Visitor Centre manager felt that it would take a few months for visitor numbers to settle down at Abberton. It will therefore be important to continue to monitor changes in visitor numbers at Abberton in future years.

The site is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site principally for the internationally important populations of regularly occurring Annex 1 and migratory bird species. There are three SSSI units at Abberton Reservoir. The condition of the SSSI units within the survey area is

¹ JNCC (2001) Abberton Reservoir SPA description. <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2013>

summarised in Table 2 below. The latest SSSI condition survey has indicated that none of the units are currently adversely affected by recreational disturbance.

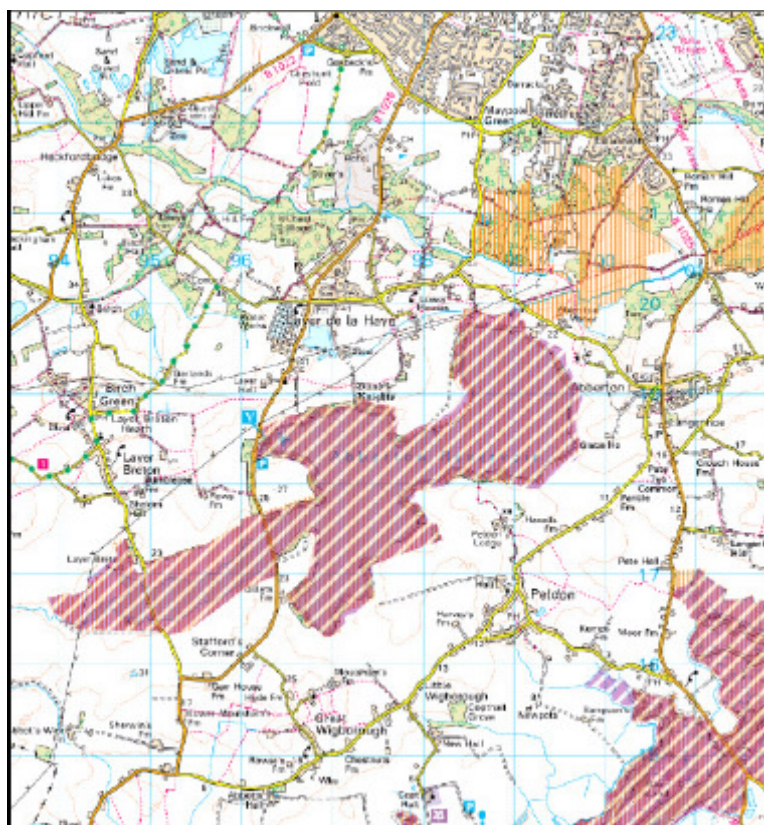


Figure 1a. Abberton Reservoir SPA

SSSI Unit	Condition	Summary	Last Assessment date
1	Favourable	-	18 August 2010
2	Favourable	-	18 August 2010
3 *	Favourable	-	18 August 2010

Table 2. Condition of SSSI units at Abberton Reservoir

Surveys were carried out at Abberton Reservoir during the 2013 summer period over 2 ½ days, mid week on Saturday 1 June and on Friday 14 June. On both survey days the weather was mild and dry.

During the June survey period, a total of 35 groups were surveyed which is fairly consistent with the June 2011 survey results when 34 groups were surveyed. In total 53 people were recorded at Abberton in June 2013. This is much lower than the 74 people recorded at the site in June 2012.

There was a slight difference in the numbers of groups visiting at the weekend and during the week; 20 groups were interviewed at the weekend while 15 were interviewed during the week. The majority of groups comprised mainly 1 or 2 people however there were 5 larger groups comprising 5 or more people recorded at Abberton in June 2013. 1 of these groups visit Abberton regularly every Saturday.

None of the groups interviewed at Abberton had dogs with them. This is not surprising given that dogs are generally not permitted on Essex Wildlife Trust sites. There is a small area allocated for dog walking towards the entrance of Abberton but dogs are not permitted on the actual reserve.

Consistent with the previous years survey results, the majority of groups, 33 groups arrived by car while 2 groups had cycled to the site. Public transport to Abberton is limited therefore the high number of groups arriving by car is not surprising.

Abberton Reservoir attracted visitors from a range of locations, both local and from further afield in 2013. Figure 2 below shows that 23 out of the 35 groups surveyed during the summer of 2013, had travelled 10 miles or less to visit Abberton. A further 5 groups had travelled between 11-15 miles while 2 groups had travelled between 16-20 miles and 4 groups had travelled 30 miles or more to visit the reserve. This is consistent with the findings from previous years summer surveys.

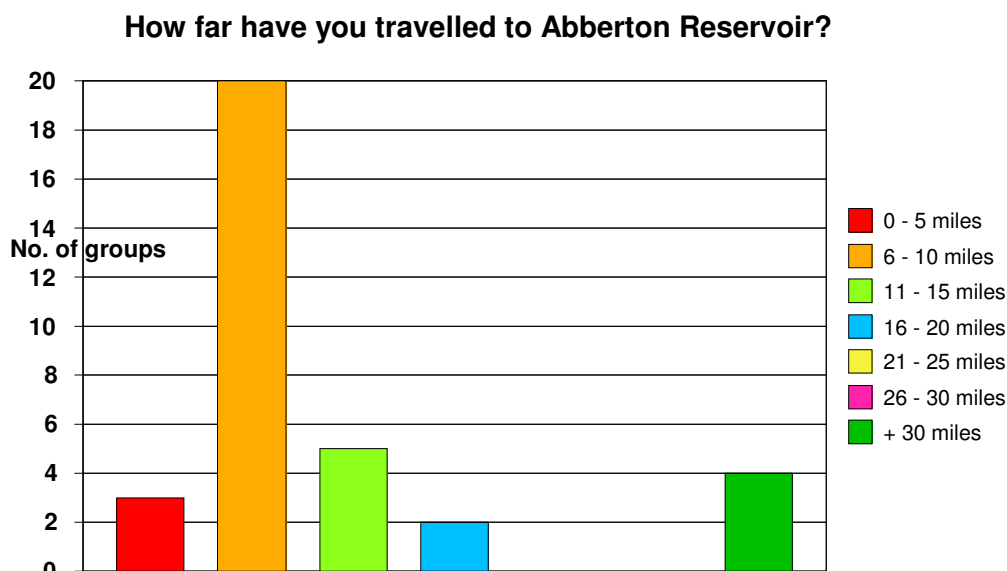


Figure 2. showing that 65% of the groups surveyed at Abberton during June 2013 were fairly local travelling 10 miles or less to Abberton.

Figure 3 below shows the home town of visitors surveyed at Abberton during June 2013 of the monitoring project. Out of the 35 groups surveyed in June 2013, 33 gave their home towns. By far the greatest number of those interviewed were from Colchester. 18 of the groups lived in the Borough with 13 of these giving Colchester town as their home town. The other 5 groups lived in Wivenhoe, Layer de La Haye, West Bergholt and Great Tey. 5 groups lived in Braintree District in the towns of Braintree and Halstead and Great Braxted village. 6 groups lived in Maldon District in Maldon town, Great Totham, Maylandsea, Little Totham, Tollesbury and Salcott. The remaining 4 groups lived further afield in Rayleigh in South Essex, Rochester in Kent, Cambridge and Suffolk.

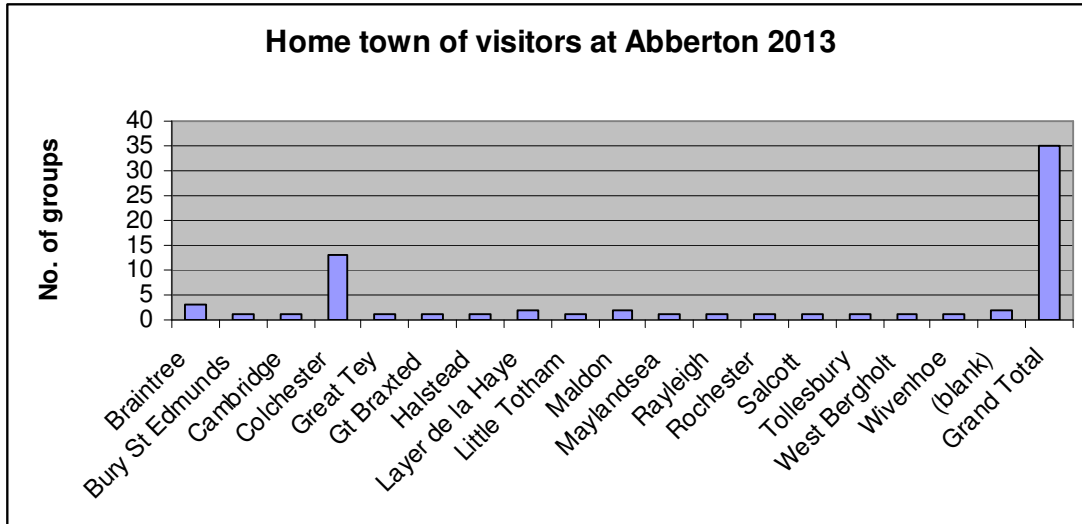


Figure 3. showing that Abberton is well used by local residents. Just over 51% of those surveyed in June 2013 lived in Colchester Borough.

People visited Abberton Reservoir during June 2013 for a variety of reasons. 21 of the groups were visiting Abberton to birdwatch while 3 were there to walk and 1 group was visiting to get some exercise as shown in Figure 4 below.

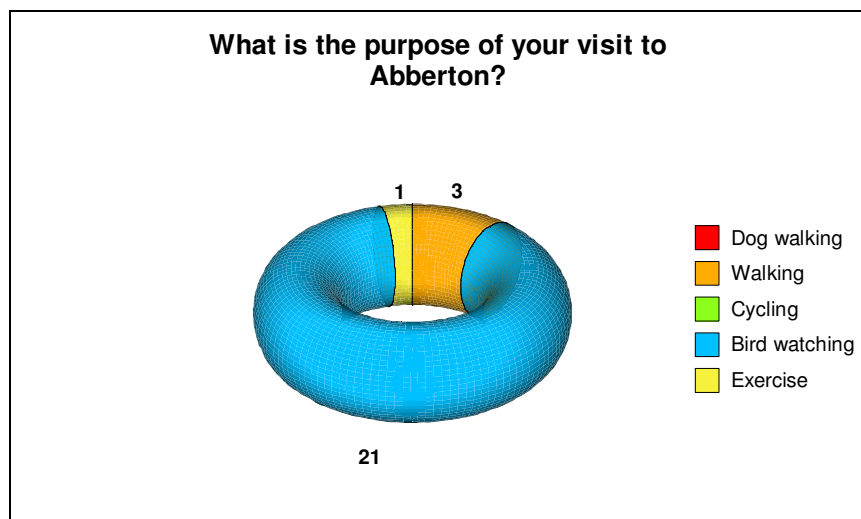


Figure 4. showing that Abberton not surprisingly mainly attracted visitors to watch birds.

As shown in Figure 5 during the June 2013 survey period, the most popular reasons given for visiting Abberton was because it was close to where people lived, and because they liked it. 18 groups cited proximity to where they lived as their main reason for visiting Abberton while 8 groups cited the fact that they liked the reserve. These findings also reflect the 2 keys reasons why people had chosen to visit Abberton in June 2012.

In the summer 2012 survey period many of the groups were also visiting to see the new visitor centre. 18 out of 27 respondents interviewed during this survey period said they were visiting Abberton for this reason.

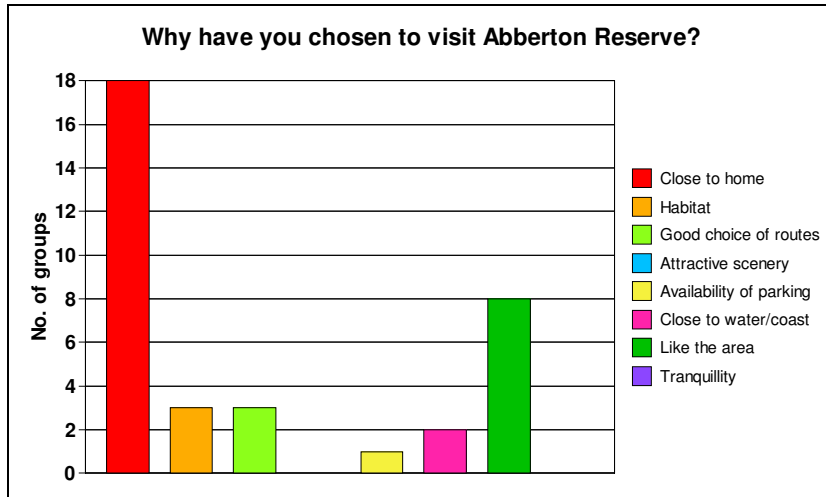


Figure 5. In June 2013, visitors were mainly attracted to Abberton because it was close to where people lived and because people liked the area.

The groups surveyed in June 2013 gave a real mixture of responses about the frequency of their visits to Abberton as shown in figure 6 below. In this period 14 of the groups surveyed were first time visitors to the reservoir. Of the other groups, 7 visited 2-3 times a month, 4 visited once a week, 4 visited less than once a month, 3 groups visited 2-6 times a year and 3 groups visited monthly. As with the other survey periods no one visited Abberton on a daily basis. This is not surprising considering it is a nature reserve with relatively poor public access.

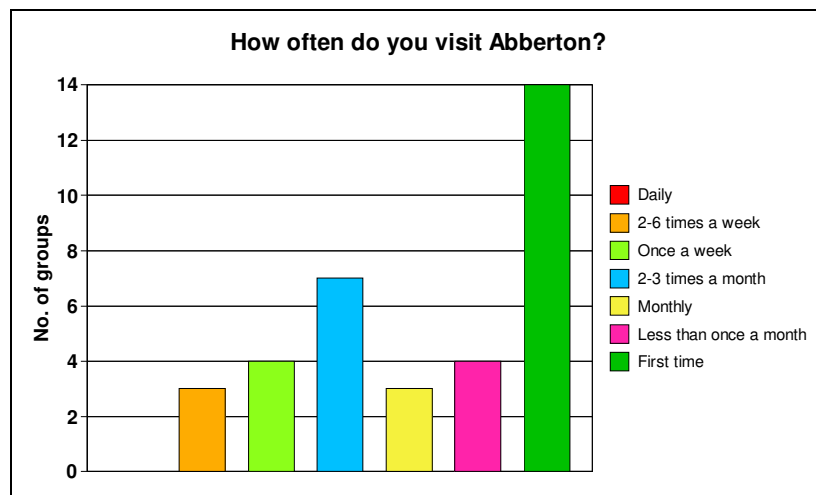


Figure 6. Shows that in terms of frequency of visits during the summer 2013 survey period, 26% of the groups surveyed were first time visitors to Abberton. From 2012 onwards many people were attracted by the new visitor centre.

19 of the groups surveyed during June 2013 visited Abberton Reservoir throughout the year. 16 groups said that they mainly visited in the summer and this included all the first time visitors. 1 group said that they mainly visit in the spring. Given Abberton Reservoir's importance for birds it is not surprising that the site attracts visitors throughout the year. The enlarged reservoir and the new habitats surrounding Abberton are likely to attract more birds and even more visitors in the future. It will

be interesting to see how visitor numbers changed when the surveys are repeated in the future.

Of the 31 responses received, 83% of the groups interviewed at Abberton Reservoir in June 2013 said that they visited alternative sites regularly. Respondents could select more than one alternative site.

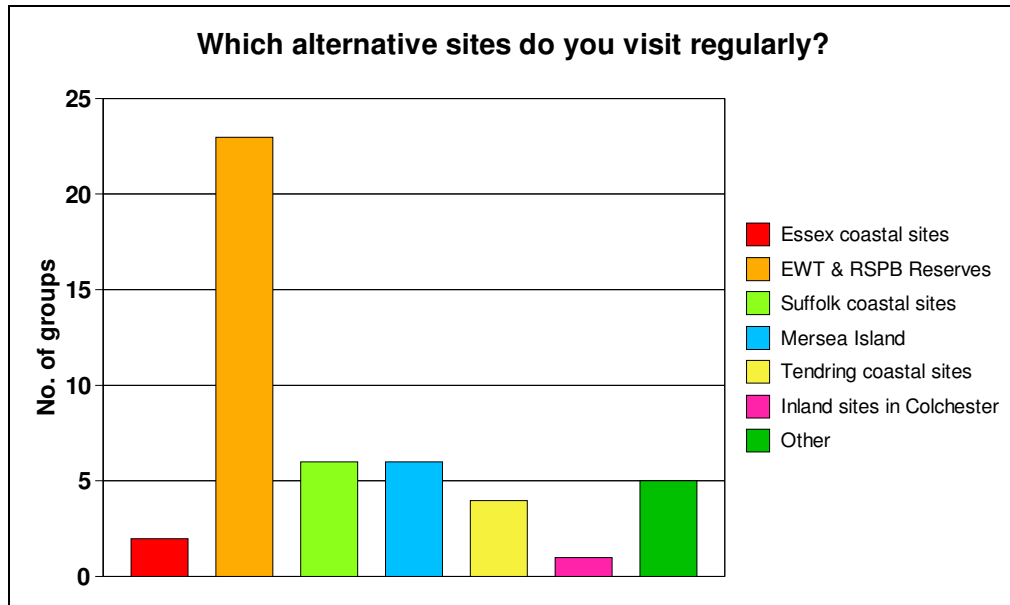


Figure 7. showing that by far the most popular alternative sites visited by groups interviewed at Abberton in June 2013 were other EWT/RSPB reserves.

As shown in figure 7 above 23 groups were regular visitors to other Wildlife Trust and RSPB reserves (Abberton, Fingringhoe, Abbots Hall, Dunwich and Minsmere. 6 groups visited Mersea Island while 6 groups also visited Suffolk coastal sites (Aldeburgh, Southwold, Orford and Snape). 4 of the groups regularly visited coastal sites in Tendring (Harwich, Clacton, Walton, Wrabness, Dovercourt, Felixstowe and Beaumont Quay) while only 1 group reported that they visited inland sites in Colchester (Dedham, Wivenhoe, Friday Woods and Rowhedge). 5 groups said that they visited a range of sites regularly not listed in the survey. These included Alton Walter, Hatfield Forest, Chalkney Woods and the Discovery Centre in Braintree, Heybridge, Maldon Tollesbury and Southend. A number of visitors also visited sites in Norfolk including Cley, Hunstanton and Blakeney.

29 of the groups surveyed in June 2013, stated that they had good access to open space close to where they lived that they used regularly. 5 groups were not asked this question as they lived outside the survey area and only 1 group responded negatively to this question.

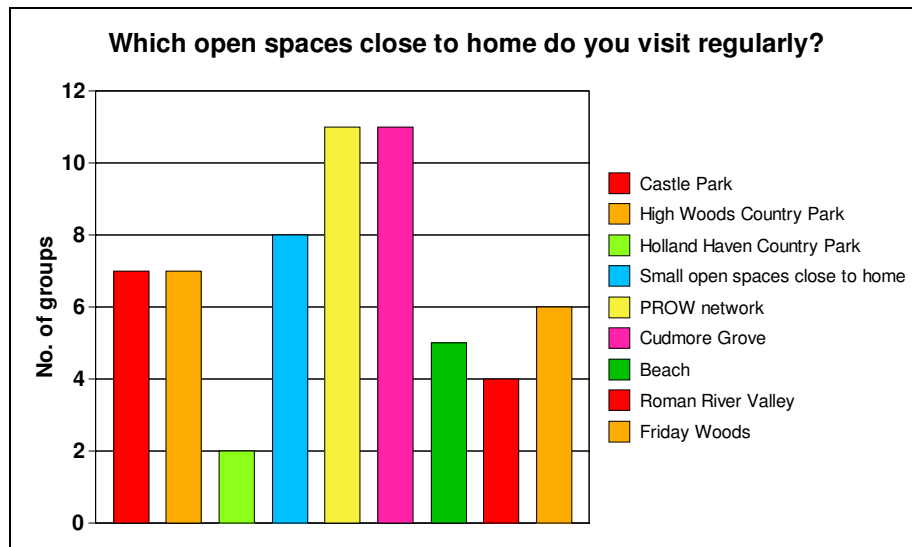


Figure 8. showing that the most popular local open spaces used by visitors surveyed at Abberton in June 2013 were public footpaths, Cudmore Grove, Castle Park and High Woods Country Park. The least regularly visited site was Holland Haven.

11 groups said that they made regular use of public footpaths close to where they lived, while 11 also said they visited Cudmore Grove on a regular basis. Small open spaces were popular with 8 groups while 7 groups said that they were regular visitors to Castle Park and Highwoods Country Park respectively. Another 6 groups regularly visit Friday Woods, 5 use local beaches and 4 visit the Roman River Valley on a regular basis. These responses reflect the fact that many of the groups interviewed at Abberton in June 2013 were local to Colchester Borough. The least regularly used site for visitors at Abberton was Holland Haven in Tendring. Only 2 groups ticked this site which is not surprising given it is the furthest away from Colchester.

Blackwater Estuary

The Blackwater Estuary is the largest estuary in Essex and is one of the largest estuarine complexes in East Anglia. Its mud-flats are fringed by saltmarsh on the upper shores, with shingle, shell banks and offshore islands a feature of the tidal flats. The surrounding terrestrial habitats; the sea wall, ancient grazing marsh and its associated fleet and ditch systems, plus semi-improved grassland, are of high conservation interest. The diversity of estuarine habitats results in the sites being of importance for a wide range of overwintering waterbirds, including raptors, geese, ducks and waders. The site is also important in summer for breeding terns. The table below includes details of the Blackwater Estuary SPA notification. Water based recreation and in particular jet skis are identified as one of the site's sensitivities.

Site Name	Blackwater Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4)
Designation	Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site
Qualification	The site qualifies as an SPA under Article 4.1 and 4.2 of the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European species of importance listed on Annex 1 of the Directive and of regularly occurring migratory species and under Article 4.2 of the Birds Directive by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl. The site qualifies as a Ramsar Site under criteria 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat.
Date designated	May 1995
Area	4395.15 hectares
General Site Cover	50% Tidal rivers. Estuaries. Mud flats. Sand flats. Lagoons (including saltwork basins) 33% Salt marshes. Salt pastures. Salt steppes 5% Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens 12% Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland
Soil and geology	Clay, Mud, Neutral, Nutrient-rich, Sedimentary, Shingle
Geomorphology & landscape	Coastal, Estuary, Intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), Islands, Lowland, Shingle bar, Subtidal sediments (including sandbank/mudbank)
Sensitivity	<p>Coastal erosion The main threat to the site is erosion of intertidal habitats due to a combination of sea level rise and isostatic forces operating on the land mass of Great Britain. The situation is worsened with increasing winter storm events, whilst the hard sea walls along this coastline are preventing the saltmarsh and intertidal areas from migrating inland. This situation is starting to be addressed by alternative flood defence techniques. A shoreline management plan has been prepared for the Essex coast which seeks to provide a blueprint for managing the coastline sustainably and a new SMP is currently being prepared.</p> <p>Nutrient enrichment Nutrient enrichment occurs from agricultural run-off and treated sewage effluent. This problem will be addressed through the Essex Estuaries SAC scheme of management as well as review of discharge consents under the Habitats Regulations.</p> <p>Water-based recreation The control of motorised craft (with particular reference to jet-skis) is being addressed through the Blackwater Estuary Management Plan. Enforcement of speed limits should ensure that roosting birds are not subjected to disturbance and saltmarsh habitats are protected from damage by jet-skis.</p> <p>Drought The droughts over the last five years have resulted in lowered water tables in grazing marshes. Attempts are being made to restore this by pumping water from adjacent ditches and use of tertiary treated sewage effluent.</p>

Table 3. Information about the Blackwater Estuary SPA notification.

This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

During the breeding season:

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, 36 pairs representing at least 1.5% of the breeding population in Great Britain (Count as at 1997)

Over winter:

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, 76 individuals representing at least 6.0% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, 7,247 individuals representing at least 2.9% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, 4 individuals representing up to 0.5% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year mean, 1993/94-94/95, 1996/7-98/99)

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, 51 individuals representing up to 7.3% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

On passage:

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, 955 individuals representing up to 1.9% of the Europe/Northern Africa - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Over winter:

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, 1,280 individuals representing up to 1.8% of the wintering Iceland - breeding population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, 15,392 individuals representing up to 5.1% of the wintering Western Siberia/Western Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, 33,267 individuals representing up to 2.4% of the wintering Northern Siberia/Europe/Western Africa population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, 5,090 individuals representing up to 3.4% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Redshank *Tringa totanus*, 4,015 individuals representing up to 2.7% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, 600 individuals representing up to 1.2% of the wintering Europe/Northern Africa - wintering population (WeBS/Peter Clement)

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, 4,594 individuals representing up to 1.5% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance.

The area qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl

Over winter, the area regularly supports 109,815 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Teal *Anas crecca*, Pintail *Anas acuta*, Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*.²

Old Hall Marshes

Old Hall Marshes is located in Maldon District, close to the village of Salcott, which is in Colchester. Mersea Island is located to the north, across Salcott Channel. Figure 9 below shows the location of Old Hall Marshes.

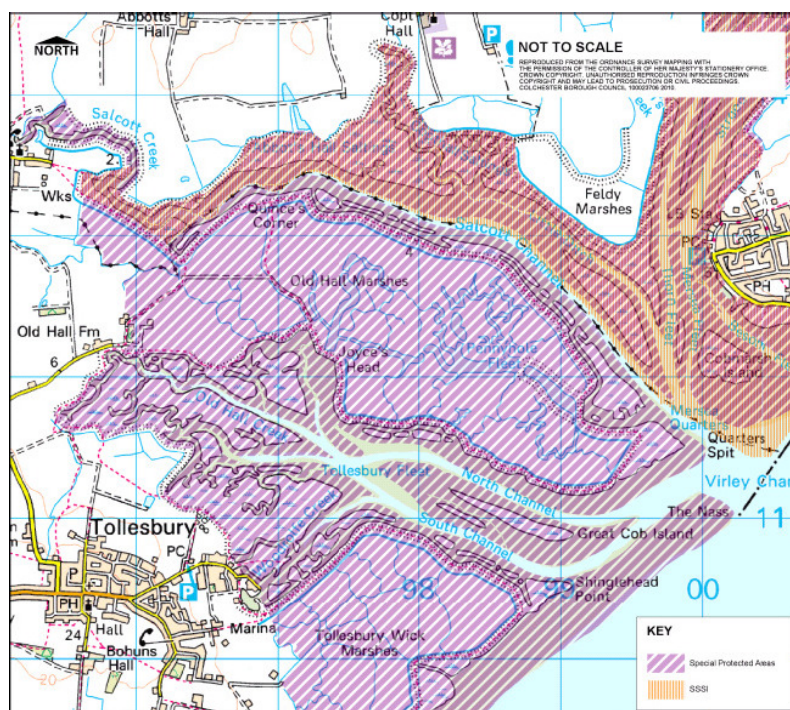


Figure 9. Map of Old Hall Marshes showing the extent of the Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest notifications.

² JNCC (2001) Blackwater Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4) SPA description. <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2020>

Old Hall Marshes Reserve is owned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The reserve is accessed via a small car park off Old Hall Lane, near Salcott. Within the site there is a short walk and a long walk (10.5km). Both walks follow public footpaths and the long walk follows the sea wall. As advised by the warden, Old Hall Reserve site does not normally receive many visitors and this has been reflected in the project findings.

The condition of the SSSI units within the survey area are summarised in Table 4 below. None of the units are currently adversely affected by recreational disturbance.

SSSI Unit	Condition	Summary	Last Assessment Date
10*	Unfavourable recovering	The saltmarsh within Abbot's Hall Saltings has generally remained stable between 2000 and 2008 with some accretion within the saltmarsh body of creek channels. Of the 41.24ha of saltmarsh mapped in 2000, a total of 1.82ha was lost to erosion, but 2.45ha gained elsewhere through natural accretion resulting in a net gain of +0.63ha by 2008. Sufficient habitat re-creation has commenced within the estuary complex for this unit to be assessed as 'recovering' up until Dec 2010.	31 Mar 2010
12	Unfavourable recovering	Of the 31.3469 ha of saltmarsh present in 1997/2000, 1.0542 ha were lost to erosion, with 0.5990 ha gained through accretion resulting in a net LOSS of 0.454 ha. Sufficient habitat re-creation has commenced within the estuary complex for this unit to be assessed as 21 Oct 2010 'recovering' up until Dec 2010. Beyond Dec 2010 further additional habitat recreation will need to be delivered through Shoreline Management Plans and/or regional coastal habitat recreation programmes for this unit to remain in 'recovering' status.	21 Oct 2010
14*	Favourable	Fields managed as wildfowl pasture. High water table with standing water in places. Even sward - approx height 5-6 cms. Supporting up to 3000 brent geese, also wigeon, dunlin and godwit. Full report and photos on file	23 Jan 2009
16*	Favourable	Collectively creates a good mosaic of structural habitats and surfaces for brackish wetland invertebrates and breeding birds. The Fleets themselves contribute open expanses of water displaying typical brackish conditions with no signs of pollution (or significant concerns).	27 Aug 2010
18*	Unfavourable recovering	Erosion of the seaward marsh edge has occurred among all the saltmarsh areas, particularly along both banks of Old Hall Creek. Of the 79.73ha of saltmarsh present in 2000, a total 4.58ha was lost to erosion, but an additional 2.62ha was gained elsewhere through natural accretion resulting in a net loss of -1.95ha by 2008.	31 Mar 2010

Table 4. A summary of SSSI unit conditions within the survey area. The * indicates the units where the interviews took place.

3 groups, each comprising 1 person, were surveyed during this survey period. During all the survey periods the number of groups has been very low. Indeed this is the quietest of all the sites surveyed. This is also the site furthest from a settlement. 2 groups were surveyed during the November 2012 survey period. One of these had travelled from Coggeshall (Braintree district) and the other person had walked from Tollesbury. The person interviewed from Coggeshall regularly visits

Old Hall Marshes throughout the year and their main reason for visiting is usually to bird watch. The 3 visitors interviewed during the June 2013 survey period all visited for different reasons: to bird watch, cycle and walk. All visitors commented that one of their reasons for visiting was because of the habitat.

The visitors during this survey period had all travelled a fairly short distance: Salcott, Tiptree and Maldon. The visitor from Salcott had cycled to the site. Previous surveys found that the majority of visitors travelled by car. This is the only site where very few local dog walkers have been encountered. This is likely to be because of its remoteness, lack of facilities and also because it is an RSPB reserve which requires people to have a permit to visit.

One of the visitors was volunteering at the RSPB reserve. The visitor from Maldon does not visit alternative sites regularly and does not have access to open space close to home. The visitor from Tiptree said that they regularly visited Essex coastal sites and Tiptree Heath SSSI.

A few boats were recorded using Salcott Channel, Virley Channel, The Blackwater Estuary or Tollesbury Fleet during the June 2012 survey period. During previous survey periods only a few boats were observed.

Visitor pressure is very low at Old Hall Marshes Reserve; this is confirmed both by the surveys over the past three years and the observations of the site warden. Visitor numbers are not likely to increase significantly in the future to a point where disturbance levels to birds using the site becomes an issue. Even if visitor numbers do rise the RSPB has already put measures in place to help reduce or manage visitor impacts. In the more sensitive parts of the reserve i.e. around Quarters Spit, signs have been erected requesting that visitors walk at the base of the seawall to reduce disturbance to the wild birds. Visitors are guided towards a goose friendly trail around one of the fields (see photo below). Owners are requested to keep dogs on leads to minimise disturbance to livestock and wildlife. Finally access is also restricted to certain parts of the reserve, mainly the central area, through the use of a permit system.



Whilst disturbance from visitor pressure at Old Hall Marshes may be low there are also other external factors that can cause disturbance. During the November 2012

survey period a low flying MOD helicopter flew over the marshes twice and both times the large number of geese feeding on the grassland adjacent to the seawall leading to Salcott (SSSI unit 16) took flight. It is not clear how this type of disturbance could be mitigated for as a no fly policy is unlikely to be realistic or enforceable.

Three holiday cottages have recently opened along Old Hall Road, in very close proximity to the entrance to the reserve. No guests of these holiday cottages have been encountered on any of the survey days.

Strood Channel

The Strood Channel runs north-west from West Mersea towards The Strood Causeway as shown in figure 10 below.

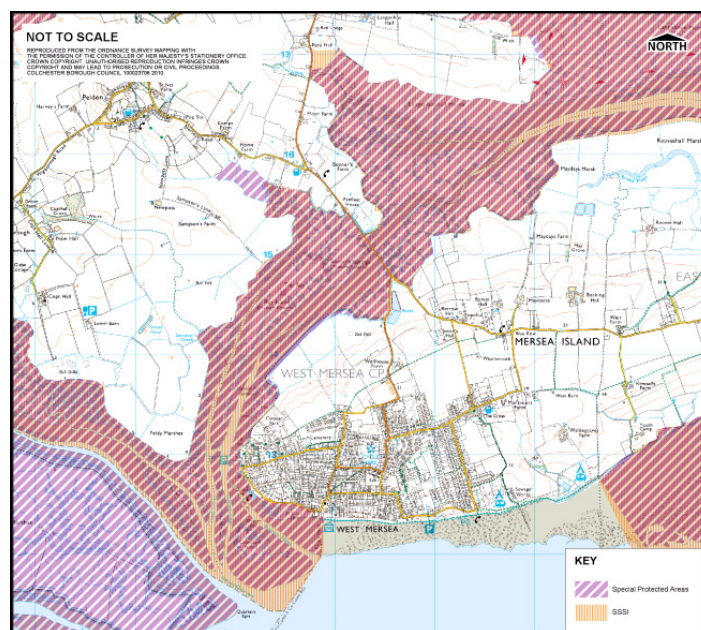


Figure 10. The Strood Channel

There is informal parking immediately off Strood Causeway and there is also a designated car park situated off Coast Road along West Mersea hard. The site is accessible by foot via public footpath (No.154) which runs along the seawall along Strood Channel.

The condition of the SSSI unit within the survey area is summarised in Table 5 below.

SSSI Unit	Condition	Summary	Last assessment date
4	Unfavourable recovering	Of the 67.7724 ha of saltmarsh present in 1997/2000, 3.5 ha were lost to erosion, with 0.2504 ha gained through accretion resulting in a net LOSS of 3.2496 ha. Sufficient habitat re-creation has commenced within the estuary complex for this unit to be assessed as 'recovering' up until Dec 2010.	14 January 2010

Table 5. A summary of SSSI unit 4 condition at The Strood where the interviews were completed.

During the summer 2013 period surveys were conducted at The Strood mid week. The weather was hot and sunny.

During the spring 2013 survey period 10 groups were surveyed, which was more than the 4 groups surveyed during the winter 2012 survey period. As with previous survey periods group sizes were very small with 7 of the groups surveyed consisting of just 1 person.

During the winter 2012 survey all of the groups were dog walkers and during other survey periods the number of dog walkers has been very high at this site. However, during the summer 2013 survey period only half of the groups were dog walking. 3 groups said that the purpose of their visit was to walk and 5 of the groups also said that the purpose of their visit was to get some exercise. Furthermore during the survey 3 people were seen jogging along the footpath but were not interviewed.

Previous surveys at this site have found that the majority of visitors to Strood Channel live within West Mersea (with the exception of the winter 2011 survey period when the presence of a rare bird caused many ornithologists to visit the site from further afield). During the spring 2013 survey 1 group had visited from Fingringhoe and 1 group from Ipswich.

Previous surveys have found that most people visit the site daily but during the spring 2013 survey only 1 group visited the site daily. 6 groups said that they visited 2-6 times a week, 1 group once a week, 1 monthly and 1 group less than once a month. This finding does tie in with the fewer than normal groups that were visiting to walk their dogs as previous surveys across all sites have tended to find that dog walkers walk their dogs daily.

Previous survey periods have found that there were a range of reasons why people visited the Strood Channel but during the spring 2013 survey only 3 reasons were given. These were close to home (6 groups), good choice of routes (7 groups) and like the area (1 group), as seen in figure 11 below. Close to home was the most popular reason for visiting during the winter 2012 survey and whilst a popular reason good choice of routes was the most popular reason for visiting during the spring 2013 survey period.

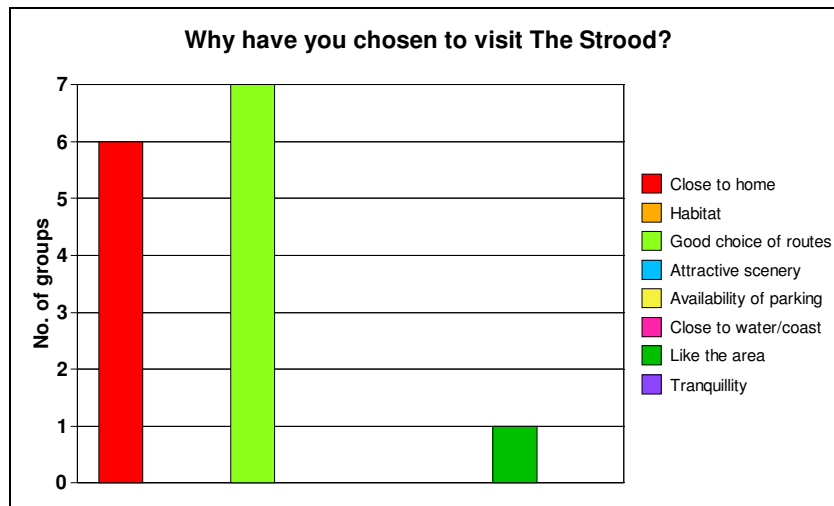


Figure 11. Reasons that people visited Strood Channel during the spring 2013 survey period.

6 of the groups said that they visited alternative sites regularly. Apart from the beach and Friday Woods all groups visited different sites regularly. These included Donyland Woods, Orwell Park, Rowhedge, Minsmere, Old Hall Marshes, Cudmore Grove, Fingringhoe, Dedham and Orford.

Only 1 group said that they did not have good access to open space close to home and this person lived in Mersea. This person acknowledged that although Mersea has the beach he felt that there was not enough freely available open space as he does not like to pay for car parking at Cudmore Grove. Other visitors said that they regularly visited the beach, Chestnut Wood and Donyland Wood. 1 of the groups did comment that they only visit the Strood Channel in the summer as it is too wet in the winter. One group commented during the winter 2012 survey that winter is quieter than summer because the footpaths get very muddy so many people tend to walk their dogs on the beach or less muddy sites in Mersea. One person commented that Colchester Borough generally has good open space provision but they are worried that open spaces are being lost to development. Another person commented that more should be done to promote Colchester's open spaces and history for residents and tourists.

No boats were seen during the summer 2013 survey period and previous survey periods have found that boat usage is low on this stretch of water. During the summer 2012 survey 2 yachts, a motor boat and a rib were recorded using the Strood Channel. Whilst the evidence collected as part of this monitoring programme would suggest that boat usage on the Strood Channel is low this may not accurately reflect true boat usage levels at other times of the year. One such example of this is the unregulated jet skiing along the Strood Channel and a jet ski was observed in the channel on another day by the surveyor whilst driving to Cudmore Grove to survey. Given that The Strood forms part of the Mid Essex Special Area of Conservation (SAC) unmanaged levels of recreational boating or the lack of speed restrictions has the capacity to cause erosion of the salt marsh and potential disturbance to birds using this site.

Colne Estuary

The catchment area of the River Colne is approximately 250 km² to the tidal limit. Being a long and narrow catchment it has few tributaries, with most contributions being from field drains or minor watercourses. The Colne Estuary is located in the southern end of Colchester's coastal area. It is a comparatively short and branching estuary, with five tidal arms that flow into the main channel of the River Colne. The estuary has a narrow intertidal zone predominantly composed of flats of fine silt with mud-flat communities typical of south-eastern English estuaries. The estuary is of importance for a range of wintering wildfowl and waders, in addition to breeding Little Tern which nest on shell, sand and shingle spits. There is a wide variety of coastal habitats which include mudflat, saltmarsh, grazing marsh, sand and shingle spits, disused gravel pits and reedbeds which provide feeding and roosting opportunities for the large numbers of waterbirds that use the site (JNCC, 2008).

Site Name	Colne Estuary (Mid Essex Coast Phase 2)
Designation	Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site
Qualification	The site qualifies as an SPA under Article 4.1 and 4.2 of the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European species of importance listed on Annex 1 of the Directive and of regularly occurring migratory species and under Article 4.2 of the Birds Directive by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl. The site qualifies as a Ramsar Site under criterion 6 of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat.
Date designated	July 1994
Area	2719.93 hectares
General Site Cover	52% Tidal rivers, estuaries, mudflats, sandflats, lagoons 25% salt marshes, salt pastures, salt steppes 15% humid grassland, mesophile grassland 5% improved grassland 2% shingle, sea cliffs islets 1% coastal sand dunes, sand beaches
Soil and geology	Alluvium, clay, gravel, mud, sand, shingle
Geomorphology & landscape	Coastal, Estuary, Intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), Islands, Lagoon, Lowland, Open coast (including bay), Shingle bar, Subtidal sediments (including sandbank/mudbank), Valley
Sensitivity	The Colne Estuary encompasses a diversity of soft coastal habitats, dependent upon natural coastal processes. The vulnerability of these habitats is linked to changes in the physical environment: the intertidal zone is threatened by coastal squeeze and changes to the sediment budget , especially up drift of the site. Limited beach feeding is under way to alleviate the sediment problem. The site is vulnerable to recreational pressures which can lead to habitat damage (saltmarsh and sand dunes) and to disturbance of feeding and roosting waterfowl. Pressures for increased use and development of recreational facilities are being addressed through the planning system and under the provisions of the Habitat Regulations. Jet and water-skiing are largely contained by the Harbour Authorities. Most grazing marshes are managed under ESA/ Countryside Stewardship Agreements, but low water levels are of great concern, and low freshwater flows into the estuary, may be affecting bird numbers and/or distribution. This is being addressed through reviews of consents under the Habitats Regulations. Unregulated samphire harvesting is being addressed by notifying all pickers of the legal implications of uprooting plants without the consent of landowners. To secure protection of the site, an Estuarine Management Plan is in preparation, which will work alongside the Essex Shoreline Management Plan and the emerging Marine Scheme of Management. The Environment Agency's Local Plan aims to reduce the nutrient enrichment arising from sewage and fertiliser run-off .

Table 6. Colne Estuary SPA information.

The site is vulnerable to recreational pressures, which can lead to habitat damage and disturbance to feeding and roosting waterfowl. This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

During the breeding season:

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, 38 pairs representing at least 1.6% of the breeding population in Great Britain (5 year mean, 1992-1996)

Over winter;

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, 75 individuals representing at least 5.9% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, 2,530 individuals representing at least 1.0% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, 4 individuals representing at least 0.5% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year mean 1994/95-1998/99)

This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

Over winter;

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, 4,907 individuals representing at least 1.6% of the wintering Western Siberia/Western Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Redshank *Tringa totanus*, 2,077 individuals representing at least 1.4% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance.

The area qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl

Over winter, the area regularly supports 38,548 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*.³

Brightlingsea Marshes

Brightlingsea Marshes and beach form part of the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation, Colne Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site, and Colne Estuary SSSI, see figure 12. Table 7 outlines the condition of the SSSI unit within which the survey took place. Recreational disturbance is not referred to in the unit summary.

³ JNCC (2001) Colne Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 2) SPA description.
<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2018>

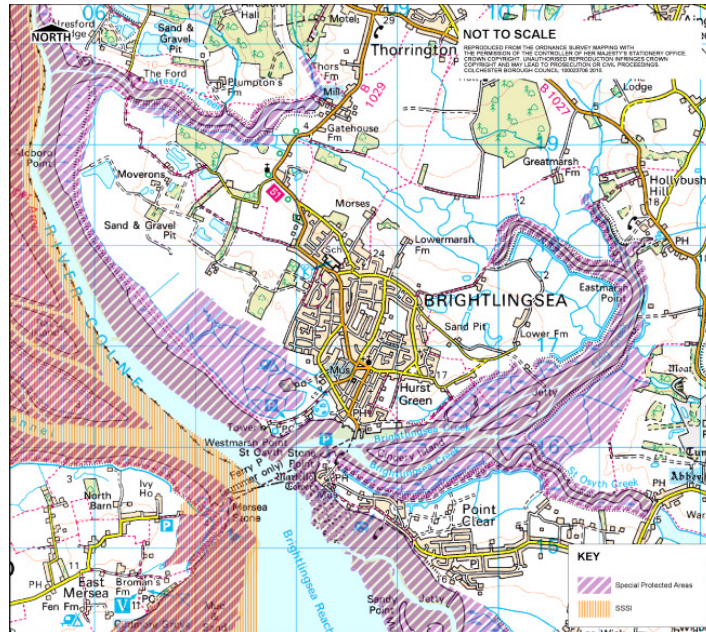


Figure 12. Map showing Brightlingsea Marshes and the Extent of the Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest notifications.

SSSI Unit	Condition	Summary	Last assessment date
23	Unfavourable recovering	The main vegetation types recorded within the Alresford and Brightlingsea saltmarsh sections of this unit concur with those mapped by the Posford survey (2003). The current survey records patches of SM6 <i>Spartina anglica</i> (common cord grass) marsh within these sections, which were not mapped previously. Comparing the field survey observations with the mapping of changes in extent of saltmarsh undertaken by the University of Newcastle in 2000, and circa. 2000 aerial photos, around 80% of the marsh area continues to be stable. Erosion was noted to be more extensive along the outer edge of the saltmarsh according to the studies quoted, with erosion also evident in many of the creeks, particularly along the eastern edge in the north section of the Alresford marsh. The current survey noted erosion of the marsh at this end with slumping of sections of marsh; erosion of the seaward edge was also noted. It is not considered currently that significant erosive changes have occurred in the marsh since the Newcastle study, notably the stable areas have not noticeably deteriorated. Though, there may still be an erosive trend within these marshes the rate of change is not currently considered to be resulting in a significant decline.	18 November 2010

Table 7. A summary of SSSI unit conditions within the survey area.

Surveys were carried out at Brightlingsea Marshes over 2 half day sessions during summer 2013. The weather varied between the survey days. The weekend survey day was cool and windy and the week day survey day was sunny and hot.

A total of 54 groups were surveyed at Brightlingsea Marshes during the June 2013 survey period. 36 of these interviews were carried out during the week and 18 were carried out at the weekend. This is less than the 76 groups surveyed during the November 2012 survey period. The week day survey day was sunny and hot, which is likely to explain the increased number of visitors than at the weekend. Some of the previous survey periods also showed a higher number of visitors during the week than at the weekend. The majority of groups were made up of 2 people and only 8 groups during the survey period were made up of 3 or more people. 18 of the groups had dogs with them.

As with previous survey periods the majority of visitors interviewed at Brightlingsea Marshes had driven. In June 2013, 42 travelled by to the site by car and 11 walked.

As shown in figure 13 below the majority of the visitors lived fairly locally to Brightlingsea Marshes. 28 groups lived within 5 miles of the site and 5 of the groups lived over 30 miles away. Previous survey periods also showed that the majority of visitors lived less than 5 miles from the site and few groups travelled over 10 miles.

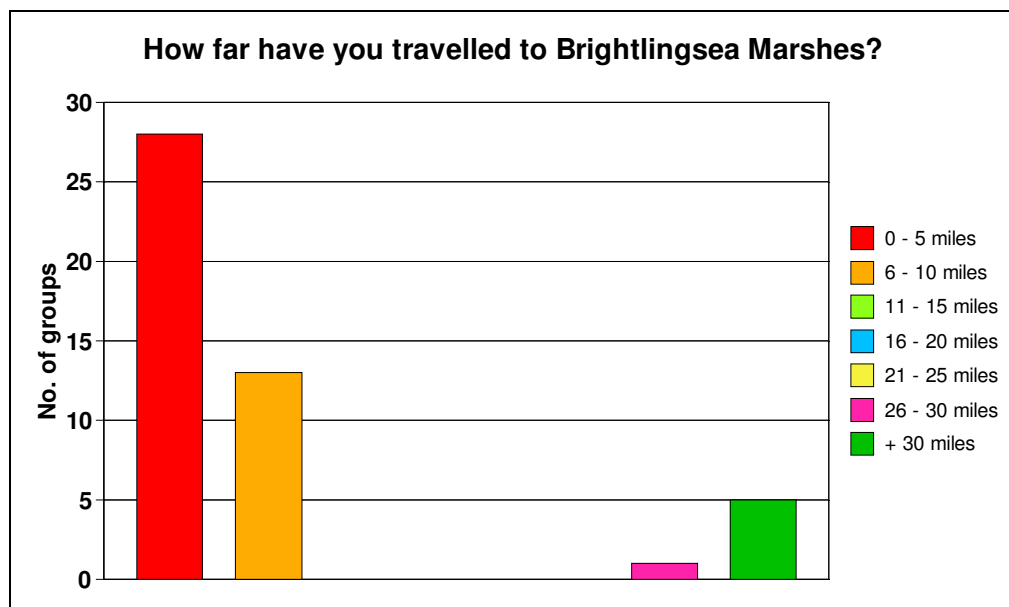


Figure 13. During the spring 2013 survey period the majority of visitors lived less than 5 miles from the site.

During the summer 2013 survey, 56% of total visitors lived in Tendring District with 38% of total visitors living in Brightlingsea. Many of the groups within Tendring District lived in villages close to Brightlingsea, including Alresford, Frating and Little Bentley. During the winter 2012 survey, 72% of groups surveyed lived in Tendring District, with most of these living in Brightlingsea.

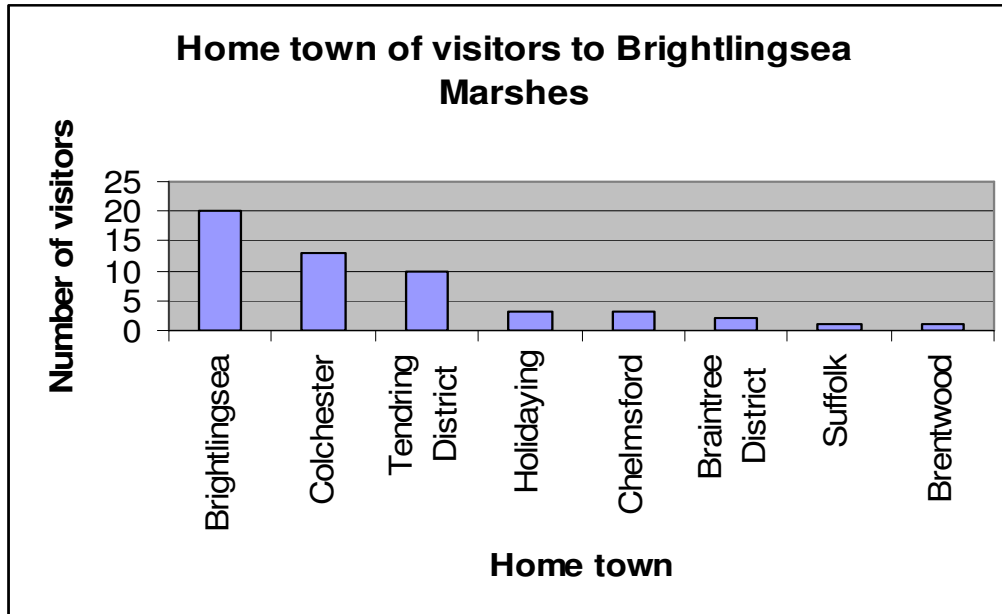


Figure 14. 38% of visitors lived in Brightlingsea and 56% lived within Tendring District during the spring 2013 survey.

The most frequent purpose for visiting was to walk (35 groups) followed by dog walking (18 groups). 2 groups visited to bird watch and 5 groups said that the purpose of their visit was to exercise. All previous survey periods have found that walking and dog walking were the most frequent activities at the site. During the winter 2012 survey the majority of visitors were at Brightlingsea to dog walk.

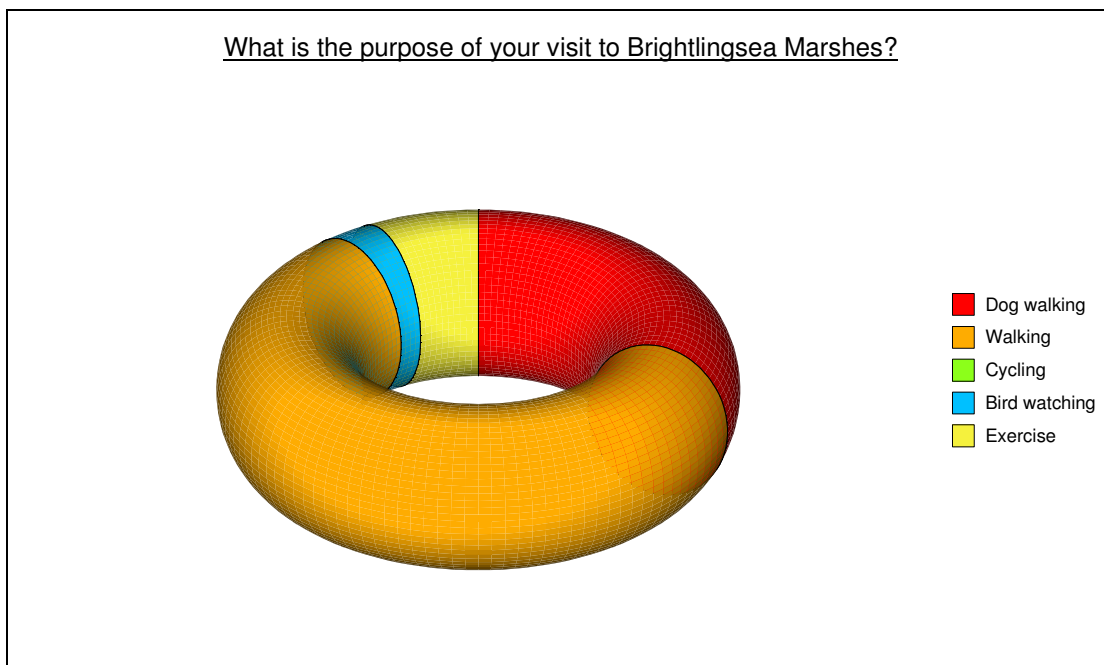


Figure 15. Purpose of visit to Brightlingsea Marshes during spring 2013. Walking was the most frequent activity followed by dog walking.

Groups have always given numerous reasons for visiting Brightlingsea Marshes, with many groups giving multiple reasons for visiting as seen in figure 16. Close to home was the most frequently given reason for visiting during the spring survey,

followed by attractive scenery. During the winter 2012 survey period these were also the most popular 2 reasons for visiting, although attractive scenery was the most popular reason. As with previous survey periods being close to the coast and because people liked the area were also popular reasons for visiting.

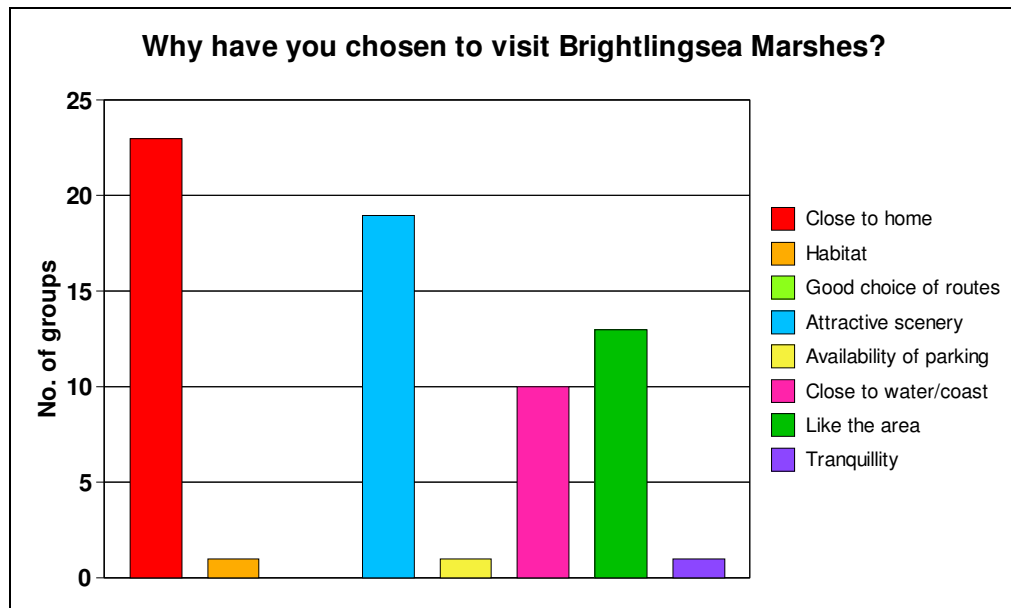


Figure 16. Reasons for visiting Brightlingsea Marshes during spring 2013.

As with previous survey periods there was a great variation between the frequency of visits, although there is variation between spring and winter. During the summer 2013 survey, the most common frequency of visiting was less than once a month. Whereas during the winter 2012 period the most common frequency of visits was daily. This can be linked to dog walking being the most popular reason for visiting in the winter as many dog walkers walk their dogs daily. The reason once a month was the most common frequency of visits during the spring 2013 survey could be due to the sunny and hot weather at the time of the week day survey.

40 groups said that they visited the site all year round and the results of the 6 survey periods have shown Brightlingsea Marshes to be as popular in winter as it is in summer. 5 of the groups said that they only visited in the summer months.

25 groups at Brightlingsea Marshes said that they visited other sites regularly and 16 said that they did not. The alternative sites people visited are highlighted in figure 17 below. Tendring coastal sites, followed by Essex coastal sites were the most popular alternative sites visited. Many visitors specifically said that they visit Frinton and Walton frequently and of those who said they visit inland sites in Colchester many of these referred to High Woods Country Park. Tendring coastal sites were the most popular alternative during the winter 2012 survey. All survey periods have shown that visitors to Brightlingsea Marshes visit a range of alternative sites.

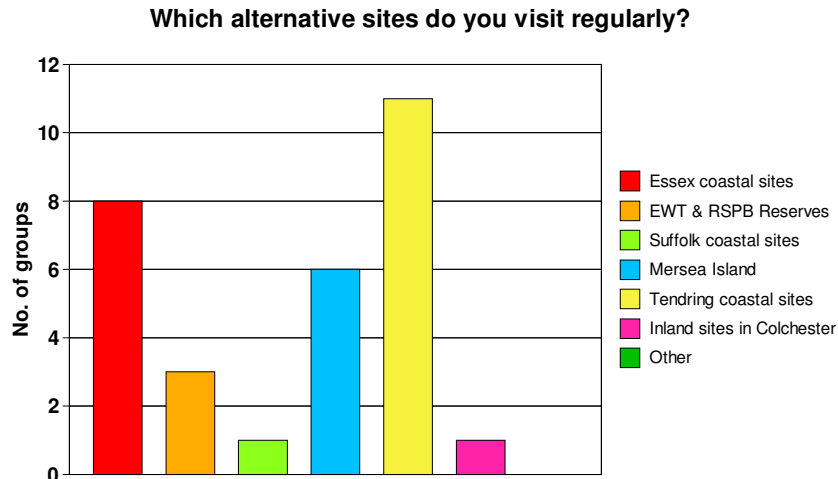


Figure 17. Alternative sites visitors to Brightlingsea Marshes during spring 2013 like to visit.

5 of the groups visiting Brightlingsea Marshes during the spring 2013 survey said that they did not have good access to open space close to where they lived. 3 of these groups lived in Colchester, 1 lived Great Bentley and 1 did not give their home town, although they lived less than 5 miles away. Only 23 groups answered the question ‘which open spaces close to home do you visit’ and 14 of these said small open spaces close to home. Many of the groups lived fewer than 5 miles from the site and so Brightlingsea Marshes is close to home for them.

During all survey periods groups at Brightlingsea Marshes identified a number of sites around Colchester and Tendring that they visited regularly. In Colchester these were Dedham, Lexden Springs, Roman Sites and Wivenhoe Woods the Wivenhoe Trail and Wivenhoe Park. In Tendring, other local sites identified included Alresford Creek, Beach Huts, Brightlingsea woods and church, Robinsons Road, Howlands Marsh, Hurst Green, Mill Street, Moverons Pits, The Lozenge, Ropewalk, Partridges, St Osyth, Strangers Corner and Wrabness.

Cudmore Grove

Cudmore Grove Country Park lies at the eastern end of Mersea Island. The Country Park which is owned and managed by Essex County Council is accessible from Broman’s Lane however it is not well served by public transport. There are pay and display parking meters in use and there are also toilets and basic refreshment facilities available at the Country Park.

Cudmore Grove Country Park itself is not a designated site however the beach/cliff area to the south, north and east forms part of the Colne Estuary SSSI. This same area is also designated as part of the much larger mid Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation and Mersea Flats immediately north east of the site is a National Nature Reserve.

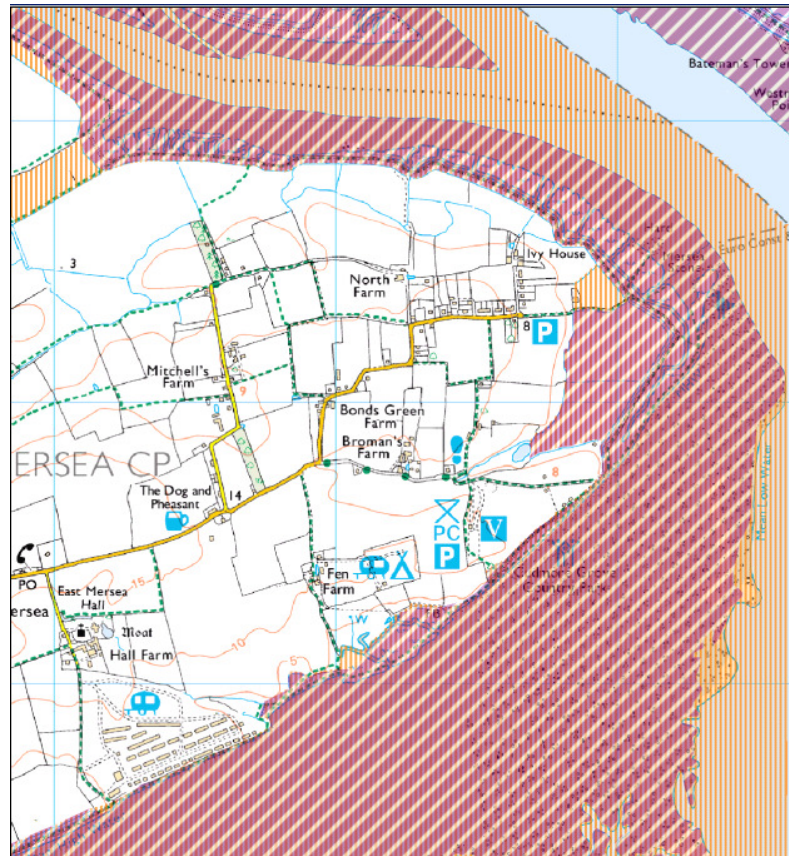


Figure 18. Cudmore Grove Country Park and surrounding designated sites.

The condition of the SSSI units within the survey area are summarised in Table 8 below. None of the units are currently adversely affected by recreational disturbance.

SSSI Unit	Condition	Summary	Last assessment date
1*	Unfavourable recovering	This unit is encompassed within the Essex Estuaries complex. Sufficient habitat re-creation has commenced within the estuary complex for this unit to be assessed as 'recovering' up until Dec 2010. Beyond Dec 2010 further additional habitat recreation will need to be delivered through Shoreline Management Plans and/or regional coastal habitat recreation programmes for this unit to remain in 'recovering' status. Saltmarsh loss of 3.14 ha (31,400 m ² / 7.76 acres) has occurred between 1997 and 2008 - This loss represents a significant loss of saltmarsh i.e. 31.56% from the 1997 baseline area. Saltmarsh change shows a downward trend with a net loss of 2.82 ha (28,200 square metres/6.97 acres) over the reporting period. A full account of the pattern of losses or gains throughout the whole estuary is required to develop understanding of the morphological changes taking place in the estuary.	31 March 2010
2	Favourable	The cliff profile is exposed indicating that erosive processes are operating on the cliff face.	5 November 2008

3	Unfavourable recovering	Of the 1.38 ha of saltmarsh present in 1997, a total of 0.28 ha were lost to erosion, with only 0.08 ha gained elsewhere through natural accretion resulting in a net loss of 0.20 ha by 2008. Saltmarsh was lost along the seaward marsh edge. "This unit is encompassed within the Essex Estuaries complex. Sufficient habitat re-creation has commenced within the estuary complex for this unit to be assessed as 'recovering' up until Dec 2010. Beyond Dec 2010 further additional habitat recreation will need to be delivered through Shoreline Management Plans and/or regional coastal habitat recreation programmes for this unit to remain in 'recovering' status	28 June 2010
4*	Favourable	This unit is managed as wildfowl pasture to support birds in winter and breeding birds. It is managed by mowing and aftermath grazing, and water levels are raised by a water control structure on the central drainage ditch where it discharges into the borrow dyke.	05 Nov 2008
5*	Unfavourable recovering	This unit is encompassed within the Essex Estuaries complex. Sufficient habitat re-creation has commenced within the estuary complex for this unit to be assessed as 'recovering' up until Dec 2010. Beyond Dec 2010 further additional habitat recreation will need to be delivered through Shoreline Management Plans and/or regional coastal habitat recreation programmes for this unit to remain in 'recovering' status. Saltmarsh loss of 3.14 ha (31,400 m ² / 7.76 acres) has occurred between 1997 and 2008 - This loss represents a significant loss of saltmarsh i.e. 31.56% from the 1997 baseline area. Saltmarsh change shows a downward trend with a net loss of 2.82 ha (28,200 square metres/6.97 acres) over the reporting period. A full account of the pattern of losses or gains throughout the whole estuary is required to develop understanding of the morphological changes taking place in the estuary.	31 Mar 2010
43*	Favourable	Widespread erosion exposing underlying clay beds. Alluvial gravels deposited by the proto Thames are evident in the upper shore. Full report and photos on file.	5 November 2008

Table 8. A summary of SSSI unit conditions around Cudmore Grove. The * indicates the units where surveys were held.

During the 2013 summer period, surveys were carried out at Cudmore Grove over 2 half day periods, the first on Sunday 9 June and the second on Tuesday 11 June. On both survey days the weather was dry but breezy and unseasonably cool for June.

During the June 2013 survey period, a total of 58 groups comprising 135 people were recorded at Cudmore Grove Country Park. The park was busier at the weekend with 33 groups recorded during this survey period and 25 groups observed during the week. This compares to the summer 2012 survey period when 120 people were recorded showing a continuing rise in visitor numbers at Cudmore Grove.

Cudmore is a popular dog walking area, however 43% of the groups interviewed at the Country Park in June 2013 had no dogs with them. A total of 52 dogs were recorded in this period. There were slightly more dogs (28) recorded at the weekend at Cudmore Grove than mid week, when 24 dogs were recorded. 30 of the groups had 1 or 2 dogs while only 1 group had more than 4 dogs. This group visits Cudmore Grove daily and they have been surveyed in previous survey periods.

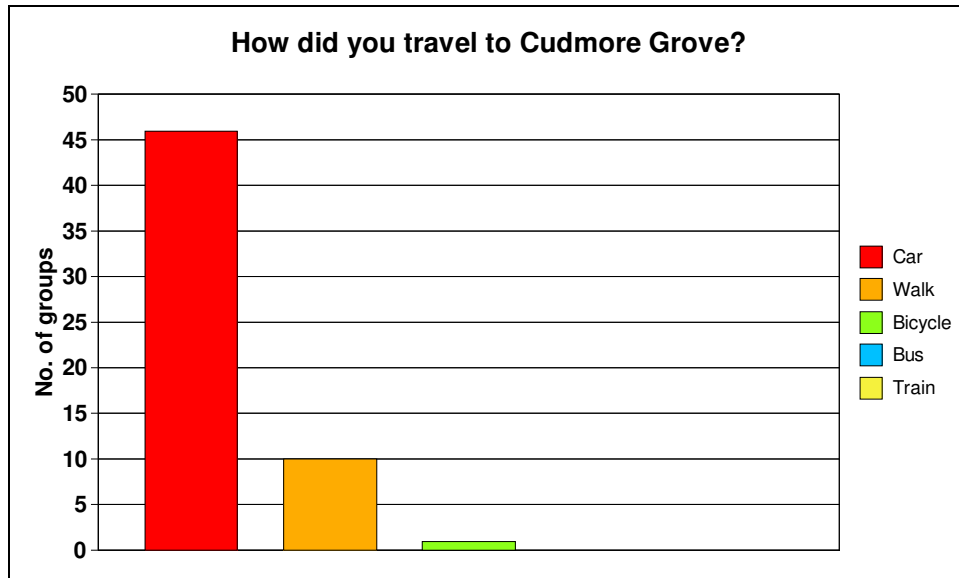


Figure 19. Given the location of Cudmore and its poor transport links many people drive to the country park. Some of these however live locally on Mersea.

Figure 19 above shows that during the June 2013 survey period, 46 out of the 58 groups travelled to Cudmore Country Park by car. 10 groups arrived on foot and 2 groups cycled. This is consistent with the 2012 summer survey results where the majority of visitors had driven or walked to the Country Park.

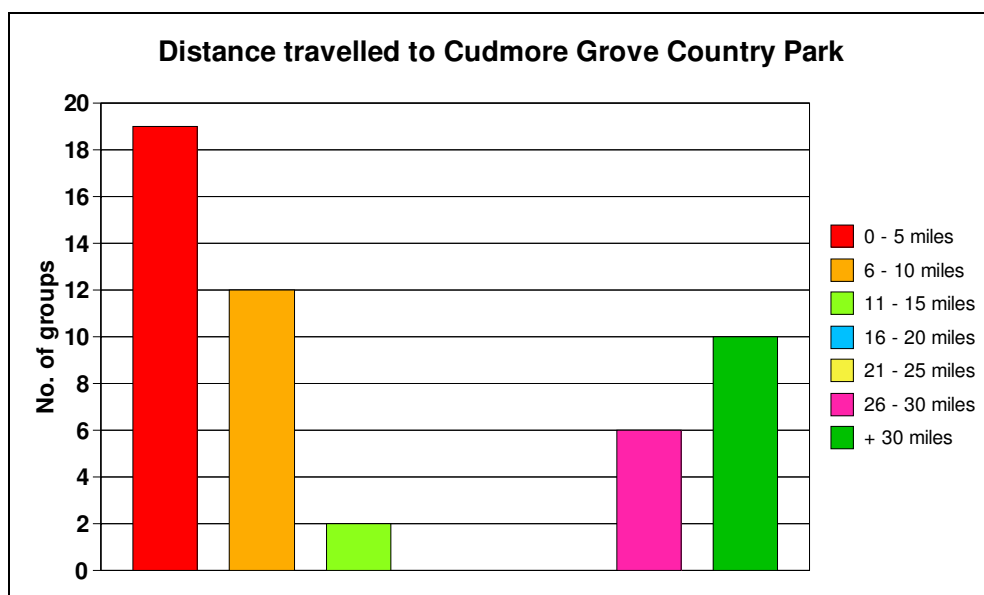


Figure 20. showing distance travelled in June 2012. 53% of the groups interviewed during his period lived within 10 miles of Cudmore Grove Country Park. 17% of visitors had travelled 30 miles or more.

As shown by figure 20 above, many of the groups surveyed at Cudmore Grove Country Park lived or were staying close to the park. During June 2013, 19 of the groups had travelled 5 miles or less to the park, while 12 of the groups had travelled 10 miles or less to the site. In total 53% of those surveyed in June 2013 had travelled 10 miles or less to the Country Park. 10 of the groups had travelled 30 miles or more to access the site which is twice the number who had travelled this distance during the June 2012 survey period. The June 2013 survey results were consistent with the combined year 2 results, where 53% of the groups interviewed had travelled short distances i.e. between 0 -10 miles to visit Cudmore Grove.

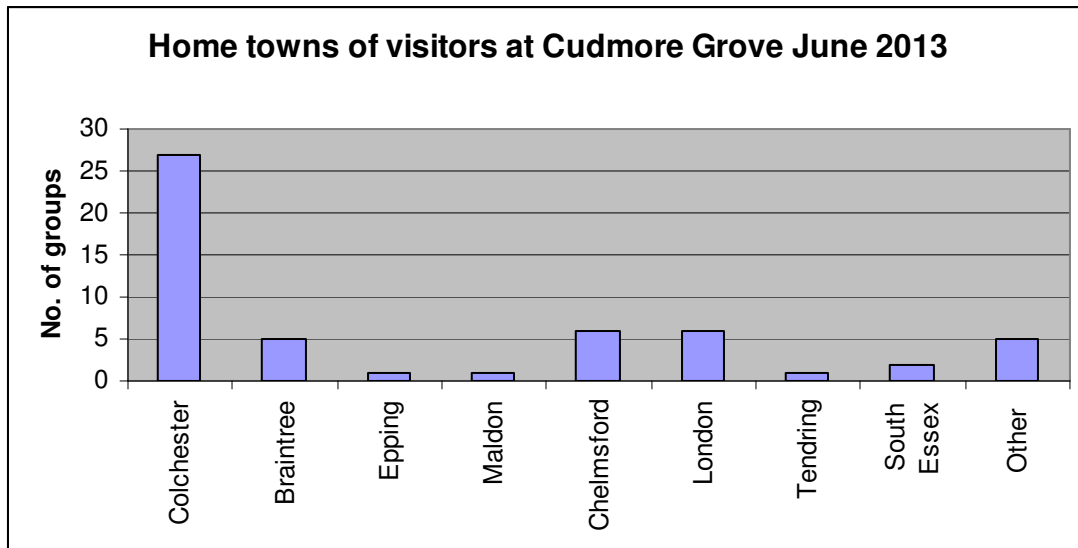


Figure 21 showing the home town of visitors of those surveyed at Cudmore Grove in June 2013. 46% of visitors surveyed lived within Colchester Borough.

Figure 21 above shows that 27 of the groups interviewed in June 2013 at Cudmore Grove Country Park lived in Colchester Borough (East and West Mersea, Colchester, Abberton, and Boxted). 5 groups lived in Braintree District (Braintree, Stisted, Hatfield Peverel) while 6 groups lived in Chelmsford (Chelmsford, Danbury and Writtle). 1 group was from Tendring (Brightlingsea), 1 was from Epping (Ongar) while another was from Maldon (Burnham). 6 of the groups gave their home town as London (Barnett, Buckhurst Hill, Finchley, Waltham Abbey) while 3 groups were from South Essex (Southend, Grays). The remaining 5 groups lived outside the County including Nottinghamshire, Suffolk (Ipswich, Sudbury), Leicestershire and Hertfordshire. These latter groups and the groups from London were mainly holidaying on Mersea.

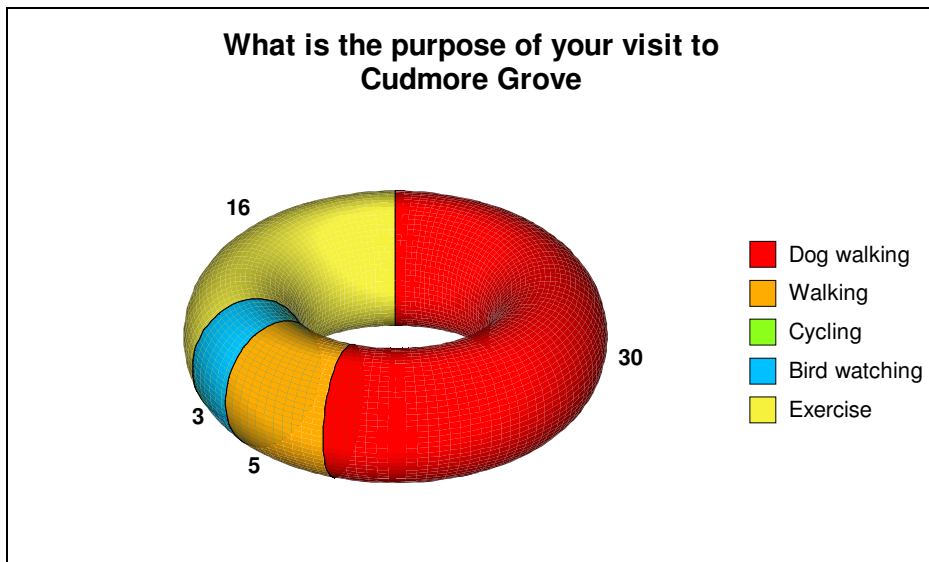


Figure 22. The June 2013 results show that Cudmore Grove continues to be an important dog walking area with 51% of visitors visiting the park to undertake this activity.

Cudmore Grove has emerged as a popular area for dog walking with local people. As shown in figure 22 above the most popular purpose for visiting Cudmore Grove in June 2013 was to dog walk with 30 groups citing this as their main purpose for visiting the Country Park. This is consistent with the 2012 summer survey period findings where dog walking was also cited as the main purpose for visiting. Cudmore Grove was also a popular destination for people to take some exercise and to go walking with 16 groups saying that they were visiting for exercise and 5 to go walking. As in the previous year's surveys, the least popular reason given for visiting Cudmore Grove was bird watching with only 5 groups citing this is at the reason why they were at the Country Park in June 2013. This is not surprising as Cudmore Grove is a County Park and not a nature reserve with higher levels of recreational disturbance although the adjacent Mersea Flats National Nature Reserve attracts interesting birds.

Figure 23 below shows that during the June 2013 survey the most popular reason given for visiting Cudmore Grove was because people liked the area. 29 groups cited this as an important factor for choosing to visit the Country Park. Proximity to where people lived was important for 15 groups, while for 14 groups it was because Cudmore offered a good choice of routes. 12 of the groups chose Cudmore Grove for its coastal location. These reflect the findings from the June 2012 survey period. The availability of parking was not a factor for choosing this site in June 2013 however many of the groups interviewed said that they had annual parking passes.

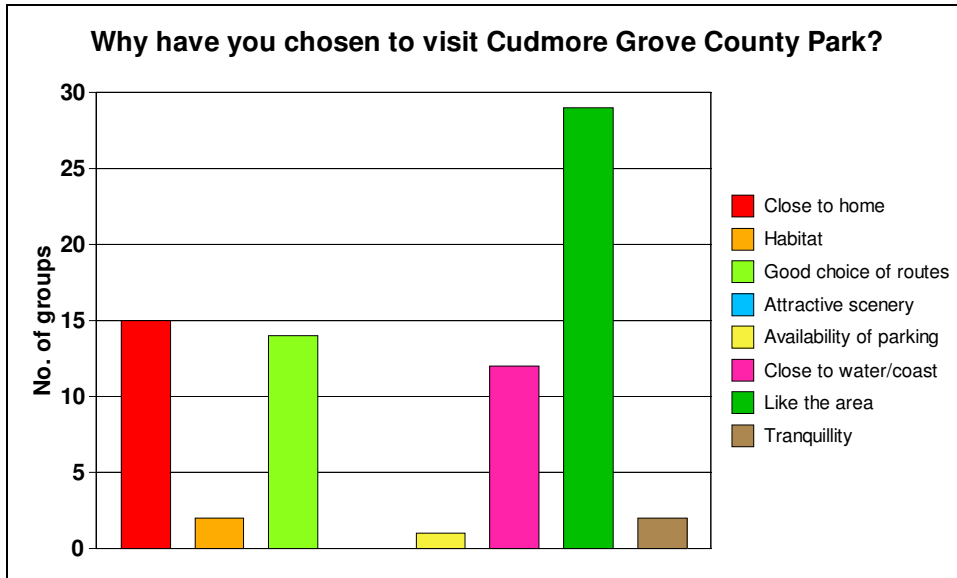


Figure 23. This figure shows that during June 2013 people had chosen to visit Cudmore Grove mainly because they liked the area or it was close to where they lived.

Figure 24 below shows that the frequency of visits to Cudmore Grove varies for different user groups. During the June 2013 survey period, by far most visitors visited infrequently with 15 groups visiting less than once a month. 6 groups visited once a week, another 6 groups visited monthly and 5 visited 2-3 times a month. 7 groups used the park on a daily basis and these tended to be local dog walkers. During the June 2013 survey period, 12 of the groups were first time visitors to the Country Park. The frequency of visiting patterns in June 2013 were consistent with the visiting patterns in June 2012 and Year 2 generally when the majority of visitors either visited irregularly (less than once a month), with a reasonably high number of daily visitors and first time visitors.

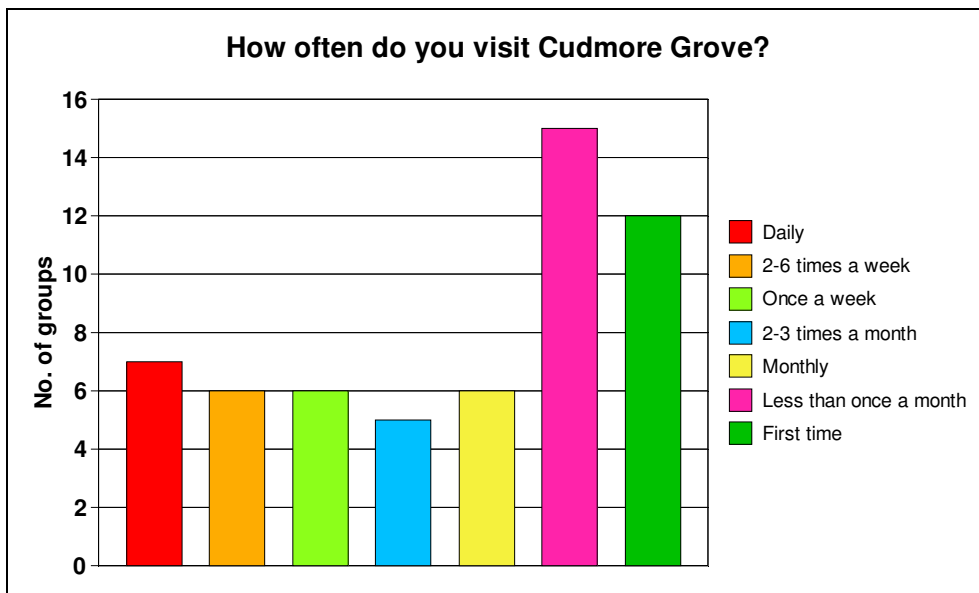


Figure 24. showing that while most groups visited Cudmore Grove on a irregular basis (less then once a month) there are a number of regular daily users too.

As shown in figure 25 58% of visitors surveyed during the June 2013 survey period, visited all year round while 36% of the groups were recorded as summer visitors only. This obviously includes the first time visitors. While 48% of visitors visited Cudmore Grove in the spring/summer or autumn its draw for most visitors throughout the year reflects the broad range of activities that people engage in at the Country Park beyond dog walking, taking exercise and bird watching. These included crabbing, families having a day out, holidaying and exploring new coastal areas.

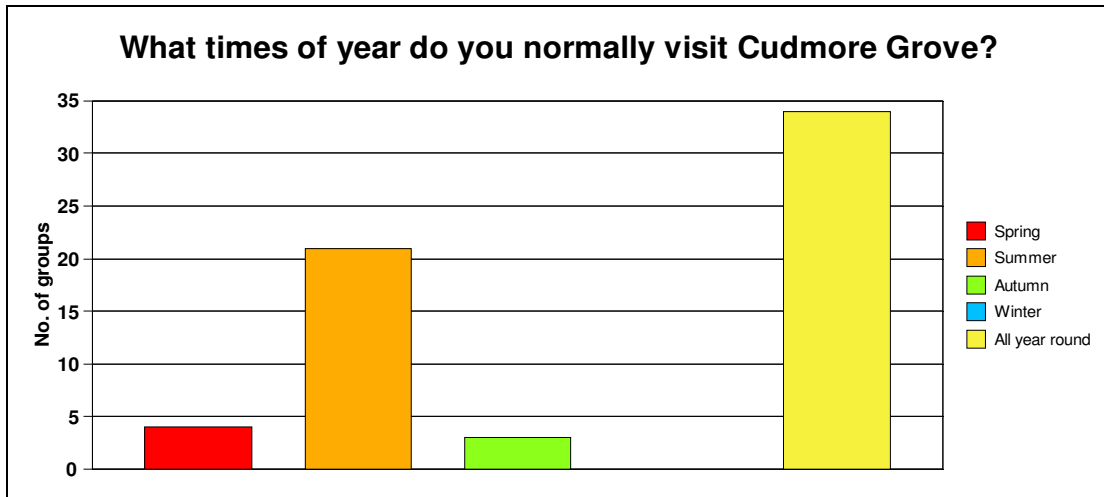


Figure 25. shows that Cudmore Grove is a year round destination for visitors. 58% of groups visit throughout the year reflecting the variety of activities that can be undertaken at the Country Park.

70% of the groups surveyed in June 2013 also visited alternative sites while 30% said they did not. Not all of the groups were asked this question particularly those groups that there holidaying or who mainly lived outside Essex.

Figure 26 below shows that for the groups surveyed in June 2013, the most popular alternative sites visited included Suffolk coastal sites, inland sites in Colchester and other parts of Mersea Island.

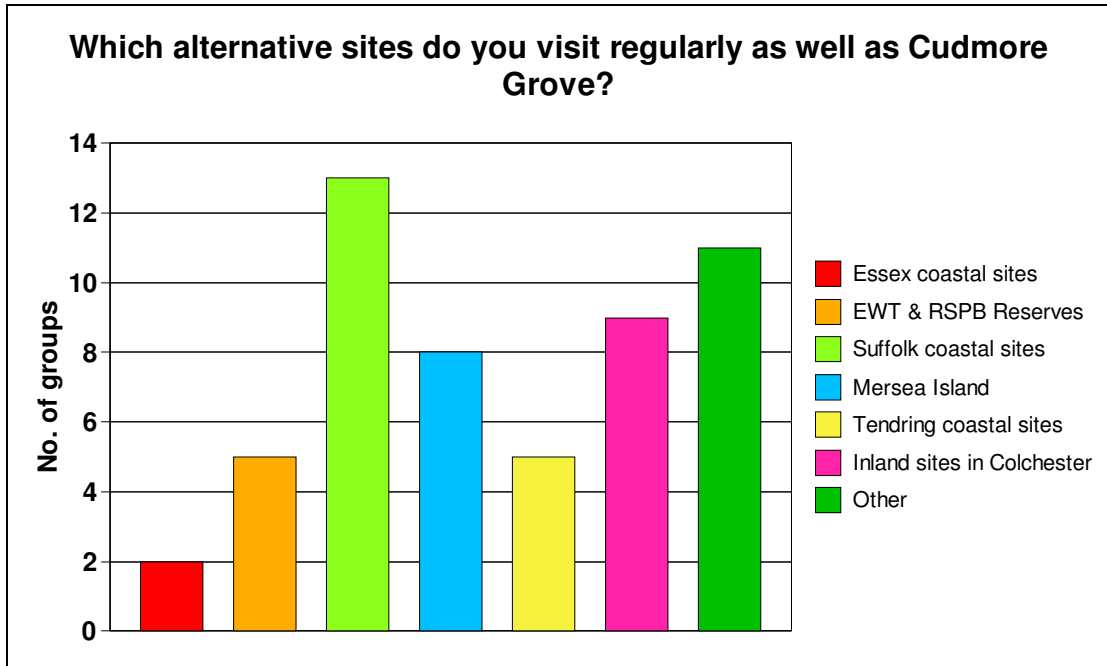


Figure 26. showing that those interviewed at Cudmore Grove Country Park also regularly visited a wide range of alternative sites in Essex and Suffolk. Suffolk Coastal sites were the most popular response given about alternative sites visited during the June 2013 survey period.

13 of the groups surveyed in June 2013 said that they visited coastal sites in Suffolk including Aldeburgh, Southwold, Minsmere, Felixstowe and Snape Maltings. 8 groups regularly visited other parts of Mersea namely the beach, while 11 groups said that they visited other sites not listed in the survey. These included Epping Forest, Hatfield Forest, Danbury Common and Hylands Park in Chelmsford, Chalkney Woods and Heybridge Basin near Maldon.

39 of the groups surveyed in June 2013 stated that they had access to open space close to where they lived that they used regularly. Only 5 of the 58 groups surveyed responded negatively to this question. 14 of the groups were not asked this question as they were not local to the area or lived a significant distance outside the survey area.

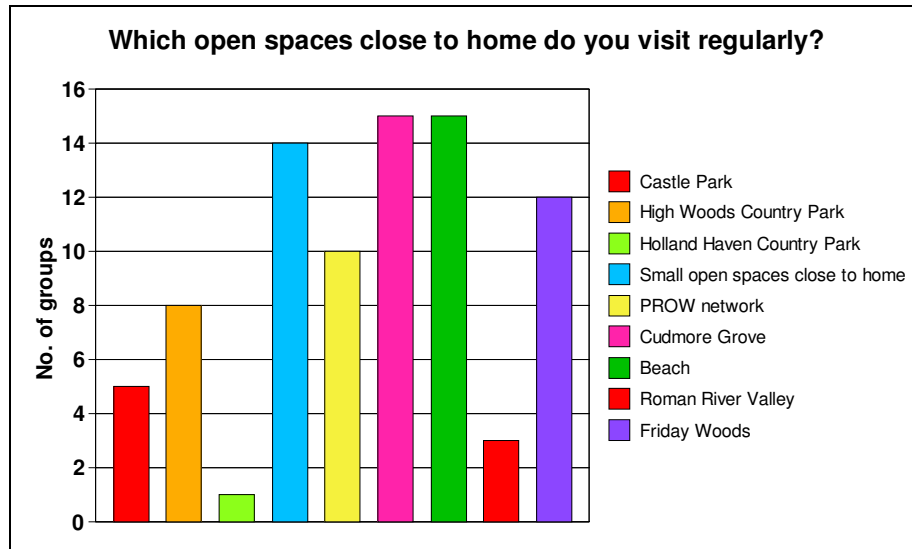


Figure 27. showing that Cudmore Grove and local beaches on Mersea were the most regularly used open spaces close to where visitors at Cudmore Grove lived. Those surveyed also made good use of small open spaces.

Figure 27 above shows that the 4 most popular local open spaces most regularly used by the visitors surveyed at Cudmore Grove Country Park in June 2013 were Cudmore Grove, local beaches, small spaces close to home and Friday Woods. This is not surprising given that 46% of the groups surveyed at Cudmore Grove during this time lived locally in Colchester or the surrounding villages. 5 groups also regularly visited Castle Park, while 10 used the local footpath network, and 3 regularly visited the Roman River valley. Only 1 group said that they used Holland Haven regularly again reflecting that many of those surveyed at Cudmore Grove lived fairly locally to Colchester.

The small open spaces most regularly used by visitors at Cudmore Grove during June 2013 included Hillyfields, Abbeyfields, Gosbecks, The Recreation Ground in New Town, Highwoods, The Strood and Alresford Creek near to Colchester. Popular well used open spaces around Braintree included Notley Country Park, the Discovery Centre and the Flich Way. In Chelmsford well used local open spaces included Admirals and Central Park, Hylands Park, Paper Mill Lock and Langleys Estate. In Ipswich the most popular local open spaces cited were Christchurch Park and Holywells Park.

Hamford Water

Hamford Water is a large, shallow estuarine basin comprising tidal creeks and islands, intertidal mud and sand-flats, and saltmarsh. The rich invertebrate fauna and sheltered nature of the site results in its importance for internationally important numbers of waterbirds during the passage and winter periods, as well as for breeding terns in summer. The shallow and sheltered nature of the complex provides refuge for waterbirds, especially in periods of severe weather. Survey work took place at Kirby Quay and The Naze. A total of 66 groups were surveyed at these sites, which is 7 more than during the winter 2012 survey. Hamford Water is a difficult site to access and only Walton-on-the-Naze was identified as an access point with car parking. The map, below, shows the extent of the Hamford Water Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest notification.

This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

During the breeding season:

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, 55 pairs representing at least 2.3% of the breeding population in Great Britain (4 year mean 1992-1995)

Over winter:

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, 317 individuals representing at least 25.0% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, 4,118 individuals representing at least 1.6% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, 53 individuals representing at least 7.6% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

On passage:

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, 1,572 individuals representing at least 3.1% of the Europe/Northern Africa - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Over winter:

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, 1,121 individuals representing at least 1.6% of the wintering Iceland - breeding population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, 6,892 individuals representing at least 2.3% of the wintering Western Siberia/Western Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, 3,251 individuals representing at least 2.2% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, 520 individuals representing at least 1.0% of the wintering Europe/Northern Africa - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Teal *Anas crecca*, 4,206 individuals representing at least 1.1% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population

Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance.

The area qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl

Over winter, the area regularly supports 44,461 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Teal *Anas crecca*, Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*.⁴

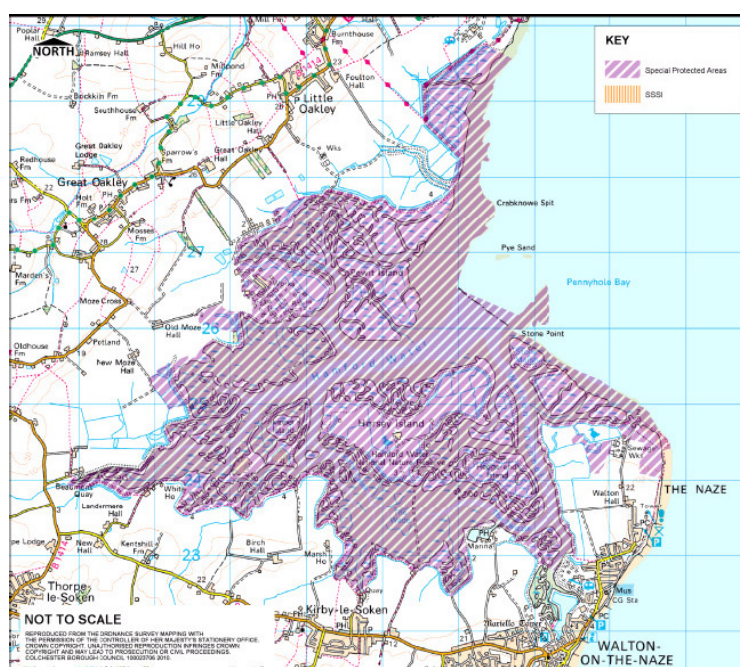


Figure 28. Hamford Water Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest 2 JNCC (2001) SPA Description: Hamford Water. <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2012>

⁴ JNCC (2001) Hamford Water SPA description. <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2012-theme=default>

Kirby Quay

Kirby Quay is located at the southern end of Hamford Water Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest. This site was selected as it is accessible from Kirby le Soken and, with the exception of The Naze, is the only location where Hamford Water can be accessed adjacent to a settlement. The map, below shows the location of Kirby Quay and table 9 summarises the condition of the SSSI units within the survey area.

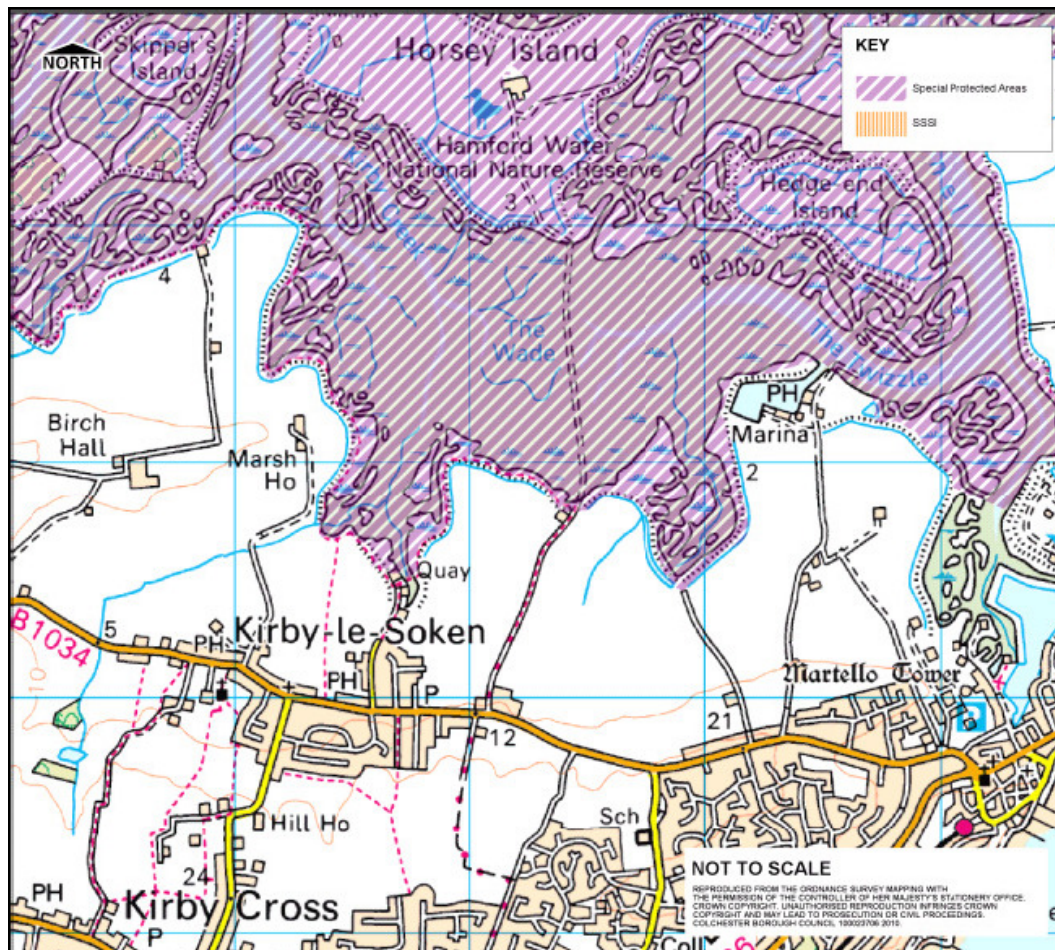


Figure 29. Map showing Kirby Quay & the Walton Backwaters and the extent of the Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest notifications.

SSSI Unit	Condition	Summary	Last assessment date
3	Unfavourable recovering	Evidence indicates that the extent of mud/sandflat habitats within the outer coastal units of the SSSI likely to have decreased due to coastal squeeze. The proposed creation of sufficient intertidal habitat has commenced adjacent to Hamford Water SSSI for this unit to be assessed as 'recovering' up until end Dec 2010. Saltmarsh is broadly favourable in habitat terms (structural and plant variety) but likely to have been eroding at a site level and therefore not regarded as favourable on a precautionary basis. The population figures for Ringed Plover are below the required threshold, however proposed work should help address this. The WeBS counts are above thresholds for all listed species.	25 June 2010
24*	Favourable	Seawall - maintained by annual mowing creating a mixed structure due to cutting regime being split between top and bottom of the seawall.	11 December 2008

Table 9. A summary of SSSI unit conditions within the survey area. * indicates where survey work took place.

Kirby Quay was visited mid week for a full day survey as with previous survey periods. Like in previous survey periods the site at Kirby Quay was very quiet with 10 groups surveyed, which is an increase from the 6 groups surveyed during the winter 2012 survey.

With the exception of 1 group, all groups had travelled less than 5 miles to visit the site. These groups lived in Kirby le Soken and Kirby Cross. One of the groups lived in Clacton. Once again the survey shows that the site is used predominately by people in the local area and/or who live in close proximity to the site.

None of the groups had driven to the site. 9 walked to the site and 1 arrived by bus. Kirby Quay does not benefit from dedicated car parking provision so for those wishing to visit the site by car they would have to park on public roads nearby. Access to the site on foot is the most popular option and this correlates with the short distances travelled by visitors to the site.

With the exception of the visitor from Clacton all groups either visited the site daily or 2-6 times a week. 7 of the groups were visiting to dog walk. 2 were walking, 1 was bird watching and 2 of the groups said that the purpose of their visit was also to exercise. Whilst the site is not used by a large number of visitors those who do visit it appear to be regular and benefit from the open access provided by the Public Rights of Way in this area.

7 of the groups said that one of the reasons they visited the site was because it is close to home. 7 groups said that they visited because they liked the area, 5 said they visited because of the attractive scenery, 2 said they liked to be close to water and liked the tranquillity and 1 group said they visited because of the habitat and choice of routes.

5 groups said that they visited alternative sites regularly, with Tendring coastal sites being the most popular alternative. Whilst all visitors lived within Tendring, 2 of the groups said that they regularly visited Dedham and Flatford. Walton-on-the-Naze was referred to the most and this is also part of Hamford Water.

None of the groups said that they did not good access to open space close to home and this is unsurprising considering that 9 out of 10 of the groups lived within walking distance of the site.

The Naze

The Naze is located to the north of Walton-on-the-Naze town and to the south east of Hamford Water. The Naze is designated as a SSSI, Ramsar and Special Protection Area.

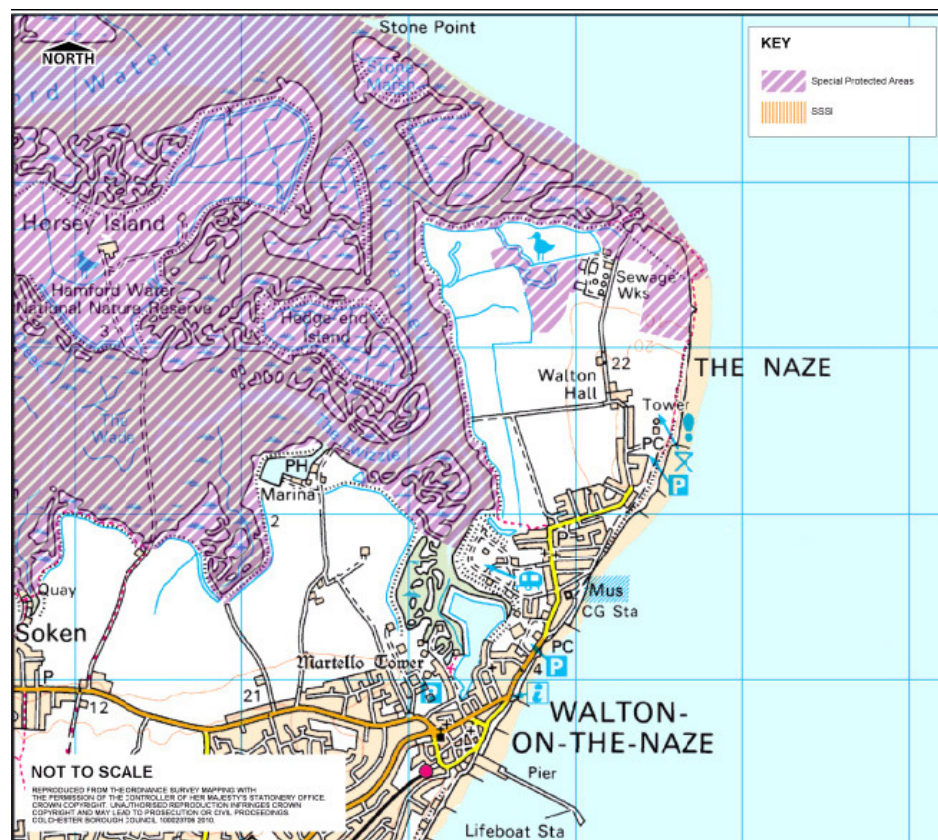


Figure 30. The location of The Naze and SPA designation.

The condition of the SSSI units within the survey area are summarised in table 10. The Naze SSSI unit is in favourable condition however the SPA units have been recorded as being in unfavourable condition. None of the SSSI units are currently adversely affected by recreational disturbance.

SSSI Unit	Condition	Summary	Last assessment date
1*	Favourable	-	16 Jul 2008
14	Favourable	Good structure of beach communities, regular overtopping on spring tides providing good water exchange in lagoon. Oystercatcher and ringed plover nested in small numbers during breeding period. Regular visits from wildfowl and waders.	11 Dec 2008
18*	Favourable	Scrub control has been undertaken. Grass cutting in open areas on regular basis. Good structure throughout.	11 Dec 2008

Table 10. A summary of SSSI unit conditions within the survey area. The * indicates the units where the interviews took place.

Surveys were undertaken at Walton-on-the-Naze during the week and at the weekend. 20 surveys were carried out during the week and 33 were carried out at the weekend. This is consistent with the November 2012 survey split between weekend and weekday visitors, which found that 61% of the surveys conducted were carried out at the weekend. During the summer 2013 survey the split was 62% weekend and 38% week day. Previous survey periods have also found that this site is busier at the weekend. During the summer 2013 survey a school group was observed and previous surveys at this site have also observed school groups.

During the summer 2013 survey 31 groups, which represents 57% of total groups, had travelled less than 5 miles to visit the site. Previous surveys have found that this site is very important and well used by local people but that it is also an attraction for people from further afield. During the summer 2013 survey 12 groups had travelled over 30 miles to visit the site, which is 22% of the total groups. This is significantly higher than the 2 groups that had travelled over 26 miles during the winter 2012 survey, which suggests that groups are prepared to travel further during the spring/summer.

12 groups surveyed at Walton were holidaying in the area during the summer 2013 survey. During the winter 2012 survey no groups were holidaying in the area (although one group had visited from Cambridge for the day) and during the previous summer survey, 17 groups were holidaying in the area. Frinton and Walton are popular holiday destinations and so it is to be expected that a large number of groups surveyed at The Naze were holidaying in the area. 9 groups lived in Frinton and 8 in Walton, indicating the popularity of the site with local people.

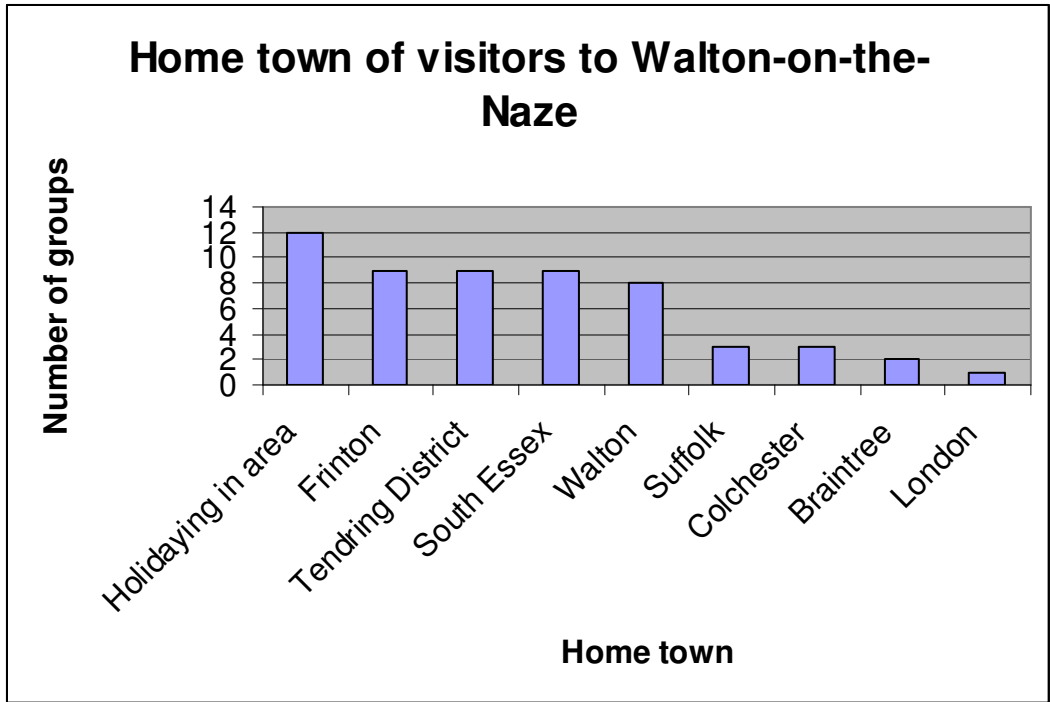


Figure 31. Home town of visitors to Walton-on-the-Naze. 12 groups were holidaying in the area.

Previous survey periods found that dog walking was the most popular purpose for visiting. However, during the spring 2013 survey walking was the most popular purpose for visiting. 21 groups visited to walk and 18 to dog walk, see figure 32. There was also a couple of groups observed cycling, however these groups were not surveyed. Previous survey periods found that in addition to the majority of groups visiting to dog walk there was a high number of groups with 2 or more dogs. However, during the spring 2013 survey 11 groups had 1 dog and only 4 groups had 2 dogs. No groups had 3 dogs or more. The weather during the surveys during this survey period was hot and sunny, which may explain why there were less groups than previous survey periods with a dog.

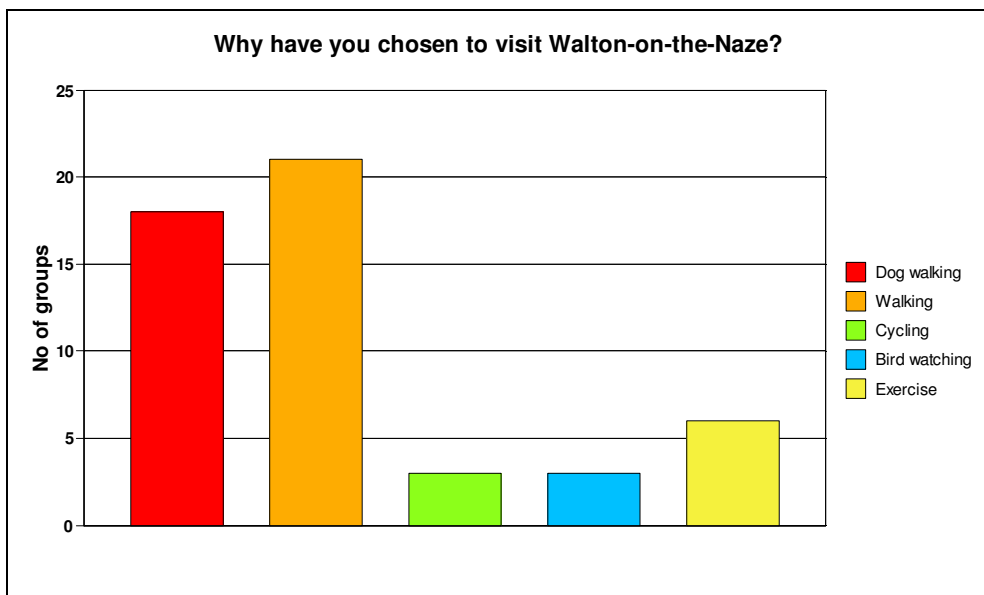


Figure 32. Purpose of visit to Walton-on-the-Naze. Walking was the most popular purpose for visiting followed by walking.

Visitors during the spring 2013 survey gave a wide range of reasons for visiting as can be seen in figure 33, below. Like the area was the most popular reason for visiting with 39 groups giving this as one of their reasons for visiting. Attractive scenery was mentioned by 31 groups and desire to visit the coast was mentioned by 29 groups. Surveys at other sites have shown that availability of parking has little bearing on the reasons peoples visit. However, 14 groups at this site during the spring 2013 survey period said that one of the reasons for visiting was because of the availability of parking. Like the area was also the most popular reason for visiting this site during the winter 2012 survey period; close to home was the second most popular reason for visiting.

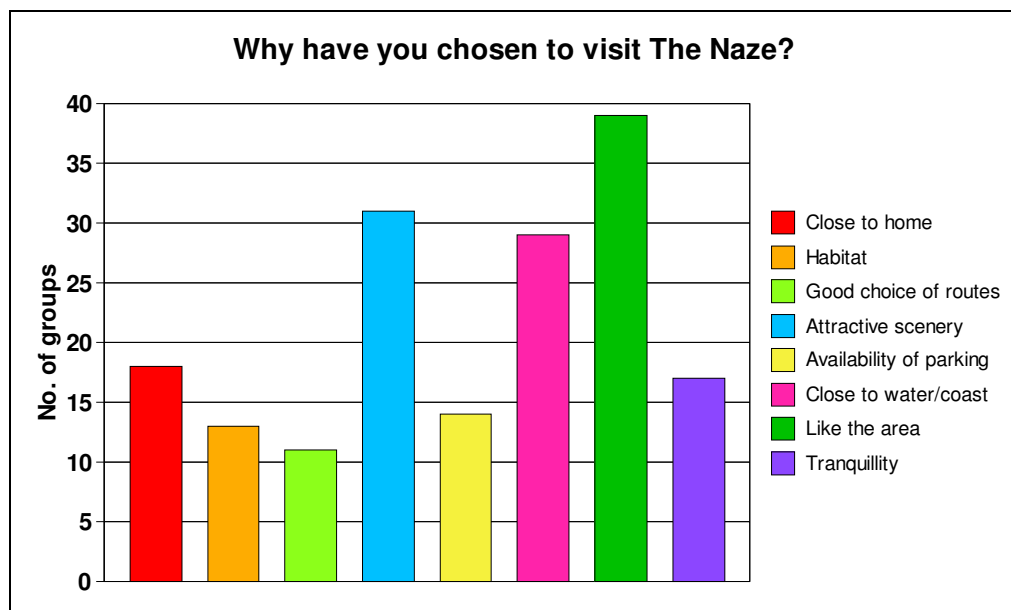


Figure 33. Reason for visiting the Naze. Like the area was the most popular reason for visiting.

During the winter 2012 survey, 92% of groups said that they visited all year round but during the spring 2013 survey only 55% of groups said that they visited all year round. Only 5 groups said that they visited the site daily compared to 26 during the winter 2012 survey. 24 groups during the spring 2013 survey said that they visited very infrequently (less than once a month) and 4 groups were visiting for the first time.

20 groups (36%) said that they do not visit other sites regularly. Groups that did visit alternative sites regularly said that they visited coastal sites and inland sites in Colchester. Only 7 groups said that they regularly visited EWT/RSPB sites. Owing to the high number of groups that had visited from outside of the district many groups referred to sites in Suffolk (Thorpeness, Dunwich, and Southwold) and south Essex (Southend). Many groups said they regularly visited Frinton and Clacton.

Only 2 groups said that they did not have good access to open space close to home. These groups lived in Clacton and Frinton.

In terms of which sites groups visited close to where they lived, 28 groups said that they regularly visited the beach and 28 groups said small open spaces close to

home, see figure 34. This is consistent with previous survey results. Many of the groups said that this question was not relevant to them as they were holidaying in the area.

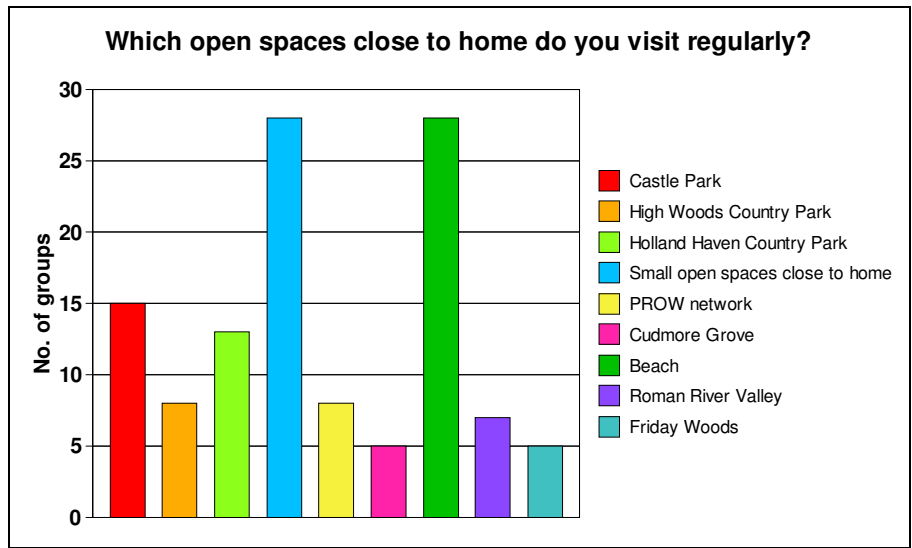


Figure 34. Open spaces close to home that people visit regularly. The beach and small open spaces close to home were the most popular areas visited.

Stour and Orwell Estuaries

The Stour and Orwell Estuaries straddle the eastern part of the Essex/Suffolk border. The estuaries include extensive mud-flats, low cliffs, saltmarsh and small areas of vegetated shingle on the lower reaches. The mud-flats hold *Enteromorpha*, *Zostera* and *Salicornia* spp. The site also includes an area of low-lying grazing marsh at Shotley Marshes on the south side of the Orwell. In summer, the site supports important numbers of breeding Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, while in winter they hold major concentrations of waterbirds, especially geese, ducks and waders. The geese also feed, and waders roost, in surrounding areas of agricultural land outside the SPA.⁵

This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

Over winter;

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, 10 individuals representing at least 1.3% of the wintering population in Great Britain (Count as at 1996/7)

This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

Over winter;

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, 2,475 individuals representing at least 3.5% of the wintering Iceland - breeding population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, 23,940 individuals representing at least 1.7% of the wintering Northern Siberia/Europe/Western Africa population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, 3,660 individuals representing at least 2.4% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Pintail *Anas acuta*, 878 individuals representing at least 1.5% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Redshank *Tringa totanus*, 3,545 individuals representing at least 2.4% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, 578 individuals representing at least 1.2% of the wintering Europe/Northern Africa - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

⁵ JNCC (2001) SPA Description: Stour and Orwell Estuaries.
<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2011>

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, 3,672 individuals representing at least 1.2% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, 836 individuals representing at least 1.2% of the wintering Western Palearctic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance.

The area qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl

Over winter, the area regularly supports 64,768 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Pintail *Anas acuta*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Knot *Calidris canutus*, Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*.⁶

Survey work took place at the Stour Estuary and RSPB reserve, and at The Walls in Manningtree. A total of 106 surveys were completed at these 2 sites during the June 2013 survey period, which is less than the 125 surveyed in November 2012. 66 were surveyed at The Walls and 40 at Stour Estuary.

Stour Estuary

The Stour Estuary RSPB reserve includes Stour Wood, Copperas Wood and extends along the Stour estuary. Stour and Copperas Woods do not form part of the Stour and Orwell Estuaries Special Protection Area or the Stour Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest. The map, below, shows the extent of the Special Protection Area notification. Stour and Copperas woods are notified as the Stour and Copperas Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest. The condition of the Site of Special Scientific Interest units within the survey area are summarised in table 11.

⁶ JNCC (2001) Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA Information. <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2011-theme=default>

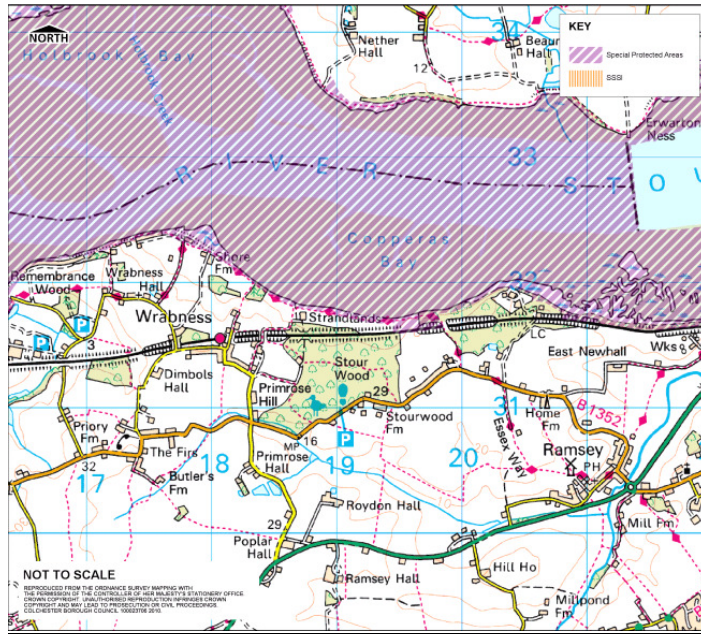


Figure 35. Map showing part of the Stour and Orwell Estuaries Special Protection Area.

SSSI Unit	Condition	Summary	Last assessment date
10*	Favourable	The features assessed for this site are littoral sediment and vascular plants. The condition of the plants is recorded as viable and/or subject to natural change and likely to be subject to geomorphological changes due to historical impacts. The sediment character, biotope composition and distribution, and species composition of representative biotopes appears to be favourable. The biotopes change position but there do not appear to be any adverse changes. The extent of littoral sediment appears to be reducing, eroding at the seaward edge and the shoreline profile is changing and appears to be lowering. The condition of the littoral sediments is subject to natural change and likely to be subject to geomorphological changes due to historical impacts.	6 October 2010
Stour & Copperas Wood 1*	Favourable	Management plan being adhered to.	2 August 2009
Stour & Copperas Wood 2*	Favourable	No comment	2 August 2009
Stour & Copperas Wood 4	Favourable	No comment	2 August 2009

Table 11. A summary of SSSI unit conditions within the survey area. * indicates where survey work took place. The condition of the Stour and Copperas Wood SSSI units within the survey area are included in the table.

Surveys were carried out at the Stour Estuary over 2 half day sessions. The surveys were carried out mainly along the footpath adjacent to the estuary. However, surveys were also undertaken in Stour Wood even though the wood does not form

part of the SPA. More groups were encountered in the wood than along the estuary, which is further from the car park.

During the June 2013 survey period a total of 40 groups were surveyed, which is less than the 64 surveyed during the November 2012 survey period. Weekends at this location were far busier than during the week, and this has been a consistent pattern throughout the 3 year monitoring period. 28 groups were surveyed at the weekend and 12 during the week. Groups mainly comprised 1 or 2 people, which is consistent with previous survey periods. Only 2 groups consisted of 3 people and no larger groups were encountered.

12 out of the 40 groups did not have any dogs with them, which represents around a quarter of visitors. During the November 2012 survey there was a much higher proportion of groups without dogs (65%).

Consistent with other survey periods the majority of visitors travelled to the site by car. 9 out of 40 groups had walked to the site and 2 had cycled. One group commented that whilst they only lived a short distance from the site the busy road and lack of footpaths made it too dangerous to walk.

All previous surveys have shown that whilst dominated by groups that live less than 5 miles away visitors do travel some distance to visit this site. Figure 36, below, shows the range of distances that groups travelled to visit this site. Unlike previous surveys periods no groups travelled over 21 miles.

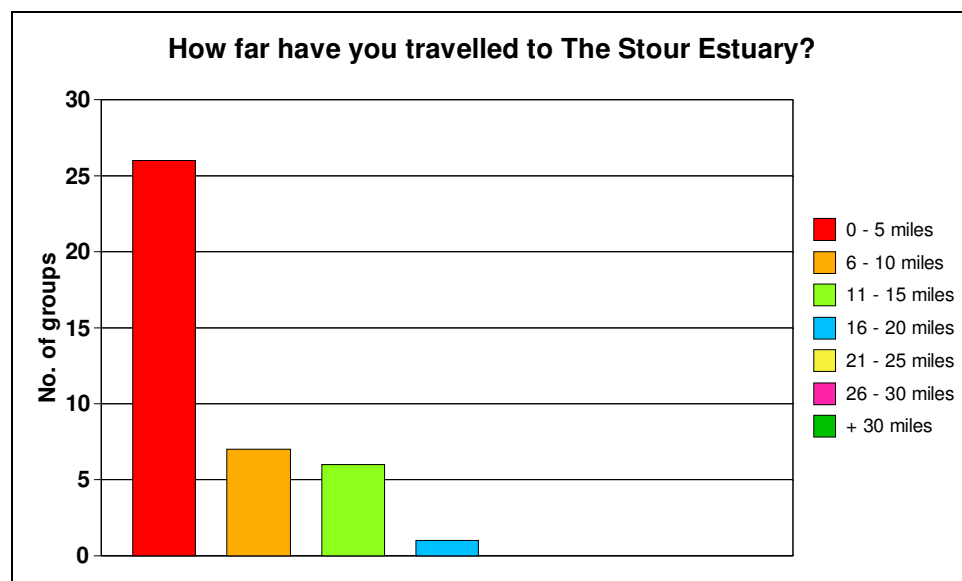


Figure 36. Distance visitors travelled to visit Stour Estuary. 14 groups travelled over 6 miles.

The majority of visitors to Stour Estuary live within the Harwich urban area as shown in figure 37. There were also several groups from Clacton, 1 from Brightlingsea and 1 from Manningtree. Only 4 of the groups did not live in Tendring District (3 from Colchester and 1 from Sudbury).

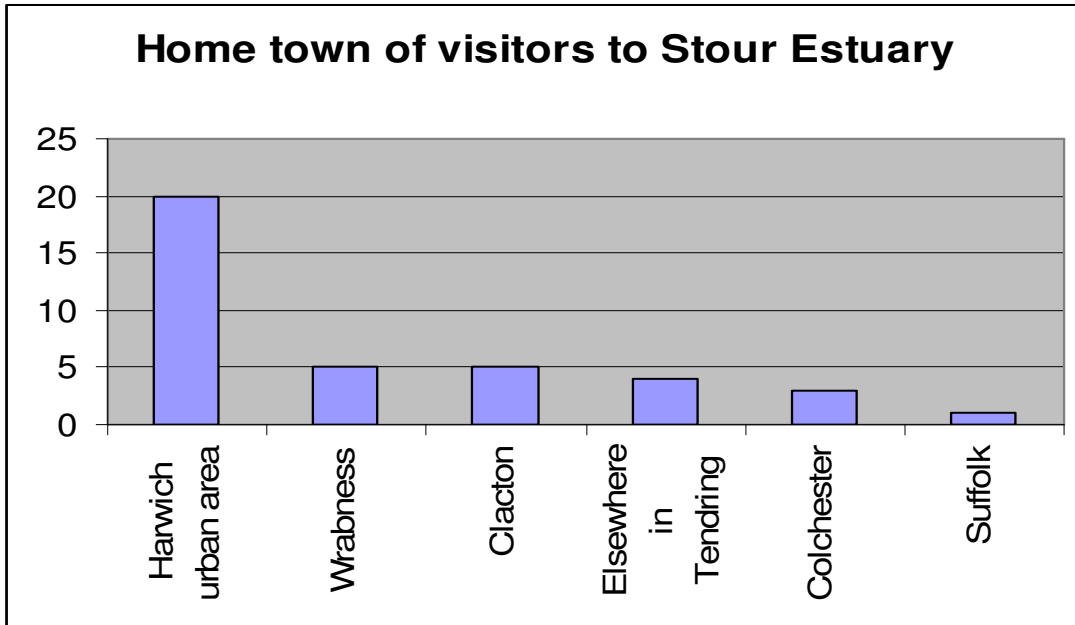


Figure 37. Whilst the Stour Estuary attracts visitors from a variety of locations many live in Tendring District. Whilst Wrabness is within the Harwich urban area the graph shows the number of groups from Wrabness.

Dog walking was the most popular purpose for visiting the Stour Estuary, followed by walking. In November 2012 walking was the most popular purpose for visiting. During this survey period no groups visited to cycle. 5 visited to exercise and 3 to bird watch.

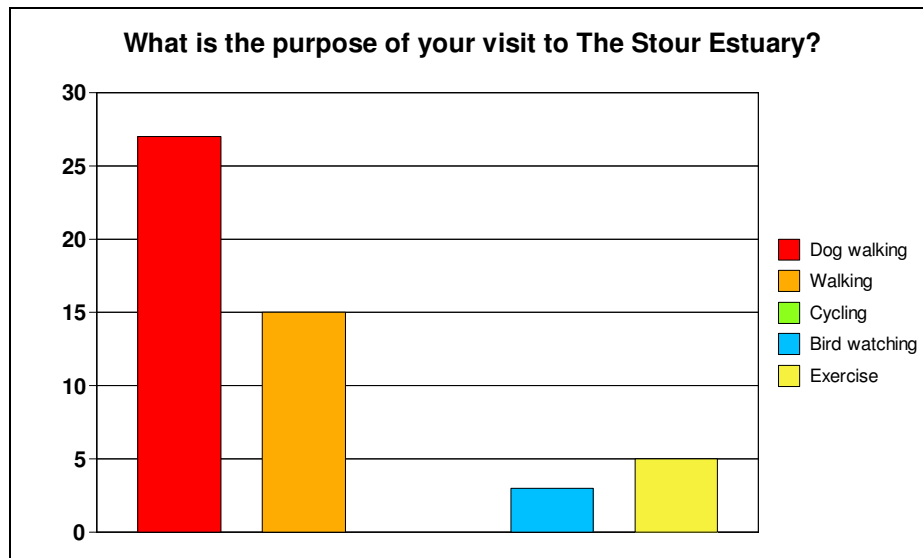


Figure 38. Purpose of visiting Stour Estuary. Dog walking was the most popular purpose of visiting.

Visitors gave a wide range of reasons for visiting the Stour Estuary with like the area being most common with 27 groups saying this. Close to home was given as a reason for visiting by 25 of the groups. Like the area and close to water were also popular reasons with 11 groups each giving these reasons. During the November 2012 survey period visitors also gave a variety of reasons for visiting the Stour Estuary. However, during November 2012 attractive scenery was the most popular

reason given for visiting and during the summer 2013 survey only 9 groups referred to this. During the November 2012 survey like the area and close to home were also very common reasons for visiting.

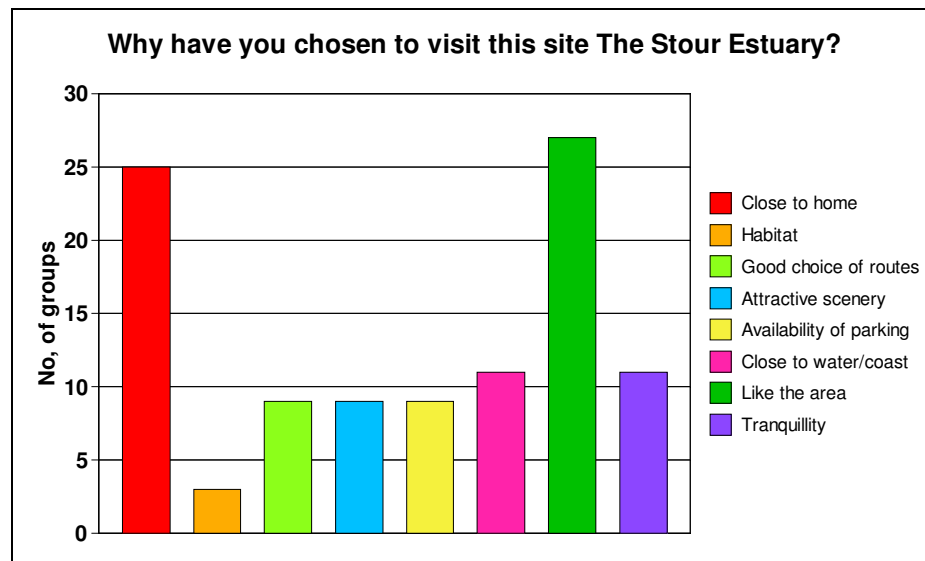


Figure 39. Reason for visiting the Stour Estuary. Numerous reasons were given with like the area being the most common, followed by close to home.

There was a mixed response regarding the frequency of visits which was also found during the November 2012 survey. As in previous surveys the percentage of groups who visited daily was low compared to other sites (15% during spring 2013 and 14% during winter 2012). This is particularly surprising given that dog walking was the most common purpose for visiting and a large number of groups lived less than 5 miles from the site. 9 groups said that they visited 2-6 times a week and 9 said that they visited monthly. 1 group was visiting for the first time. As considered before this may reflect the relatively rural nature of the site.

29 groups said that they visited all year round, which equates to 72% of the total groups surveyed in June 2013. This is consistent with the findings from the winter 2012 survey in which 79% of groups visited all year round. This is also consistent with previous survey periods. No groups during spring 2013 said that they visited solely in the winter and 8 groups said that they visited in the spring. The frequency of visits generally reflects the main types of activities undertaken at the site during different seasons i.e. dog walking and walking year round.

29 of the groups said that they visited alternative sites regularly and the different sites visited are shown in figure 40. Consistent with previous survey periods coastal sites were the most popular alternative sites visited. This ties in with the finding that the desire to be close to water was a common reason given for visiting this site. During this summer survey period Tendring coastal sites was the most common answer given to this question and during the winter 2012 survey Essex coastal sites was the most common answer given. This difference reflects the larger number of groups visiting Stour Estuary from further away during the winter 2012 survey period. The majority of visitors during the spring 2013 survey were more local. 9 groups said that they regularly visited Essex Wildlife Trust and RSPB sites. Stour Estuary is an RSPB reserve and so it is not surprising that almost a quarter of

visitors said that they visit other EWT and RSPB sites regularly. However, not many visitors during the spring 2013 survey period said that their reason for visiting was because of the habitat.

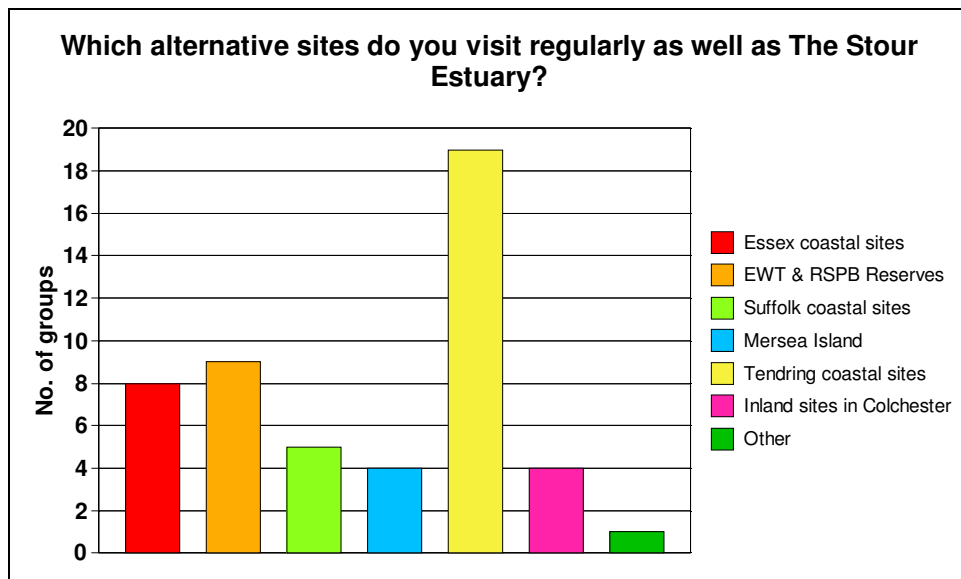


Figure 40. Alternative sites visited. Tendring coastal sites were the most common, followed by EWT & RSPB reserves.

27 groups said that they have good access to open space close to home and 9 groups said that they did not, see figure 41. This demonstrates a higher number of people unhappy with open space provision close to home than in previous survey periods. The beach was the most common area visited which ties in with the finding that many of the groups like to visit Tendring coastal sites. Public Rights of Way were also visited regularly which has been a common finding for all sites throughout the 3 year monitoring period. The winter 2012 survey also found that the beach followed by Public Rights of Way were the most common open spaces visited close to home. The groups that said they did not have good access to open space close to home lived in Parkeston (2 groups), Wrabness, Ramsey, Harwich, Little Oakley and Great Oakley which with the exception of Parkeston and Harwich are quite rural in character.

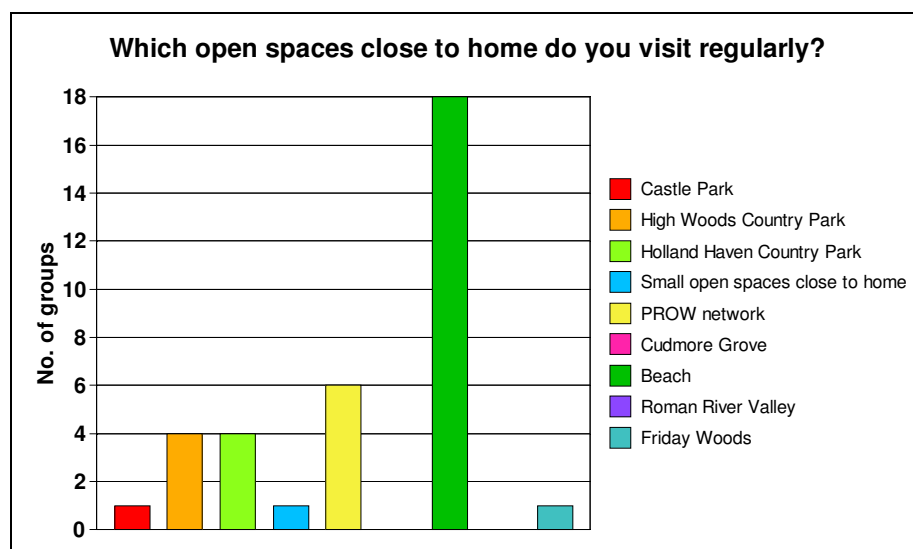


Figure 41. open spaces close to home that groups visit. The beach was the most popular area followed by public rights of way network.

Only 4 boats were recorded during the week day survey at the Stour Estuary, no record was taken of boats during the weekend survey.

The Walls, Mistley

The Walls is a popular area of open space and busy footpath between Manningtree and Mistley located on the southern banks of the Stour Estuary.

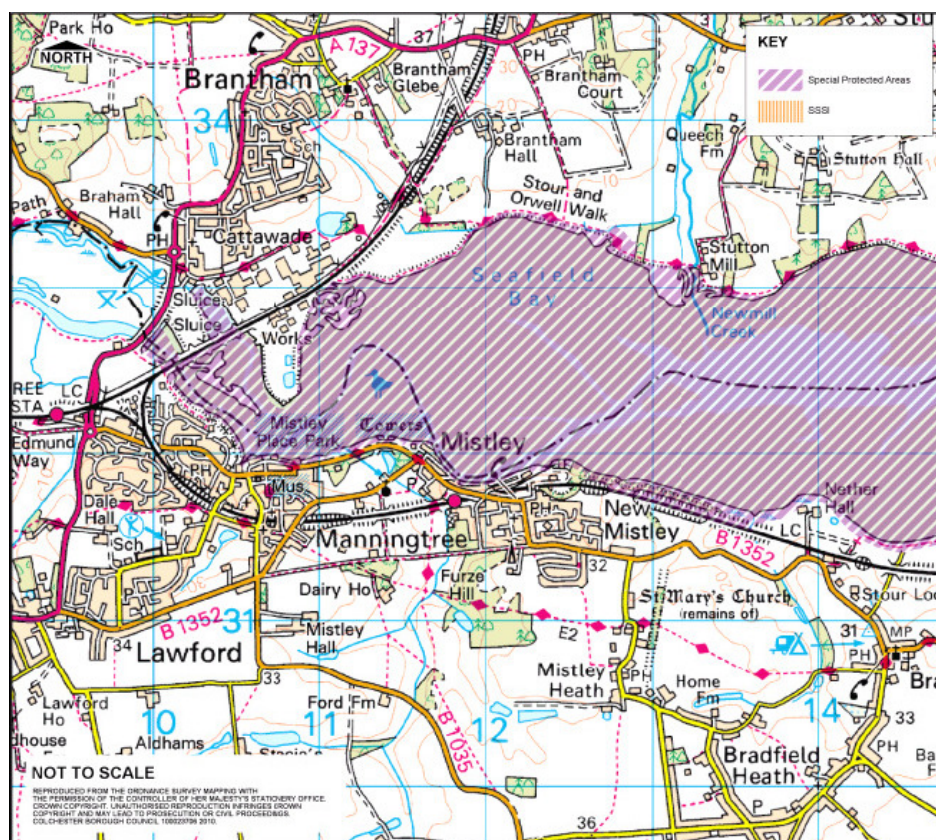


Figure 42. Location of The Walls, Mistley.

The condition of the SSSI unit within the survey area is summarised in table 12; this unit is unfavourable declining. Coastal squeeze, water pollution and agricultural run off have been identified as potential reasons for adverse condition. The previous site condition (2002) identified recreational disturbance as a reason for adverse condition, this is no longer referred to in the unit summary.

SSSI Unit	Condition	Summary	Last assessment date
1	Unfavourable declining	The unit contains the biotopes typically associated with upper estuarine soft muds and sandy muds. It also contains the biotope known to support the burrowing anemone, <i>Nematostella vectensis</i> , and the tentacled lagoon worm, <i>Alkmaria romijni</i> - notified features. There is some upper foreshore erosion and evidence of active erosion of saltmarsh types associated with the notified feature, <i>Limonium humile</i> (lax-flowered sea lavender). However it is difficult to assess whether this has significantly increased since the Environment Agency (2000) report on saltmarsh losses between 1988 and 1998. On balance the unit is assessed as unfavourable declining and coastal squeeze may be a key contributory factor. The sea wall length in this unit maintained by the Environment Agency is approximately 1.58 km out of a total shoreline in this unit of approximately 3.29 km. The remainder of the frontage is in private ownership or possibly local authority responsibility. The assessment of this unit should be revisited following consideration of the findings of a Royal Haskoning report on saltmarsh change and changes in land surface elevation commissioned by Harwich Haven and due to report in March 2011. Field recording forms and photos are stored on file.	27 November 2010

Table 12. A summary of SSSI unit conditions within the survey area.

During spring 2013 surveys took place over a weekend and week day. 53 surveys were recorded; 20 of these were during the week and 33 at the weekend. This is less than during winter 2012 when 62 surveys were completed. As with spring more surveys were recorded at the weekend than during the week.

As with previous survey periods the number of dogs recorded at the site was very low, 28%, which is similar to the winter 2012 survey period which recorded 18% of groups with dogs. This is very different from the other sites surveyed which show that a high percentage of groups have dogs with them. The reduced number of dogs recorded at this location can be put down to the characteristics of the survey site. The surveys were undertaken alongside the river which is home to a large number of swans and adjacent to a busy road which restricts the opportunities to let dogs off the lead. The site is also heavily used by those visiting Manningtree for their daily business, shopping and other various appointments so does not portray the same leisure opportunities as other sites surveyed. Many visitors tend to pass through the site rather than specifically visit it.

As in previous years the distance people travelled to visit The Walls was dominated by those travelling a short distance of less than 5 miles. 57% of visitors travelled

less than 5 miles, which is less than during the winter 2012 survey period (75%). During this survey period 12 out of 54 groups had travelled over 30 miles to visit the site. All previous surveys found that there tend to be groups of people that are holidaying or staying with family in the area.

The home town of visitors to The Walls was consistent with previous survey periods, which found that the majority of visitors live in Lawford, Manningtree and Mistley, see figure 44. As with previous surveys more people from towns and villages in Suffolk visit The Walls than other sites within Tendring and Colchester. Some visitors travelled some distance to visit the site; one person was holidaying in the area and there were several visitors from towns in South Essex.

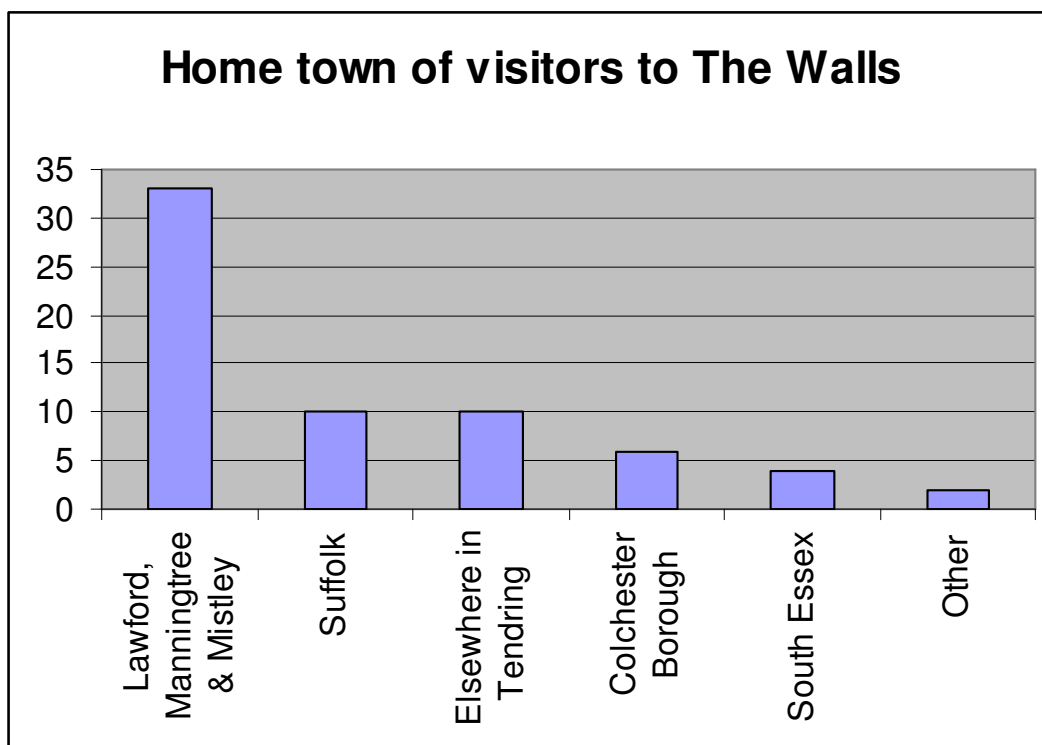


Figure 44. Home town of visitors to The Walls. The majority of visitors during the spring 2013 survey lived in Lawford, Manningtree and Mistley.

Previous survey periods found that the majority of visitors were walking (78% of visitors during the winter 2012 survey) and whilst walking was still the most popular activity during the winter survey period it accounted for 47% of visits, see figure 45. Exercise was a very popular activity at this site and was referred to by 11 people. Dog walking was also a popular activity during this survey period. The high proportion of people walking can be attributed to the nature of the site with local residents walking along it as part of their day to day visits to Manningtree.

What is the purpose of your visit to The Walls, Manningtree?

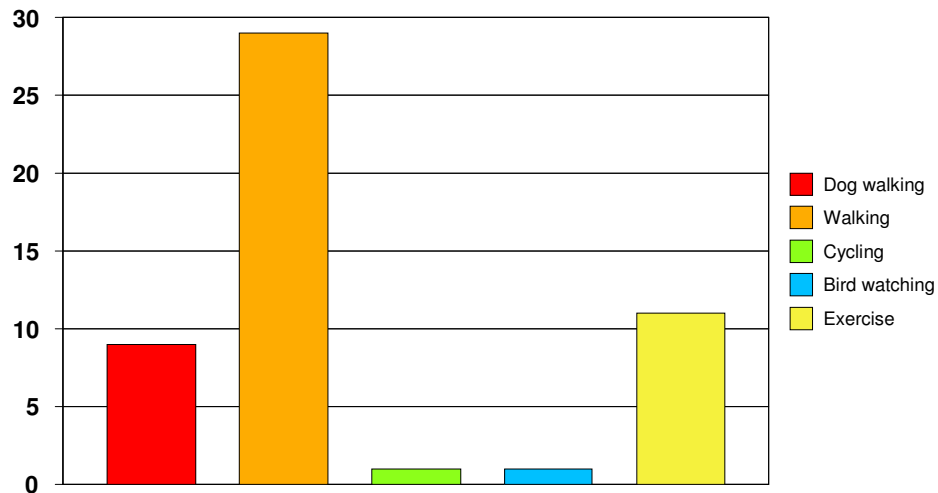


Figure 45. Purpose of site visit to The Walls. Walking was the predominant activity followed by exercise, dog walking, and bird watching and cycling.

As with previous surveys there was a wide variety of reasons given of why people visit the site, see figure 46. Despite the high proportion of people encountered during every survey period who said that they were just walking into Manningtree Town close to home was not the most popular reason given for visiting. Like the area was the most popular reason given followed by attractive scenery and then close to home. Previous survey periods have found that a lot of people visit The Walls to bird watch (or photograph) and visit due to the habitat. However, during this survey period only 1 person said that they were bird watching and only 3 people said they were visiting because of the habitat.

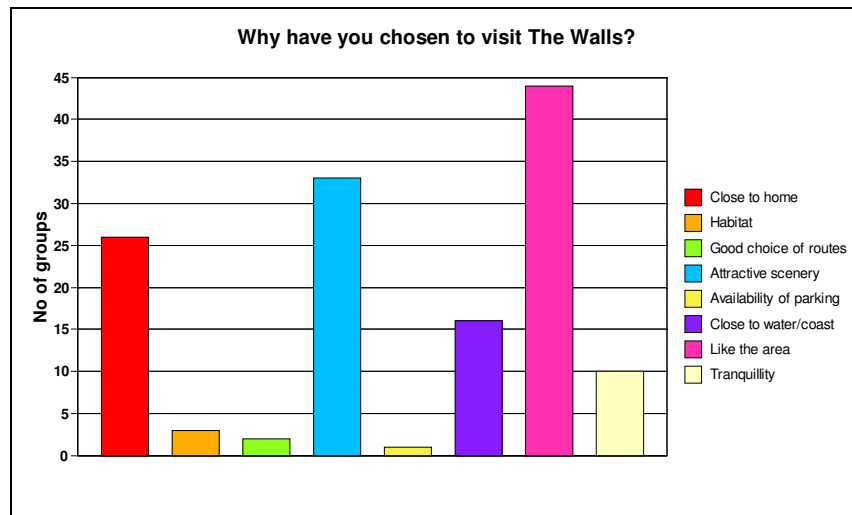


Figure 46. Reasons why people have chosen to visit The Walls. Like the area was the most popular reason followed by attractive scenery.

Frequency of visits really varies at this site as shown in figure 47, which demonstrates that the site is a popular choice for visitors and those living in the local area. 2-6 times a week was the most common response given. Previous survey periods have also found that the majority of visitors visit daily or 2-6 times a week. Whilst the winter 2012 survey did find that there were a number of people who

visited The Walls less frequently during the spring survey there was a much large number of people that visited less frequently. This indicates that people are more likely to travel to visit a site in the spring/summer.

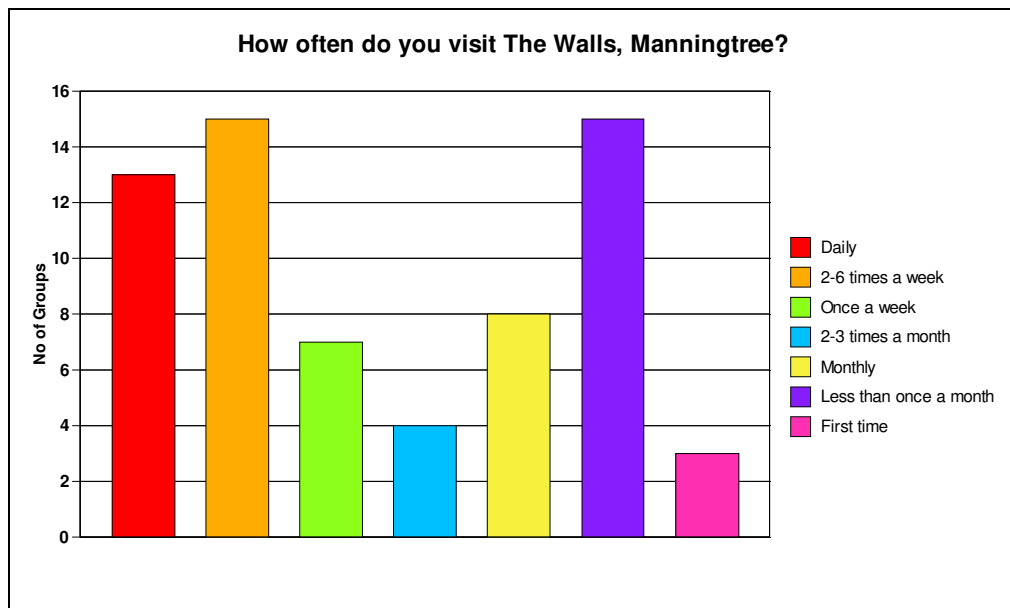


Figure 47. Frequency of visits to The Walls. Frequency of visits really varies with 2-6 times a week being the most common answer given.

Alongside the regularity of the majority of visitors 82% of the groups surveyed indicated that they visit the site all year round which further supports the continuous use and visitor pressure on this site. All survey periods have shown that a high percentage of groups visit all year round and in winter 2012 87% of groups visited throughout the year. During each survey period it was noted that a number of cars would stop at the side of the road and enjoy the view of the river or get a drink from the mobile cafes which operate from this location. It was not possible to survey the people in their cars but it was clear that the site is a popular location and draws a number of visitors to the area throughout the year.

54 of the 64 groups (83%) said that they visit alternative sites regularly. Due to Manningtree's location on the border of Suffolk and Essex it is no surprise that other coastal sites in Suffolk and Tendring were the most popular choices for groups to visit. Locations such as Walton, Harwich, Felixstowe, Flatford and Aldeburgh were specified by these groups which shows that certain groups are willing to travel to visit a location. Other coastal sites elsewhere in Essex and EWT/ RSPB reserves also received significant support, see figure 48. Unlike the winter 2012 a large number of groups (14) said that they regularly visit inland sites in Colchester.

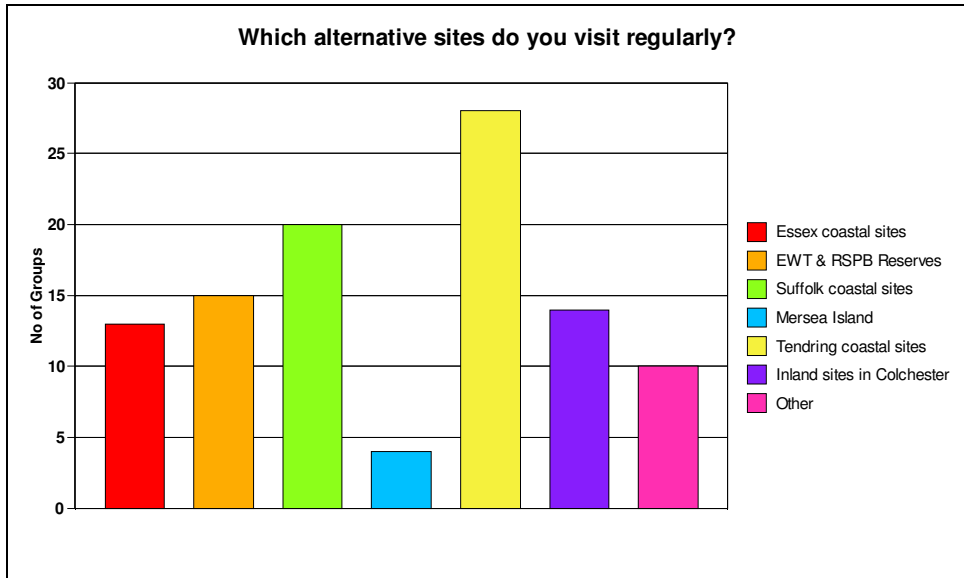


Figure 48. Alternative sites that groups visit regularly. Tendring coastal sites were the most common followed by Suffolk coastal sites.

Only 4 groups said that they do not have good access to open space close to home. This represents just 6% of total visitors. These visitors lived in Colchester, Clacton, Braintree and Bentley. Small open spaces close to home and public rights of way were the predominant answer given to the question: which open spaces close to home do you visit regularly. Locations such as Furze Hill and Wrabness Woods were given as popular locations as well as the public rights of way in and around Manningtree.

6. 3 year overview of sites

The following section summarises the findings from the past 3 years for each of the sites surveyed.

Abberton Reservoir

The number of visitors at Abberton Reservoir has increased steadily between November 2010 and June 2103. In total 139 groups were interviewed at Abberton over the 3 year project a shown in Table 13. In year 1 a total of 23 groups were interviewed in the winter and summer survey periods, 50 groups were surveyed in year 2 and 66 groups were interviewed in year 3 of the project. This represents a 186% increase in visitor numbers between the start and end of the 3 year survey period.

The winter 2010, summer 2011 and winter 2012 survey results showed that the number of visiting groups were fairly constant (11, 12 and 16) during these early survey periods. The highest number of visitors were recorded in June 2012 when 34 groups were recorded. Visitor numbers were higher during this period as the new visitor centre at Abberton opened. This was a major attractor for visitors and many of those recorded between June 2012 to the end of the 3rd year of the project cited that they were visiting to see the new centre.

Counts Respondents	Total	Survey period					
		November 2010	June 2011	November 2011	June 2012	November 2012	June 2013
Base	139	12	11	16	34	33	33
Weekday or weekend							
Weekday	64	12	11	3	12	11	15
Weekend	75	-	-	13	22	22	18

Table 13. Number of groups visiting Abberton Reservoir.

Table 13 shows that Abberton attracted more groups at the weekend than mid week. In the 1st year of the project surveys were only carried out mid week which is why the table shows no results for weekend visitors at Abberton. Following discussions with Natural England at the end of year 1, the methodology was changed to collect both mid week and weekend visitor data to allow comparisons to be made between weekend and mid week visitors. Following the opening of the new visitor centre in June group numbers more than doubled from 16 groups in November 2011 to 34, 33 and 33 groups in June 2012, November 2013 and June 2103 respectively. In the summer survey period, the number of groups recorded at Abberton were fairly equal with 15 groups recorded mid week and 18 at the weekend.

Visitor numbers were particularly low during the winter 2011 when only 3 groups were surveyed in the mid week period. The EWT centre manager attributed lower visitor numbers to the ongoing construction works at the reservoir and the Wildlife Trust expected these to affect visitor numbers for some time until the works had ended reducing disturbance levels to wildlife particularly the birds using the

reservoir and until the new habitats had established.

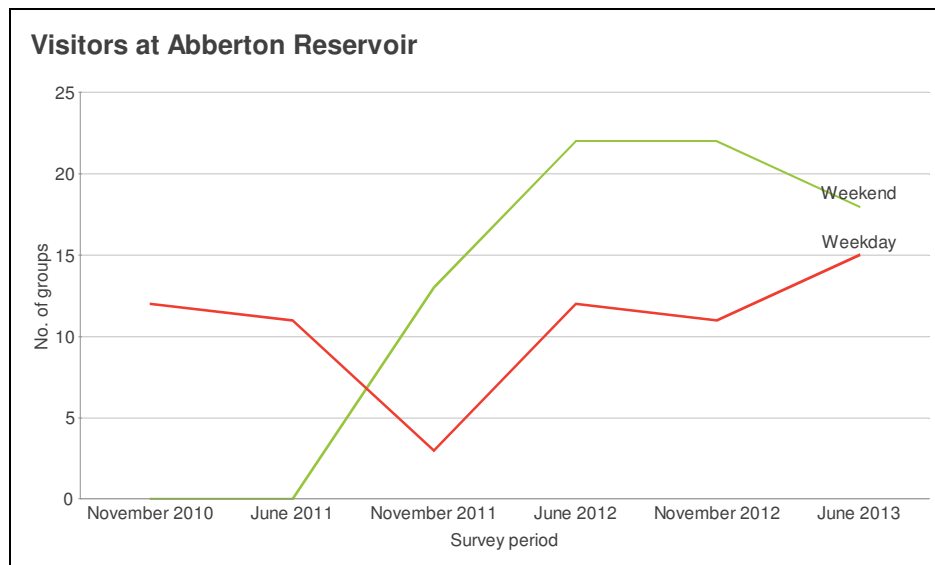


Figure 50. Number of groups visiting Abberton Reservoir. Visitor numbers were higher at the weekend.

Of the 131 groups who identified their home towns, 61 lived in Colchester Town or the surrounding villages. 16 of the groups came from Braintree District while 18 came from Maldon District. Abberton is well located to all three of these areas. Abberton however also attracts visitors from further afield. 13 of the groups lived in South Essex while another 13 lived in the neighbouring counties of Suffolk, Norfolk and Hertfordshire or further afield in Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. Only 3 of the groups interviewed at Abberton were from Tendring which is not surprising as survey results for sites in Tendring have shown that Tendring residents generally tend to visit other sites in Tendring.

The home town data is reflected in the distances travelled to Abberton Reservoir. 53% of the groups surveyed at Abberton over the 3 year period had travelled 10 miles or less to the nature reserve. 20 groups had travelled 5 miles or less while 54 had travelled up to 10 miles. 27 groups had travelled between 10 and 20 miles while 39 groups had travelled between 20 and 30 miles. Of these 28 groups had travelled 30 miles or more to visit Abberton.

Given that Abberton is a designated SPA, not surprisingly, the majority of those surveyed said that they were visiting the reserve to watch birds. From the responses given 87 groups were visiting to bird watch. This equates to 79% of those interviewed during the 3 year period. 23 groups were visiting to walk or to get some exercise. 10 of the groups were interested in seeing the new visitor centre, 2 groups were visiting on organised environmental education trips, while 1 group met at Abberton to socialise with friends and watch birds. This was a large group comprising up to 8 people. They meet every weekend at the reserve and were interviewed each survey period during years 2 and 3 of the monitoring project.

Proximity to home was the most popular reason for visiting Abberton for 43 of the groups, followed by like the area (34 groups) and good habitat (22 groups). This latter response is interesting because while new aquatic and terrestrial habitats are

being created as part of the reservoir improvement programme many of these are still developing. Availability of parking, tranquillity and attractive scenery were the least important reasons for visiting Abberton over the 3 year survey periods.

The frequency of visits varied at Abberton greatly. 45 of the groups surveyed were first time visitors to Abberton with a significant proportion of these visiting to see the new visitor centre or holidaying locally in Colchester. 30 of the groups visited less than once a month while 21 groups visited the nature reserve monthly. 18 groups visited once a week and this included the party of volunteers who meet regularly every Thursday at Abberton and also the group of ornithologists who meet weekly every Saturday or Sunday. Although no one visited Abberton on a daily basis which is not surprising given it is a nature reserve, 10 groups visited 2-6 times a week. This included people volunteering at the reserve and Anglian Water staff who worked locally but were also keen bird watchers.

Abberton attracts a high diversity of birds including winter migrants, over wintering waterfowl, as well as more common bird species who reside in the UK all year round. Because of this Abberton attracts visitors throughout the year. 82 of the groups said that they visited all year round, while 35 groups were recorded as visiting in the summer. These reflected the first time visitors who were mainly recorded after June 2012 when the visitor centre opened. 22 groups preferred to visit Abberton in the winter period when visiting bird species diversity is highest. Only 6 groups said they preferred to visit on the spring. Ornithologists will choose which destinations they visit and when they visit them depending on which birds are present at a site. This was confirmed by groups visiting at both Abberton and The Strood during November 2011 when a Snow Bunting was recorded at Abberton and a rare Red Breasted Goose was sited at The Strood.

84% of visitors said that they visited other sites regularly. 19 groups responded negatively to this question. Not surprisingly, the most popular alternative sites regularly visited were RSPB and other Essex Wildlife Site Reserves. These sites were regularly visited by 94 of the groups interviewed at Abberton over the course of the 3 years. The second most popular alternative sites were coastal sites in Suffolk including Minsmere, Dunwich, Ben Acre and Snape (30 groups), followed by Mersea Island (27 groups). Only 8 groups regularly visited inland sites in Colchester including Wivenhoe. Other sites outside the survey area visited included Rainham Marshes, Lee Valley, and Cley and Blakeney in Norfolk reflecting the fact that people are happy to travel significant distances to bird watch.

88% of the groups felt that they had access to open space close to where they lived that they used regularly. The most popular local open spaces amongst the groups surveyed at Abberton were Cudmore Grove (45 groups), small open spaces close to home (37 groups), the local Public Rights of Way network (31 groups) and Friday Woods and Castle (28 groups at each site). Only 14 groups said they visited Holland Haven Country Park regularly. Well used local green spaces included the Wivenhoe Trail, Hill House Woods, Marks Hall, Colchester Zoo, Westlands, Gosbecks, Lexden Springs and Hillyfields in Colchester Borough. In Braintree District the Discovery Centre, Philip Curry, and Flitch way were popular open spaces while in Tendring local sites included Frinton and Walton beaches, The Naze and the Stour Estuary.

While 9 of the groups responded negatively about local open space provision they did not give a reason. The only issues raised were about the need for better maintenance of public footpaths, dog mess on the Wivenhoe Trail and the need for better cycling paths.

Old Hall Marshes

Throughout the 3 year survey period surveys only took place during the week. Old Hall Marshes does not experience significant visitor pressure. It is a remote site and visitors require a permit to access the site, which is managed by the RSPB. Throughout the 3 years a total of 22 groups were surveyed at the site, with the highest number of visitors being in spring 2011 (8 groups) as shown in figure 51, below. Whilst the number of visitors peaked during spring 2011 the other two spring survey periods were very quiet with only 1 and 3 groups surveyed.

Visitors to Old Hall Marshes

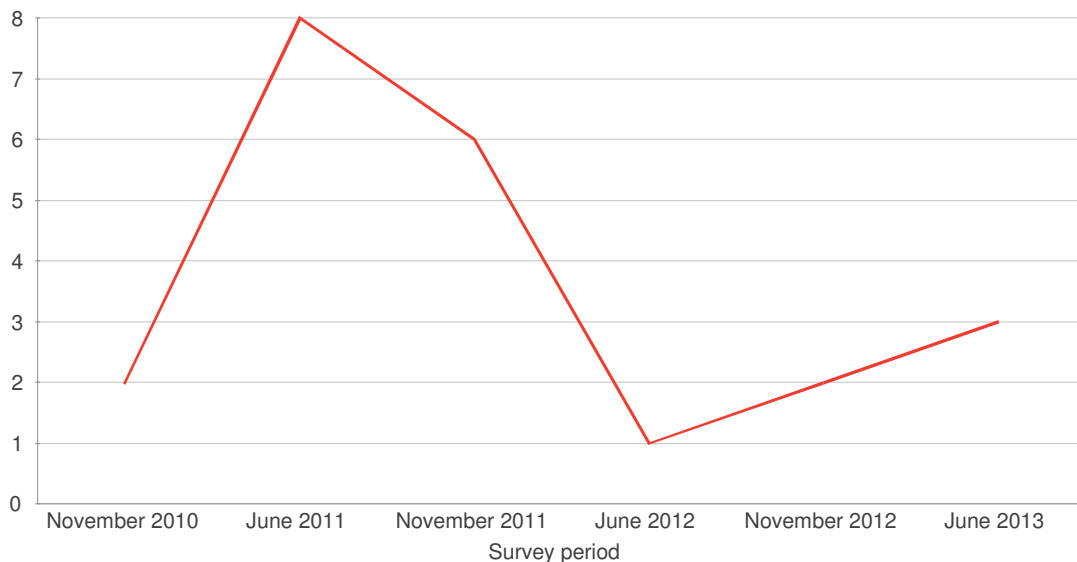


Figure 51. Visitors to Old Hall Marshes. Visitor numbers were very low compared to other sites and ranged from 1 to 8 groups.

Most of the visitors to the site were fairly local; 5 from Salcott, 4 from Maldon, 1 from Tiptree, 1 from Great Totham, 2 from Tollesbury and 1 from Tolleshunt D'Arcy. 4 groups travelled from Colchester and 2 from Braintree District (Earls Colne and Coggeshall). 1 group had travelled from Hertford during the spring 2012 survey.

12 out of the 22 groups had visited the site to bird watch and during the spring 2013 survey period one of the bird watchers was recording bird numbers for the RSPB. There were 5 groups walking and 5 groups dog walking and interestingly there were no groups of people walking or dog walking during the spring 2012, winter 2012 and spring 2013 surveys. Bird watching was the only activity that was recorded during every survey period.

The two main reasons for visiting Old Hall Marshes were close to home (9 groups) and habitat (8 groups). Attractive scenery, close to water, tranquillity and like the

area were also given as reasons for visiting. With the exception of the spring 2012 survey period when only 1 group from Hertford visited, at least 1 group of visitors during every survey period said that they visited because the site is close to home.

There were no patterns to the frequency of visits with once a week being the most common frequency (5 groups). The 4 groups that said that they visit the site daily were only encountered during the winter 2011 and winter 2012 survey periods.

16 of the groups surveyed said that they do visit alternative sites regularly, whereas 6 do not. Essex coastal sites and EWT/ RSPB reserves were the two most common alternative sites visited (8 and 7 groups respectively). Only 1 of the groups said that they visit inland sites in Colchester, possibly indicating that visitors to this site highly value the coast and habitat and choose to visit similar sites. Many alternative sites were mentioned and those that were mentioned most frequently were Abberton Reservoir, Minsmere, Fingringhoe nature reserve and the Tendring beaches.

Only 2 of the groups said that they do not have good access to open space close to home, 1 group lived in Colchester and 1 in Maldon.

Strood Channel

Throughout the 3 year survey period a total of 56 groups were surveyed at Strood Channel, which is low compared to the other survey sites. The number of groups during each survey period is set out in table 14, below. There were lower numbers than average during the spring 2012 and winter 2012 survey periods and a high number of visitors during the winter 2011 survey period. The peak in visitors in winter 2011 can be attributed to the presence of a rare bird. During this survey period a Red Breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) was grazing on the marshes north and south of The Strood Channel, which was a major attraction for those interviewed. 9 of the groups interviewed lived within Colchester Borough (6 were local to West Mersea and 3 lived in Colchester Town), 1 group lived in Braintree district, 1 in Maldon district, 1 in the Borough of Chelmsford, 1 in Billericay and 2 in Babergh district. The low numbers in spring 2012 and winter 2012 could be because of the weather. During both of these survey periods the area experienced a lot of rain and the footpath was very muddy. Several people commented that when the footpaths get very churned up with the mud many people visit less muddy sites in Mersea such as the beach.

Counts Respondents	Total	Survey period					
		November 2010	June 2011	November 2011	June 2012	November 2012	June 2013
Base	56	12	9	16	5	4	10
SSSI Unit							
Strood Channel	56	12	9	16	5	4	10

Table 14. Number of visitors at Brightlingsea Marshes over the three year survey period.

39 of the 52 groups that gave their home town lived in Mersea, which is 70% of total visitors. Other groups had travelled from a range of locations including Colchester, Sudbury, Ingatestone, Braintree and Maldon. 40 out of 52 groups had travelled

less than 5 miles to visit the site. Of the 12 groups that had travelled over 5 miles to visit 10 of these visited during the winter 2011 survey when the presence of a Red Breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) caused an increase in visitors.

Dog walking was the most popular purpose for visiting with 31 groups visiting to dog walk. These groups were evenly split across all survey periods. 12 groups had visited to walk and 12 to exercise. All of those visiting to bird watch were during the winter 2011 survey period.

Close to home was the most popular reason for visiting with 33 out of the 36 groups that answered the question saying that this was one of their reasons for visiting. Good choice of routes and like the area were also popular reasons for visiting with 14 and 13 groups respectively saying that this was one of the reasons they visited. 5 groups said they wanted to be close to water, 5 said they liked the attractive scenery, 2 said habitat and 2 said tranquillity. As already stated 12 groups visited during the winter 2011 survey to view the Red Breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*).

31 of the groups visited either daily or 2-6 times a week, which is characteristic of this site which is popular with local dog walkers.

31 of the groups said that they visit alternative sites regularly. 23 groups visit other sites in Mersea and Essex coastal sites and EWT/ RSPB reserves were also popular sites with 12 and 15 groups respectively saying they visit these sites. In terms of which sites groups visit close to home 33 said they visit Cudmore Grove, 26 said the beach and 16 said Friday Woods. At other sites small open spaces close to home and public rights of way were generally the most common answers given to this question.

Only 1 person during the 3 year monitoring period said that they do not have good access to open space close to home. This person lived in Mersea and said that they do not think there is good access to freely accessible open space within Mersea and does not like having to pay for car parking at Cudmore Grove.

Brightlingsea Marshes

The numbers of visitors at Brightlingsea Marshes has varied over the course of the 3 year survey period and ranges from 31 – 74 per survey period as shown in table 15 below. There is no difference between the number of visitors over the spring and winter periods and the highest number of visitors were during the winter 2012 survey.

Counts Respondents	Base	Survey period					
		November 2010	June 2011	November 2011	June 2012	November 2012	June 2013
Total	310	32	31	54	65	74	54
Weekday or weekend							
Weekday	142	14	15	28	24	25	36
Weekend	168	18	16	26	41	49	18

Table 15. Number of visitors at Brightlingsea Marshes over the three year survey period.

141 visitors lived in Brightlingsea, which is 45% of total visitors. Although this figure is actually likely to be higher as not all visitors gave their home town. After Brightlingsea Colchester was the most common home town of visitors. People travelled from a wide range of places to visit Brightlingsea Marshes and whilst many lived within 5 miles of the site 94 groups during the 3 year period travelled over 5 miles. During each of the spring survey periods there were several visitors that said they were holidaying in Brightlingsea.

Dog walking, followed by walking were the predominant activities taking place at Brightlingsea Marshes. The only survey period where there were more people walking than dog walking was June 2013. The weekday survey was undertaken on a very hot day, which may explain why there was a lower proportion of dog walkers. During the 3 years only 8 people visited to bird watch.

Over half of visitors surveyed over the 3 year survey period said that they had chosen to visit the site because it is close to home (151 out of 268). Attractive scenery was the second most common reason for visiting (120). Despite this being an environmentally sensitive site only 10 visitors throughout the 3 years said that they had chosen to visit because of the habitat and 6 of these were during the November 2011 survey period.

The frequency people visit this site really varies, although daily was the most frequent response given (30%). There was no difference between frequency of visits during the week and at the weekend.

42% of visitors said that they do not visit alternative sites regularly and this could perhaps be those people that live in Brightlingsea and use the site to walk their dogs. Of those that do visit alternative sites regularly Tendring coastal sites was the most common site visited. Mersea Island, Essex coastal sites and inland sites in Colchester were the next most common alternative sites visited. All of these sites are in close proximity to Brightlingsea.

8% of visitors said that they do not have access to open space close to home. The vast majority of those that do have access close to home referred to small open spaces close to home.

Cudmore Grove

Counts Respondents	Total	Survey period					
		November 2010	June 2011	November 2011	June 2012	November 2012	June 2013
Base	233	25	30	30	50	44	54
Weekday or weekend							
Weekday	112	8	30	12	22	16	24
Weekend	121	17	-	18	28	28	30

Table 16. Number of visitors at Cudmore Grove over the three year survey period.

The number of visiting groups at Cudmore Grove recorded between November

2010 and June 2103 has increased steadily over the 3 year monitoring project as shown in Table 16. In total 233 groups were interviewed between November 2010 and June 2013. In year 1, a total of 55 groups were interviewed in the winter and summer survey periods, 80 groups were surveyed in year 2 and 98 groups were interviewed in year 3 of the project. This represents a 78% increase in the number of groups visiting Cudmore Grove between the start and end of the 3 year monitoring project.

Figure 55 below shows that Cudmore Grove was generally slightly busier during the weekend survey periods when compared to the mid week survey periods. 112 groups were interviewed during weekday survey periods while 121 were surveyed during weekend survey period. During June 2011 1 full day survey was completed mid week hence the lack of data about weekend visitors during this survey period and the data peak for the weekday period. Following discussions with Natural England at the end of year 1, the methodology was changed to collect both mid week and weekend visitor data to allow comparisons to be made between weekend and mid week visitors.

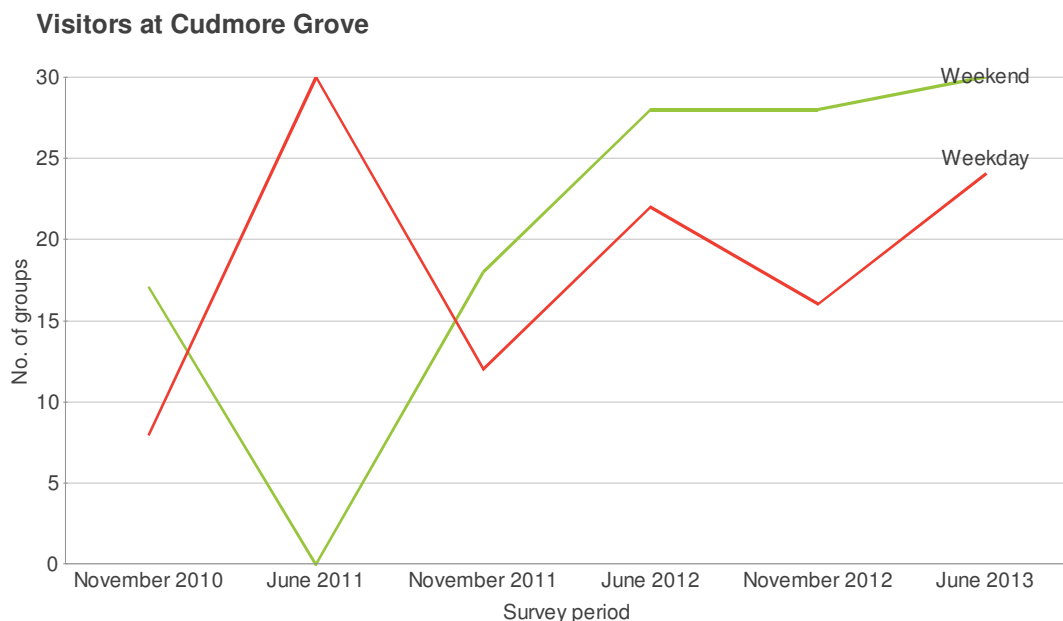


Figure 55. Visitors to Cudmore Grove. Weekends were generally busier than week days.

Over the course of the 3 year monitoring project the majority of visitors travelled to Cudmore Grove by car. 194 groups arrived by this mode of transport while 30 walked, 2 cycled and only 1 group arrived by bus. Cudmore Grove Country Park is located at the eastern end of Mersea Island. While East Mersea is accessible by bus the frequency of the service is poor, therefore it is not surprising that most visitors arrived by car.

Of the 230 groups who identified their home towns, the majority of groups surveyed at Cudmore Grove over the 3 year period lived in Colchester Borough. 134 of the groups surveyed lived in Colchester or the surrounding villages. 16 of the groups came from Braintree District, 8 came from Tendring, 7 groups came from Maldon District and 15 groups came from Chelmsford Borough. 13 of the groups lived in

South Essex. Cudmore Grove also however attracted visitors from further afield. 37 of the groups surveyed came from London, Hertfordshire, Leicester, 1 group was holidaying from South Africa and another group was holidaying from Switzerland.

The fact that a high number of those surveyed at Cudmore lived in Colchester Borough, correlates with the data about the distances groups travelled to access the country park. 70% travelled 15 miles or less to get to Cudmore Grove while 17% travelled 30 miles or more. 14 of the groups lived in West or East Mersea and all owned dogs. 9 of these groups had driven to the park which seems surprising but this was because these groups preferred to drive to the country park then walk the dogs.

Cudmore Grove is a Country Park therefore, not surprisingly; the groups surveyed gave a wide range of reasons about why they were visiting. From the responses given over the 3 year period, Cudmore Grove has emerged as an important dog walking area. 52% of those surveyed were at Cudmore Grove to walk their dogs. 30% of visitors were visiting to go walking and another 30% said they were visiting to get some exercise. The East Mersea Flats National Nature Reserve is located immediately beside Cudmore Grove. This area of grazing marsh attracts a diverse range of birds and there is a bird hide in the park. Only 28% of those surveyed at Cudmore Park over the 3 year project were there to bird watch. During year 2 a Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*) and Grey Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) were recorded at the park and this attracted ornithologists to the park. The availability of parking was the least important reason for visiting however this was a factor for 8 of the groups interviewed.

The top 3 reasons cited for visiting Cudmore Grove were because people liked the area (115 groups), because the park was close to home (75 groups) and because Cudmore Grove was at the coast (46 groups). People were also visiting to explore the area and sightsee, for outdoor family parties, to look for adders while others were on holiday. 2 other groups were visiting Mersea to eat Oysters at the Company Shed for lunch and were visiting the park to kill time.

The frequency of visits varied at Cudmore Grove greatly. 41 of the groups surveyed were first time visitors to Cudmore Grove. Some of these were visiting whilst on holiday and whilst sampling the local oysters in West Mersea. 51 groups visited the park daily or on an almost daily basis and this included local residents from Mersea and dog walkers. On the whole however people visit the country park less frequently than this. 51 groups visited less than once a month while 31 groups visited Cudmore once a week. 29 groups visited 2-3 times a month, while 27 groups visited the park monthly.

64% of visitors to Cudmore visit all year round and this includes the regular dog walkers. 30% of the groups surveyed over the project period visited only in the summer and this includes the first time visitors. There were many more families interviewed in the summer survey periods and more groups visited for leisure purposes i.e. beach picnics or family days out during the summer than other periods. Fewer groups visited in the autumn (4%) and spring (5%) which may be because Cudmore Grove itself is not a major bird watching area although the

neighbouring marshes do attract a range of overwintering birds and wildfowl.

76% of those surveyed at Cudmore Grove visit alternative sites regularly. The 4 most popular alternative sites regularly visited were Suffolk coastal sites (46 groups) Mersea Island (44 groups), inland sites in Colchester (40 groups) and RSPB and Essex Wildlife Site Reserves (35 groups). 33 groups also visited alternative sites in Tendring and these included Walton, Dovercourt, Frinton and Clacton.

The alternative Suffolk sites visited were Aldeburgh, Orfordness and Felixstowe, Snape and Southwold. Inland sites visited included Friday Woods, Gosbecks, Wivenhoe, Rowhedge and Copt Hall. Visitors also regularly visited Abberton, Fingringhoe, Hanningfield and Danbury Common EWT Reserves and Minsmere, Dunwich and Tollesbury RSPB sites. In addition to the sites listed 45 groups identified a number of other sites that they regularly visited including Hatfield Forest, Epping Forest in Essex, Hunstanton and Titchwell in Norfolk, sites in Kent and on the south coast.

81% of those surveyed felt that they had access to open space close to home that they had could regularly use. 24 were not asked this question as they lived outside the survey area or were holidaying locally on Mersea. 18 groups responded negatively however only two gave an explanation. Both groups felt that there were not enough generally enough expansive open spaces.

Mersea Island was the most popular local open space for 72 groups reflecting the fact that many of those surveyed at Cudmore lived either on the island or on nearby in Colchester Borough. Local beaches were the second most popular sites for 62 groups reflecting people's desire to be by the sea, while the third most popular site visited was Fridays Woods. 85 groups said that they used the local rights of way network and local green spaces. These included The Strood and The Glebe on Mersea, Hillyfields, Laver Woods, Westland, Abbeyfields, Gosbecks and Recreation Ground in Colchester, the Discovery Centre and Notley Country Park in Braintree. Only 11 of the groups surveyed at Cudmore Grove also visited Holland Haven which is not surprising as 70% of those surveyed at the Country Park lived locally in Colchester Borough i.e. therefore Holland Haven is not close to where they live. It must be noted however that 33 of the groups surveyed at Cudmore Grove said that they also visited sites Tendring coastal sites which mainly included the beaches at Clacton, Walton and Holland on Sea.

Kirby Quay

In total only 35 groups were surveyed over the 3 year monitoring period, see table 17. Spring 2013 saw the highest number of groups with 10 groups. This spring was hot and sunny which may explain why there were more visitors than normal. Spring 2011 was the quietest survey period with only 2 groups surveyed. Spring 2011 was fairly wet so this may explain the low number of visitors.

Counts Respondents	Base	Survey period					
		November 2010	June 2011	November 2011	June 2012	November 2012	June 2013
Total	35	6	2	7	4	6	10
SSSI Unit							
Kirby Quay	35	6	2	7	4	6	10

Table 17. Number of visitors at Kirby Quay over the three year survey period.

Apart from 1 group that had travelled from Clacton all of the groups lived within Kirby le Soken and Kirby Cross.

The main purpose of visiting for 30 of the groups was to dog walk. 3 said the purpose of their visit was to walk, 3 to bird watch and 5 to exercise. A variety of reasons were given for why people visit the site. Close to home was the most popular reason with 26 groups saying that this is one of their reasons for visiting. Like the area and attractive scenery were also popular reasons for visiting with 14 and 12 groups respectively referring to this.

18 groups said that they do visit alternative sites regularly, which is just over half of total groups. Tendring coastal sites were the most popular alternative sites groups visited. Walton-on-the-Naze in particular was referred to by most of the visitors and this site is also part of Hamford Water.

Kirby Quay is a very quiet site compared to the other survey sites and is predominantly visited by local people walking their dogs. From the consistent findings over the course of the initial 3 years it is concluded that an increase in housing in Tendring, Colchester and Maldon will not significantly increase visitors at Kirby Quay unless a large housing site is built within Kirby le Soken. It is therefore recommended that Kirby Quay is no longer surveyed as part of future monitoring work.

Walton-on-the-Naze

The numbers of visitors at Walton-on-the-Naze has varied over the course of the 3 year survey period as shown in figure 57 below. In total 231 groups visited Walton-on-the-Naze over the 3 year survey period. There is no difference between the number of visitors interviewed over the spring and winter periods and the highest number of visitors were recorded during the winter 2011 and spring 2013 survey (53 groups). Weekends were busier than week days during every survey period and the number of groups visiting was much higher than recorded as the surveyors could not survey every group.

Many of the groups sat on outside tables at the café and The Naze Tower café or on the grass area around these cafes. Some of the groups were playing football and other games and flying kites.

Number of visitors at Walton-on-the-Naze

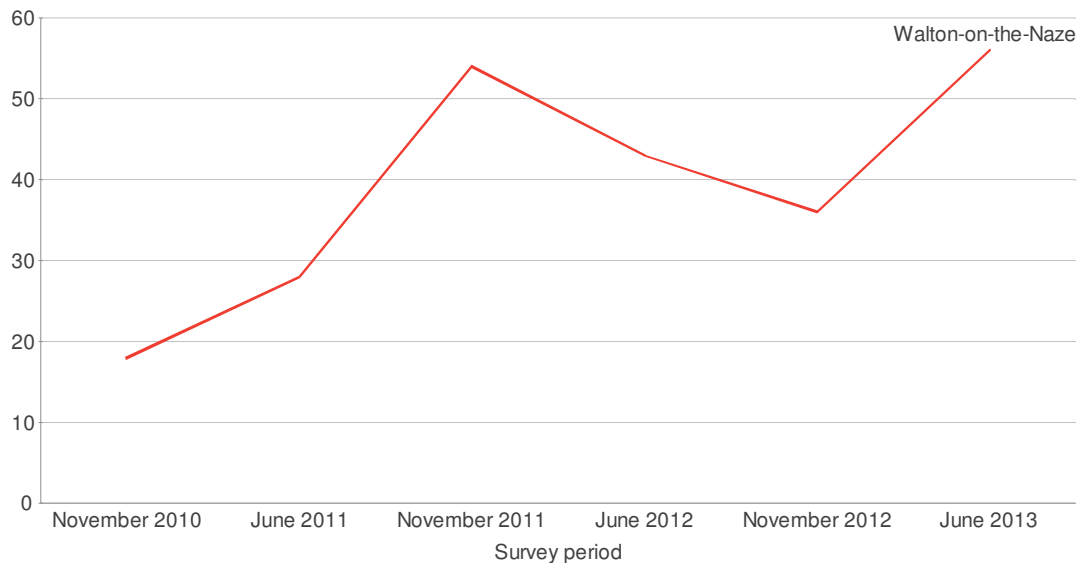


Figure 57. Number of visitors at Walton-on-the-Naze over the three year survey period.

58% of total groups lived less than 5 miles from the site. 59 groups lived in Walton and 22 lived in Frinton. This site is characterised by a high number of groups who were holidaying in the area. Approximately 20 groups said that they were holidaying in the area, although this figure is likely to be much higher as not everyone surveyed gave their home town. 39 groups had travelled over 30 miles to visit.

Dog walking, followed by walking were the predominant activities taking place at Walton-on-the-Naze. The spring 2013 survey was the only survey period where more groups visited to walk than dog walk and like other sites this may be explained by the hot and sunny weather attracting people to the coast and deterring dog walkers from visiting. Exercise was also a very popular purpose for visiting this site with 50 groups saying that the purpose of their visit was to exercise. Cudmore Grove was the only site with a higher number of groups exercising.

Like the area and attractive scenery were the most popular reasons for visiting Walton-on-the-Naze (124 and 109 groups respectively). Similar to all sites, close to home was also a popular reason for visiting (88 groups).

The frequency people visit this site really varies and less than once a month was the most frequent answer given (66 groups). This ties in with the finding that this site is characterised by people holidaying in the area during the spring months and many people tend to travel far to visit this site, even during the winter months. Notwithstanding this however, this site is also very popular with local people and 53 groups said that they visit this site daily.

40% of visitors (91 groups) said that they do not visit alternative sites regularly indicating a loyalty to this site. Whilst many of these groups could be those people that live locally it is also likely to be made up of people who have travelled from further afield. A number of people said that they visit Walton when they want to visit

the coast. Of those that do visit alternative sites regularly Tendring coastal sites was the most common site visited (72 groups). Essex coastal sites and Suffolk coastal sites were also popular alternative sites visited with 56 and 40 groups respectively saying that they regularly visit these sites. Clacton, Frinton and the Walton backwaters were the most commonly referred to alternative sites visited.

22 out of 229 (10%) groups said that they do not have good access to open space close to home. 14 of these groups were encountered during the winter 2011 survey period. Of these 14 groups 8 groups did not give their home town, 2 lived in Walton, 1 in Colchester, 1 in Clacton, 1 in Harwich and 1 was visiting from Hampton. 88 groups said that they regularly visit small open spaces close to home and 81 groups said that they regularly visit the beach. Holland Haven Country Park was referred to by 32 groups.

Stour Estuary

The number of visitors at the Stour Estuary has varied considerably over the course of the 3 year survey period and is shown in table 18 and figure 59. In total 217 groups were surveyed over the three years. Visitor numbers were very low in the first year of the survey. The winter 2011, spring 2012 and spring 2013 surveys have all shown similar numbers of visitors (42, 45 and 40 respectively). The highest number of visitors was recorded in winter 2012 (63 groups). There was significantly higher numbers of visitors at the weekend. Over the three years twice the number of groups visited at the weekend than during the week. During the spring 2011 survey period only 2 groups visited at the weekend compared to 14 during the week. This is likely to be because of bad weather on the weekend survey day. During the winter 2012 survey, which was the most popular survey day over the three years only 4 groups were surveyed during the week compared to 59 groups at the weekend. Some of the winter 2012 surveys were undertaken during unseasonable warm weather days which may account for the high number of visitors.

Counts Respondents	Base	Survey period					
		November 2010	June 2011	November 2011	June 2012	November 2012	June 2013
Total	217	11	16	42	45	63	40
Weekday or weekend							
Weekday	70	11	14	14	15	4	12
Weekend	147	-	2	28	30	59	28

Table 18. Number of visitors to Stour Estuary over the three year survey period.

Visitors at the Stour Estuary

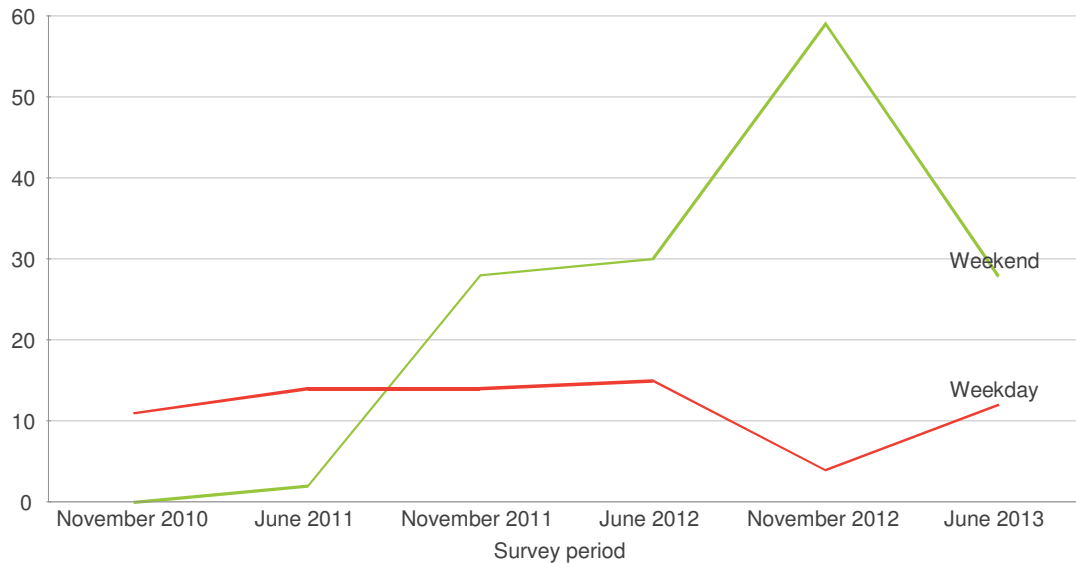


Figure 59. Visitor numbers at the Stour Estuary over the three year survey period. There were significantly higher numbers of visitors at the weekend.

105 visitors lived within the Harwich urban area as follows: 35 in Harwich, 31 in Dovercourt, 17 in Wrabness, 11 in Ramsey, 5 in Little Oakley, 3 in Great Oakley and 3 in Parkeston. This represents 48% of total visitors. Although this figure is actually likely to be higher as not all visitors gave their home town. Groups travelled from a range of locations to visit the Stour Estuary with Colchester, Clacton and Manningtree being common (10, 14 and 12 groups respectively). One visitor said that they were working in the area and 3 were on holiday in the area.

The majority of visitors had travelled less than 5 miles to visit the site, which ties in with the finding that a large number of visitors live within the Harwich urban area. 35 groups had travelled over 11 miles to visit with most of these being at the weekend (29).

Dog walking and walking were the predominant activities taking place at Stour Estuary. During the week there were more people dog walking and at the weekend the numbers walking and dog walking were virtually the same (75 and 71 respectively). Only 12 groups were visiting to bird watch and 11 of these visited at the weekend.

Attractive scenery was the most popular reason for visiting (102 out of 196), followed by close to home (85) and like the area (69). Despite this being an environmentally sensitive site only 25 visitors throughout the 3 years said that they had chosen to visit because of the habitat.

The frequency people visit this site really varies with less than once a month being the most common answer given (54 out of 216). 2-6 times a week was the second most common answer given (44 groups). 16 groups visited for the first time. 27 out of 63 groups during the winter 2012 survey period said that they visit every month and it was this survey period that perhaps saw more visitors than normal due to the

unseasonable warm weather.

34% of visitors said that they do not visit alternative sites regularly and this could perhaps be those people that live in the Harwich urban area. Of those that do visit alternative sites regularly Tendring coastal sites was the most common site visited (57 out of 124) with many visitors citing the beach.

16% of visitors said that they do not have good access to open space close to home. During the spring 2012 survey almost half of people surveyed said that they do not have good access to open space.

The Walls

The number of visitors at The Walls has varied considerably over the course of the 3 year survey period and is shown in table 19 and figure 61. In total 278 groups were surveyed over the three years. Visitor numbers were low in the first year of the survey. The winter 2011, spring 2012 and spring 2013 surveys have all shown similar numbers of visitors (63, 62 and 65 respectively), which was also found at the Stour Estuary. The highest number of visitors was recorded in spring 2013 (65 groups). There were higher numbers of visitors at the weekend, although this was not as pronounced as some of the other sites, such as the Stour Estuary. During all of the spring survey periods the number of weekend and week day visitors was very similar.

Counts Respondents	Base	Survey period					
		November 2010	June 2011	November 2011	June 2012	November 2012	June 2013
Total	278	17	36	63	35	62	65
Weekday or weekend							
Weekday	122	17	17	21	15	20	32
Weekend	156	-	19	42	20	42	33

Table 19. Number of visitors at The Walls over the three year survey period.

Number of visitors at The Walls



Figure 61. Visitor numbers at The Walls over the three year survey period. There were higher numbers of visitors at the weekend and visitor numbers fluctuated over the survey period.

Over the 3 year survey period 12 of the groups surveyed said that they were on holiday in the area. The actual number of visitors on holiday in the area may actually be higher as a number of people in large groups said that they were staying with family in the area. Visitors came from a wide range of locations to visit The Walls, principally throughout Tendring, Suffolk and Colchester. A large number of visitors, 114, lived in Lawford, Manningtree and Mistley (14, 29 and 71 respectively). 25 were from Colchester, 12 were from Ipswich with the remaining visitors spread around a number of towns and villages.

The majority of visitors had travelled less than 5 miles to visit the site, which ties in with the finding that a large number of visitors live within Lawford, Manningtree and Mistley.

Walking was the predominant activity at this site with over half of visitors walking (61%). Exercise was the second most popular activity at The Walls with 21% of visitors saying they were there to exercise. This is one of the few sites where dog walking was not a really popular activity with 41 out of 202 groups (20%) dog walking. The number of dog walkers was evenly split between the weekday and weekend.

Like the area and attractive scenery were the most popular reasons for visiting (131 and 128 out of 247). Close to home was also a popular reason with 113 visitors referring to this. Considerably more weekend visitors than week day visitors said that the availability of parking was a reason they visited (18 and 3 respectively). The tranquillity of the area was given as a reason for visiting by 14 visitors during the week day surveys but only by 4 visitors during the weekend surveys. This may be because the site is generally busier at weekends and so not as tranquil.

The frequency people visit this site really varies with daily, 2-6 times a week, once a

week and less than once a month all with a similar number of responses. Frequency of visits was very similar between the weekend and week day surveys except for once a week where more weekend visitors said that they visited this often compared to week day visitors.

21% of visitors said that they do not visit alternative sites regularly. This figure is lower than some of the other survey sites and is likely to be because of the wide range of locations that people travel from to visit this site. The 79% of visitors who said that they do visit alternative sites visit a range of sites with the majority saying that they visit Tendring and Suffolk coastal sites.

14% of visitors said that they do not have good access to open space close to home. During the winter 2011 survey 15 groups surveyed said that they do not have good access to open space, which represented a quarter of all surveys during that period.

7. Local authority data

Colchester Borough Council

Colchester Borough Council has an adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD), Site Allocations DPD and Development Policies DPD. The Council are carrying out a two stage review of these adopted DPDs. The first stage is a focused review, which is aimed at those policies that can be easily amended to ensure compliance with the NPPF without further evidence required. The focused review does not include any changes to the spatial strategy or housing and employment targets and allocations.

Colchester's spatial strategy is to direct development mainly towards the main urban area of Colchester, with lesser amounts of development restricted to small infill sites within the settlement boundaries of West Mersea, Wivenhoe, Rowhedge and Tiptree. None of the housing or employment allocations are within walking distance of any of the international sites in the Borough.

The table below, shows housing completion numbers in Colchester Borough between 2001/2 and 2011/12.

Year	Number of dwellings
2001/2	566
2002/3	980
2003/4	916
2004/5	1277
2005/6	896
2006/7	1250
2007/8	1243
2008/9	1028
2009/10	518
2010/11	673
2011/12	1016
Total over past 11 yrs	10363

Table 20. Housing completions in Colchester Borough between 2001 and 2012.

Tendring District Council

Between 2001/2 and 2011/12 4,291 new dwellings were completed in Tendring District. The annual breakdown of completions is shown in table 21.

Year	Number of dwellings
2001/2	459
2002/3	407
2003/4	253
2004/5	420
2005/6	557
2006/7	556
2007/8	495
2008/9	376
2009/10	319
2010/11	217
2011/12	232
Total over past 11 yrs	4,291

Table 21. Housing completions in Tendring District between 2001 and 2012.

Under the previous Local Plan Tendring District Council directed a large proportion of new dwellings towards the larger urban centres of Clacton, Harwich, Frinton/Walton, Manningtree/Lawford/Mistley and Brightlingsea. These areas are close to a number of international sites including the Stour and Orwell Estuaries Special Protection Area, Hamford Water Special Protection Area and the Colne Estuary which forms part of the Mid Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation. Housing completions in close proximity to international sites are set out in table 22, below. This table shows that 2161 dwellings have been completed close to international sites in Tendring District since 2001.

Tendring District Council's preferred housing strategy in their emerging Local Plan is to deliver an increase in new housing across all settlements in the District. This change of strategy may affect visitor numbers at the international sites in the future as more housing may be built close to the international sites.

Settlement	Closest Natura 2000 site	Number of dwellings
St Osyth	Colne Point (Colne Estuary)	95
Point Clear	Colne Point (Colne Estuary)	19
Frinton/Walton	The Naze (Hamford Water)	454
Kirby le Soken	Kirby Quay (Hamford Water)	19
Harwich	Stour Estuary (Stour & Orwell Estuaries)	880
Ramsey	Stour Estuary (Stour & Orwell Estuaries)	6
Wrabness	Stour Estuary (Stour & Orwell Estuaries)	10
Great Oakley	Stour Estuary (Stour & Orwell Estuaries)	26
Lawford/Manningtree / Mistle	The Walls (Stour & Orwell Estuaries)	318
Brightlingsea	Brightlingsea Marshes (Colne Estuary)	334
Total		2161

Table 22. Housing completions close to international sites within Tendring District over the past 11 years.

In 2011/12 241 dwellings were completed in the District. The table below outlines the number of new dwellings delivered during 2011/12 in close proximity to international sites. In total 37 new dwellings were completed near international sites. As with the previous 10 years the largest proportion of new dwellings that are close to international sites are located in Harwich, Frinton/Walton and Brightlingsea.

Settlement	Closest Natura 2000 site	Number of dwellings
Frinton/Walton	The Naze (Hamford Water)	6
Kirby le Soken	Kirby Quay (Hamford Water)	1
Harwich	Stour Estuary (Stour & Orwell Estuaries)	14
Ramsey	Stour Estuary (Stour & Orwell Estuaries)	0
Wrabness	Stour Estuary (Stour & Orwell Estuaries)	1
Great Oakley	Stour Estuary (Stour & Orwell Estuaries)	0
Lawford/Manningtree / Mistle	The Walls (Stour & Orwell Estuaries)	0
Brightlingsea	Brightlingsea Marshes (Colne Estuary)	15
Total		37

Table 23. Housing completions close to Natura 2000 sites within Tendring District in 2011/12.

It is very important that monitoring continues in Tendring District to ensure that development does not adversely affect the integrity of international sites due to the close proximity of the main settlements to international sites.

Braintree District Council

Between 2001/02 and 2011/12, 6164 houses were delivered in Braintree District as shown in table 66 below. A total of 298 new dwellings were built during 2011/12. Of the 298 new houses delivered in this period, 214 were built in Braintree, Witham and Halstead, 12 were completed in the key villages with a further 72 were delivered in other villages. As there are no international sites in Braintree District an analysis of the distribution of the dwellings is not a key factor.

Year	Housing Completions
2001/2	647
2002/3	659
2003/4	854
2004/5	693
2005/6	507
2006/7	658
2007/8	628
2008/9	342
2009/10	428
2010/11	450
2011/2102	298
Total	6164

Table 24. Housing completions in Braintree District between 2001/2 and 2011/12.

8. Conclusion

Whilst this is the final report of the initial 3 year survey period and conclusions have been drawn about each of the sites all previous reports should also be read to reach an understanding of the visitor patterns at each of the international sites surveyed in different years and seasons. This final section of the report provides a comparison of the 9 sites surveyed and overall conclusions.

The highest number of groups interviewed over the course of the 3 year survey period was at Brightlingsea Marshes where 312 groups were surveyed. This was followed by The Walls where 279 groups were surveyed, then Cudmore Grove where 236 groups were surveyed and Walton-on-the-Naze where 235 groups were surveyed. The quietest site was Old Hall Marshes where just 22 groups were surveyed. Figure 62 below compares visitor numbers at the 9 international sites surveyed. The highest number of visitors in any one survey period was during winter 2012 at Brightlingsea Marshes where 74 groups were surveyed. The lowest number of visitors was at Old Hall Marshes during the spring 2012 survey where just 1 group was surveyed. Visitor numbers have generally remained fairly consistent for most of the sites and whilst it appears that visitor numbers have increased this may in part be due to improvements in surveying. A number of sites show peaks in visitors during the winter 2012 survey period and this was the busiest survey period with 324 groups recorded across all sites. This was a very cold winter and surveyors noticed that on warmer days visitor numbers were higher than other survey periods and many visitors commented that they were taking the opportunity to enjoy a break in the cold weather. Winter 2010 was the quietest survey period with 135 surveys recorded across all sites. Strood Channel, which was a fairly quiet site, experienced a peak in visitors during the winter 2011 survey due to the presence of a rare bird. Visitor numbers at Abberton Reservoir have significantly increased since the early part of the monitoring period and this is likely to be because of the opening of the new visitor centre in June 2012.

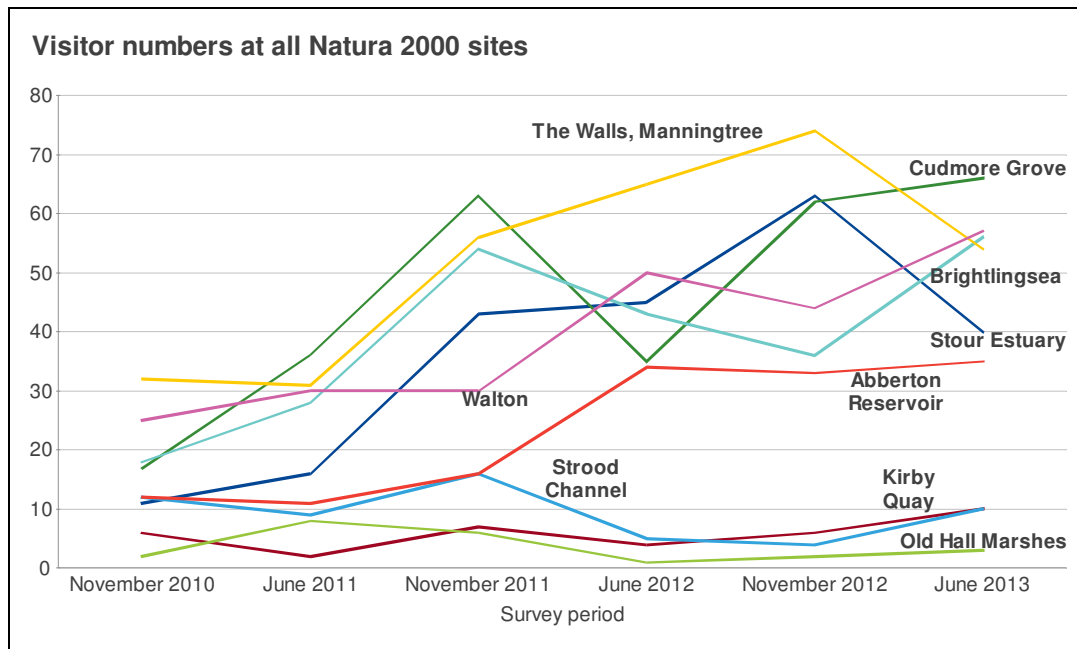


Figure 62. Visitor numbers at all Natura 2000 sites over the survey period.

Overall 75% of visitors to all sites said that they visit all year round and this is reflected in the findings that the winter survey periods were very busy and the busiest survey period was winter 2012. Cudmore Grove and Walton-on-the-Naze had the highest number of visitors that said they generally only visit during the spring/ summer months. There were also a number of visitors at Abberton Reservoir, The Walls and Brightlingsea Marshes that said they generally only visit during the spring/summer months. There was a distinct difference between winter and spring visitors surveyed at Walton-on-the-Naze.

Across all of the sites 55% of visitors travelled less than 5 miles to visit. Kirby Quay had the highest number of local visitors; only 1 visitor travelled over 5 miles to visit. 77% of visitors to Strood Channel, 68% of visitors to Brightlingsea Marshes, 67% of visitors to Stour Estuary, 59% of visitors to The Walls and 58% of visitors to Walton-on-the-Naze travelled less than 5 miles. This reflects the finding that these sites, particularly Kirby Quay and Strood Channel, are visited regularly by people living nearby. Only 14% of visitors to Abberton Reservoir travelled less than 5 miles. 39% of visitors to Abberton Reservoir travelled 6-10 miles and 20% travelled over 30 miles. Abberton Reservoir is a large and popular nature conservation site managed by Essex Wildlife Trust and it is evident from the 3 year survey period that visitors travel from all over Essex and Suffolk to visit. As already stated visitor numbers increased following the opening of the new visitor centre in June 2012 and further monitoring will help to understand whether this increase in visitors is sustained. Dogs are not permitted on the nature reserve and so this helps to explain why, contrary to the other sites surveyed, there is an absence of local people visiting to walk their dogs. Cudmore Grove and Walton-on-the-Naze also experienced a large number of visitors that had travelled over 30 miles. 39 groups to each of these sites had travelled over 30 miles and this represents 18% of total groups to Cudmore Grove and 17% of total groups to Walton-on-the-Naze. It was found that there were many large groups at these

two sites, particularly during the weekend spring/survey periods. These are popular coastal sites with car parking, toilets, visitor information and refreshments.

Across all sites dog walking was the most popular purpose of visiting with 46% of total visits being to dog walk, 39% to walk and just 1% to cycle as shown in figure 63 below. The highest percentage of dog walkers was at Kirby Quay where 88% of groups had visited to dog walk. Abberton Reservoir, The Walls and Old Hall Marshes had very low numbers of dog walkers. No-one at Abberton Reservoir visited to walk their dogs as dogs are not permitted on the reserve. 5 groups at Old Hall Marshes, which represents 23% of visitors, had visited to dog walk and 41 groups at The Walls, which represents 20% of visitors, had visited to dog walk. Old Hall Marshes is a very remote site with few dwellings within walking distance which is likely to explain the low numbers of dog walkers. Plus the site is managed by the RSPB and visitors are required to have a permit which may discourage some visitors. Many visitors to The Walls walk into Manningtree Town for their day to day business. Further the site is linear and adjacent to a busy road so is not really a safe site for dogs to run off the lead. Reflecting this The Walls has the highest percentage of visitors that had visited for the purpose of walking (61% and 124 groups). A high percentage of visitors at the Stour Estuary had visited for the purpose of walking (49% and 103 groups). It is interesting that these are the two Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA sites that are surveyed.

A study of disturbance on the Stour and Orwell Estuaries in 2007⁷ found that walkers, walkers with dogs and boats caused the greatest proportion of the disturbance recorded. However, the majority caused no disturbance at all. The study found that birds are most sensitive to relatively infrequent events such as shots, aircraft and bait diggers, which were found to cause the greatest disturbance. The study also found that every walker disturbed, on average, 24 birds, while every dog walker disturbed 33 birds and every other onshore event disturbed 30-50 birds.

The study found that at low tide when birds were a long way from the foreshore there was no difference in disturbance levels caused by walkers and walkers with dogs. At high tide, however dogs caused more disturbance. The study also found that there was a difference between dogs on leads and those not on leads, and the latter were found to cause twice as much disturbance. However, the difference was not statistically significant and there was no distinction between the behaviour and degree of control of the dogs without leads.

Across all sites very similar numbers of visitors had visited to bird watch and exercise, 15% and 16% respectively. Abberton Reservoir was the most popular site for bird watching, followed by Old Hall Marshes. These sites are well known as important sites for birds and are both nature reserves. Very low numbers of visitors at Brightlingsea Marshes, Walton-on-the-Naze and

⁷ Ravenscroft, Parker, Vonk & Wright (2007) Disturbance to water birds wintering in the Stour-Orwell estuaries SPA. Suffolk Coast & Heaths Unit.

Stour Estuary visited with the purpose of bird watching. It is surprising that such low numbers of those surveyed at Stour Estuary had visited to bird watch as it is an RSPB reserve and there are several bird hides within the site. However, the majority of surveys were carried out in Stour Wood and along the estuary path close to the wood and so some of those people visiting to bird watch may have been missed by the surveyors. Cudmore Grove, Walton-on-the-Naze, Strood Channel and The Walls were the most popular sites for exercising. From the 3 year monitoring work it is evident that sites visited by ornithologists will be influenced by the birds species present. Bird enthusiasts at both the Strood Channel and Abberton both reported that they were happy to travel to different sites to see rare birds and the species present had a major influence on the sites they decided to visit. This could have implications for visitor numbers at some sites in the future.

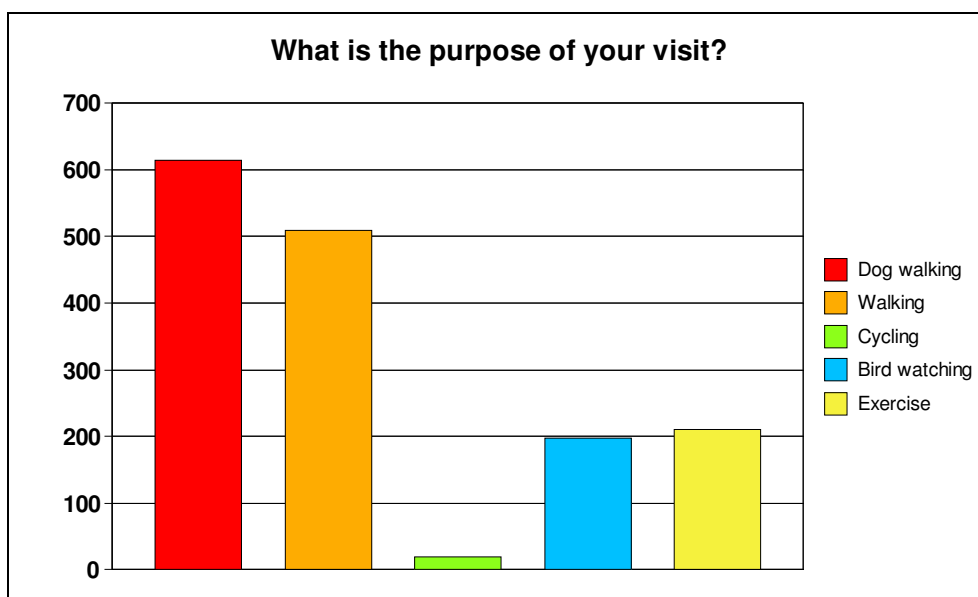


Figure 63. Purpose of visit across all sites. Dog walking was the most popular and cycling the least popular. Similar numbers of visitors were bird watching and exercise.

Across all of the sites close to home was the most popular reason that visitors gave for visiting with 49% of total visitors saying they visit sites because the site is close to home, see figure 64. Like the area and attractive scenery were also popular reasons for visiting with 43% and 39% respectively of total visitors saying that this is one of their reasons for visiting. A quarter of total visitors said that their reason for visiting was because of their desire to be close to the coast. This would suggest that the provision of alternative accessible natural greenspace to deter people from visiting sensitive coastal areas in Colchester and Tendring would only have limited success as one of key reasons people visit the sensitive coastal sites in Colchester and Tendring is to be close to the coast, which alternative accessible natural greenspace would not be able to replicate. Furthermore, analysis has shown that people are prepared to travel some distance to visit the coast. Of those groups that had travelled 26-30 miles 41% said it was because of a desire to visit the coast and of those that had travelled over 30 miles 31% said it was because of a desire to visit the coast. The desire to visit the coast is less popular with people who live close to the coast (14% of those that lived within 0-5 miles

said that they visited because of a desire to visit the coast), perhaps because visiting the coast is something they are very familiar with and also because there are other reasons they visit such as being close to home. Availability of parking was the least popular reason for visiting with just 8% of total visitors saying that this is one of the reasons they visited. 52% of visitors at Abberton Reservoir said that they visited because the site is close to home. However, only 14% of visitors to Abberton Reservoir travelled under 5 miles. This implies that many of the visitors to Abberton Reservoir are happy to travel some distance to visit sites. Almost every visitor at Strood Channel (33 out of 36) said that they had visited because the site is close to home, demonstrating that this site is popular with local people and very few people travel from outside of the area to visit.

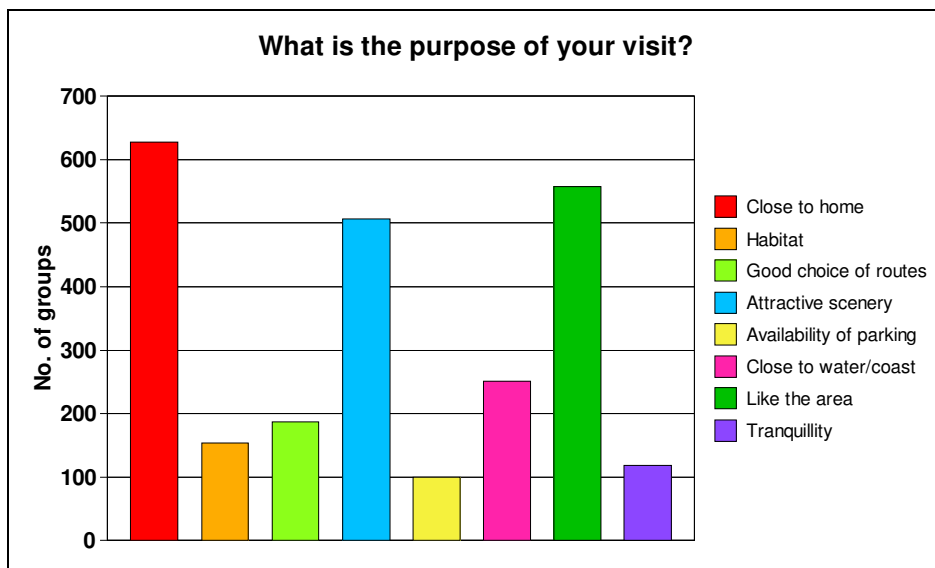


Figure 64. Reasons for people visiting all sites. Many people identified multiple reasons for visiting. Close to home was the most popular reason.

At most sites weekend and week day surveys were carried out. It was found that for most sites there were similar numbers of visitors during the week and at the weekend albeit with slightly more visitors at the weekend. However, at the Stour Estuary there was a marked difference between weekend and week day visitors with 70 of total groups visiting during the week and 148 of total groups visiting at the weekend.

31% of total visitors across the sites said that they do not visit alternative sites regularly, which demonstrates loyalty to sites. 44% of total visitors to Kirby Quay and 42% of total visitors to Brightlingsea Marshes said that they do not visit alternative sites regularly. The highest percentage of visitors who regularly visit alternative sites was at Abberton Reservoir where 86% of visitors regularly visit alternative sites. 78% of visitors to The Walls, 76% of visitors to Cudmore Grove and 73% of visitors to Old Hall Marshes visit alternative sites regularly. As already reported visitors to Abberton Reservoir and to a lesser extent Old Hall Marshes visit from a range of locations several miles away and many visit to bird watch and so it is unsurprising that many of the visitors visit alternative sites regularly. This may be sites closer to home or other sites which are well known for bird watching and wildlife. There were

very few visitors to Kirby Quay during each of the survey periods and only 1 visitor had travelled over 5 miles to visit the site. The majority of visitors had visited to dog walk and so the finding that 44% of visitors do not visit alternative sites regularly is unsurprising as many dog walkers use the same paths, close to home.

In terms of which alternative sites visitors regularly visit Tendring coastal sites was the most popular overall with 40% (396) of total visitors saying that they regularly visit Tendring coastal sites, see figure 65. A much higher percentage of visitors surveyed at sites in Tendring said that they visit alternative coastal sites in Tendring than the sites surveyed in Colchester. 29% (287) of visitors said that they regularly visit EWT and RSPB sites. Inland sites in Colchester were the least common of the alternative sites regularly visited. This could be because of the pull of the coast and visitor's desire to visit other similar areas. Location has an impact on the alternative sites visitors regularly visit. A high number of visitors at The Walls said that they regularly visit coastal sites in Suffolk and a high percentage of visitors at the Strood Channel (74%) said that they regularly visit alternative sites on Mersea. The list of alternative sites that groups visit regularly is far too lengthy to list in this report. However, the sites that were mentioned most frequently are listed below:

- Fingringhoe nature reserve
- Abberton Reservoir
- Alton Water
- The beach (Tendring beaches, Mersea and Felixstowe were mentioned the most)
- Brightlingsea
- Dedham and Flatford
- Dunwich
- Minsmere
- Aldeburgh.

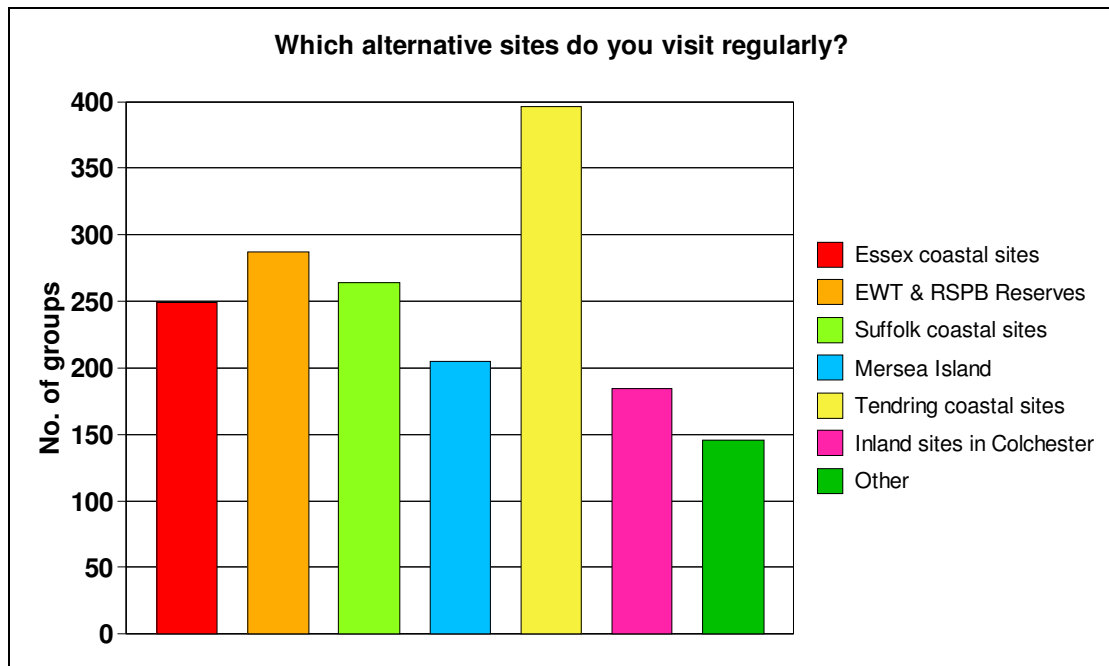


Figure 65. Alternative sites visited across all sites. Tendring coastal sites is the most common alternative site visited and inland sites in Colchester is the least popular alternative site visited.

10% of total visitors said that they do not have access to open space close to home. The highest percentage of groups that did not consider that they had good access to open space close to home were at the Stour Estuary and The Walls. 16% of visitors to the Stour Estuary, which was 34 groups and 14% of visitors to The Walls, which was 37 groups said that they did not have access to open space close to home. The Walls and Stour Estuary are in fairly close proximity to one another as both form part of the Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA. Tendring District Council has protected a 50 hectare area along Ramsey Creek between Ramsey and Parkeston for a new country park. Tendring District Council's Open Space Strategy 2009 also includes a number of recommendations to improve connectivity to existing open spaces e.g. between Stour Estuary Nature Reserve and Essex Way and site improvements at The Naze and The Hangings, Dovercourt⁸. These initiatives may help to address the perceived shortfall in open space close to home identified by some of the visitors to the Stour Estuary and The Walls. At the Strood Channel only 1 group said that they did not have access to open space close to home, which reflects the fact that the vast majority of visitors to Strood Channel are local people and thus the Strood Channel is close to home.

Figure 66 below shows the sites that visitors reported as being close to home. Small open spaces close to home was the most common answer given with 47% of groups saying they regularly visit small open spaces close to home. 34% said they regularly visit the beach and 29% said they regularly visit public rights of way close to home. Many visitors said that they were not aware of or did not visit any of the sites on the questionnaire list. As with the list of

⁸<http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/planning/planning%20policy/OpenSpacesStrategy.pdf>

alternative sites visited the list of sites close to home is far too lengthy to list in this report. However, many people referred to country parks, local fields and local woods. Many visitors expressed concern over the loss of green spaces to housing.

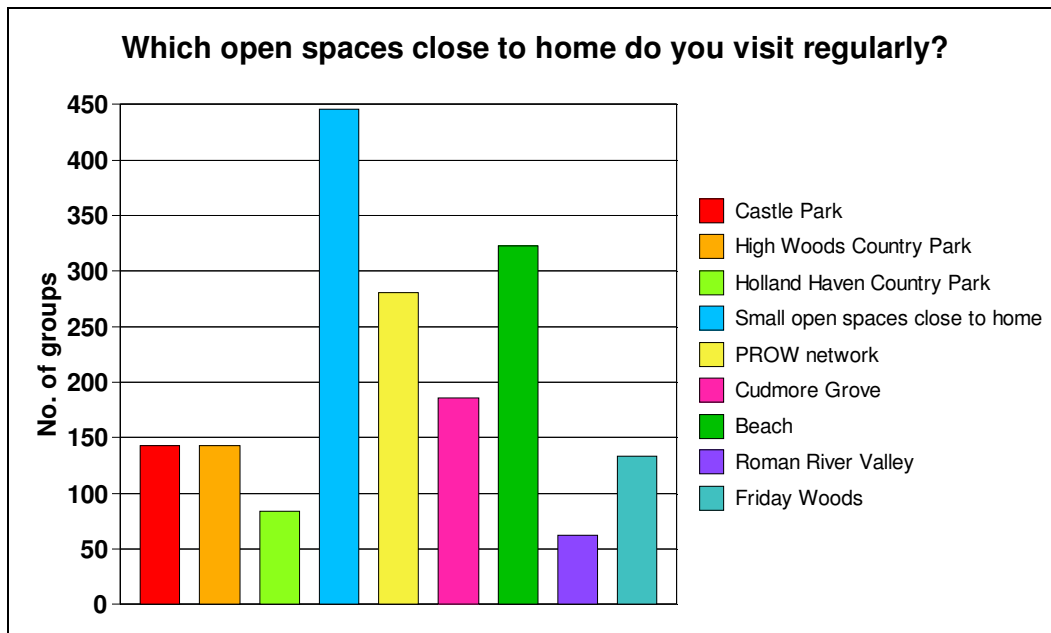


Figure 66. Open spaces close to home that visitors regularly visit across all sites. Small open spaces close to home was the most frequent answer given followed by the beach.

It is evident from the conclusions in this report that each of the 9 sites surveyed has its own distinct patterns of visitors which has been fairly consistent over the past 3 years. Patterns have also been established across all or some of the sites. Conclusions that have already been drawn can be used to influence development in Colchester, Tendring and Braintree and over time as the monitoring programme progresses conclusions will be drawn on whether population increases in Colchester, Tendring and Braintree are adversely affecting the integrity of international sites.

Whilst it would appear that visitor numbers have increased since the first survey this is partly related to improvements in carrying out the surveys. Since the first survey period in November 2010 the timings and in some cases locations of the surveys have changed. However, what is clear is that weather has had a big influence on the numbers of visitors. For example, only 2 groups visited Stour Estuary during the weekend spring 2011 survey as the weather was cold and wet but during the weekend winter 2012 survey 59 groups visited on an unseasonable warm day. Across all sites there was generally little difference between the numbers of groups during the winter and spring surveys.

At some of the sites there was very little difference between the number of groups interviewed during the week and weekend but at other sites there was a marked difference in visitor numbers. It was found that people are prepared to travel further at the weekend and at some sites the number of large groups

also tends to be higher at this time. Stour Estuary was significantly busier at the weekend compared with during the week.

It has been found that many people (49% across all sites over the 3 years) visit sites because they are close to home and so it is essential that as part of new development good quality open space is delivered.

A quarter of total visitors across all sites said that one of their reasons for visiting was because of a desire to be close to water. Therefore the provision of accessible natural greenspace will have limited success in deterring people from visiting the international sites in Colchester and Tendring. It may be more beneficial to focus management measures on encouraging visitors to use less sensitive areas within international sites. The provision of car parking and facilities such as toilets and refreshments appears to have an impact on the number of visitors and also the size of groups visiting. Cudmore Grove and Walton-on-the-Naze are very popular sites and there were more large groups at these sites than any of the other sites. These 2 sites have a greater range of facilities than the other international sites surveyed. Although this is also likely to have limited success at deterring visitors as almost a third of total visitors over the 3 years said that they do not visit alternative sites regularly, which shows a loyalty to sites.

Visitors could be encouraged to use sites like Cudmore Grove Country Park and The Naze which as well as being very well used for leisure and recreational purposes are also used by health groups and for education purposes. While both these sites are partly managed for their biodiversity interest, they probably have more capacity to absorb more visitors than the other more sensitive Natura 2000 sites without adversely impacting on their integrity.

Some of the more sensitive sites like Old Hall Marshes and Abberton Reservoir are already putting measures in place to help manage visitor disturbance on wildlife. Access is managed at Old Hall through a permit system and visitors are encouraged to keep dogs on leads and walk at the base of sea walls at the more sensitive parts of the reserve. At Abberton, the Wildlife Trust have also put in hides from where visitors can watch birds without disturbing wildlife at the reserve. Similar measures or changes to site management/access could be implemented at other sites where it emerges that growing visitor numbers are adversely impacting on wildlife on the sites.

This report summarises the results of the 3 year HRA monitoring project to collect baseline data about visitor numbers at Natura 2000 sites in Colchester and Tendring. The surveys will be repeated at 2 year intervals starting again in November 2015. The data collected in future surveys will build on the data already collected in this survey. It will be used to help establish if growth in Colchester, Braintree and Tendring is affecting visitor numbers, visiting patterns and site usage to a point where it is affecting the integrity of the designated sites and enable recommendations to be made about how to manage visitors at these locations to address these impacts.



Local Plan Committee

Item

9

28 April 2014

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Beverley McClean 01206 282480
Title	Colchester Local List		
Wards affected	Urban Colchester wards, Wivenhoe Quay and Wivenhoe Cross		

The Local Plan Committee is asked to agree the proposed amendments to the adopted Colchester Local List

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to agree the proposed amendments to the adopted Colchester Local List.

2. Reasons for Decision

- 2.1 The Local List for Colchester includes buildings, architectural features and historic assets that, while not of national significance, are considered to be locally significant for their architectural or historic value. It is not a static list and will change over time in response to planning decisions or as a result of new buildings being proposed for inclusion on it. When the Local List for Colchester was approved by the Local Development Framework Committee in December 2011, it was agreed that it would be reviewed annually.
- 2.2 Procedures for amending Colchester's Local List were agreed at the Local Plan Committee on 28 January 2013. The Local List which covers both urban Colchester and Wivenhoe is now due for its 2nd review. A number of amendments have been put forward and the committee is being asked to review and agree the suggested changes.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The alternative option is to not review the Local List. Without a regular review, the information on the Local List would become out of date and inaccurate. The inclusion of a heritage asset on the Local List is a material consideration when determining planning applications affecting them. The lack of a properly maintained Local List would reduce the Council's ability to make informed decisions when assessing development proposals affecting buildings or historic assets that are architecturally or historically significant in the Borough. This in turn would make the conservation of these buildings and assets more difficult.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 129) states that Local Authorities should identify and assess the significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of available evidence and any necessary expertise. This includes buildings or assets that are locally listed.

- 4.2 A Local List is essentially a list of heritage assets that although not suitable for designation as Listed Buildings are considered historically or architecturally important at a local level. The List can include a range of historic assets including individual buildings or whole streetscapes. It can also include individual features on buildings such as railings, lamp posts or post boxes as well as locally valued archaeological features i.e. crop marks. The important factor is that the assets included on the Local List are of historic interest locally and/or make a significant contribution to the character and setting of the area in which they are located and are valued by the local community. Inclusion on a Local List is a material consideration when planning applications affecting such buildings or features are being considered. Similarly, Planning Inspectors will have due regard for buildings or assets on a Local List as part of appeals as in the case of the Bovis Homes challenge on part of the Calvary Barrack site.
- 4.3 Colchester Borough Council set out their intention to prepare and adopt a Local List in Development Policy DP14 (Historic Environment Assets). The first List for Colchester was adopted by the Local Development Framework (LDF) Committee in December 2011.
- 4.4 A survey of the built historic assets in and around urban Colchester resulted in 665 buildings/features being identified for inclusion on the draft Local List. A further 76 assets were added to the Local List following approval of buildings and assets in Wivenhoe in March 2012. All references to the Colchester Local List include the Wivenhoe information too and in 2013 there were 741 buildings/assets on the Colchester Local List. If the current changes are approved, the total number of buildings and assets will be 742.
- 4.6 The original Colchester Local List information is stored on the Colchester's Historic Buildings Forum website (www.colchesterhistoricbuildingsforum.org.uk) and on the Council's C-MAP system.
<https://stratus.pbondemand.eu/connect/colchesterborough/?mapcfg=planningservices>
The approved changes will be added to the existing Local List information on Colchester Borough Council's C-MAP system and to the Civica database.

5. Proposals

5.1 2013/2014 Review

In January 2014, a press release was issued inviting members of the public and local groups to nominate buildings or historic/architectural features for consideration for either inclusion or removal from Colchester's Local List. The Spatial Policy team also consulted colleagues in Development Management to gather information about any planning applications that had resulted in the loss of or alteration of buildings or historic/architectural features on the Local List.

- 5.2 The press release generated 1 request from the Wivenhoe Town Forum's Local List Group to add Hardings Yard in Wivenhoe to the Local List. The internal consultation with planning colleagues revealed that 2 buildings had been approved for demolition during 2013/2014 as part of refurbishment proposals while another building has been destroyed by fire. Requests were made to remove these from the Local List. 3 other buildings in Colchester were also nominated for addition to the Local List because of the contribution they make to the locations in which they are located.

5.3 Table 1 below includes the proposed changes to the Local List in more detail.

Address	Action	Justification
Cavalry Barracks Officers' Quarters (located off Goojerat Road)	Add to Local List	The officers' quarters consists of two U shaped blocks joined by a mess room on one side to form an enclosure or courtyard. The site currently forms part of the MoD Military Police complex and the building is identified as an important building in the conservation area.
Nursery Cottage Priory Street	Add to Local List	Nursery Cottage, just off Priory Street, is significant to the history of Colchester because of its connection with the long-established stone masonry business and the neighbouring nurseries that used to be located in this part of Colchester. It is a good example of a domestic building of the period of higher status than most of those on Priory Street, and it is a good example of a late use of vernacular materials, as it was built of materials that were easily obtainable in the immediate vicinity.
The Barn', 10 Williams Walk, Colchester CO1 1TS	Remove from Local List	Approved for demolition
Guard Houses to former Goojerat Barracks Goojerat Road	Add to Local List	The circular plan form guard posts which form a matching pair originally marked the entrance to the Goojerat Barracks from Circular Road West. They are unusual buildings that form small-scale landmarks in the street scene and provide a link to the history of the site.
Williams and Griffin	Remove from Local List	Approved for demolition as part of the redevelopment of Williams and Griffin store.
Hydrabad 11 barracks	Remove	Destroyed by fire
Hardings Yard, Wivenhoe	Add to Local List	Property de-listed by English Heritage due to alterations made to the property. Request to have it added to the Wivenhoe Local List to help protect it.

5.4 The committee is asked to review and agree the above proposed changes to Colchester's Local List. This would involve the removal of 3 entries from the current Local List, 2 of which have been approved for demolition under current planning applications and 1 destroyed by fire. The Committee is also asked to approve the addition of 4 new entries to the Local List.

5.5 The approved changes will be added to the existing Local List information on Colchester Borough Council's C-MAP system and Civica database. The Local List will next be reviewed in March 2015.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The Local List provides evidence to help the Council deliver its priorities for regenerating the Borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure, promoting sustainability, supporting tourism, heritage and the arts and enabling local communities to help themselves.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Owners of proposed assets will be notified if it is intended to add an asset to the Local List. Owners will also be advised when it is intended to remove an asset from the list.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 None

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 None

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Development Framework and is available to view by clicking on this link:- <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/4962/Strategic-Policy-and-Regeneration> or go to the Colchester Borough Council website www.colchester.gov.uk and follow the pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Strategic Policy and Regeneration and select Local Development Framework from the Strategic Planning and Research section.

- 10.2 There are no particular Human Rights implications.

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 None.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 None

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 Reviewing the Local List will help ensure that planning decisions are based on the most current built heritage data available for the Borough. This will help ensure that locally important or distinctive buildings and historic assets are better protected for the future.



Local Plan Committee

Item
10

28 April 2014

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Laura Chase ☎ 282473 Karen Syrett ☎ 506477
Title	Local Plan Duty to Cooperate Requirements		
Wards affected	All		

The Local Plan Committee is asked to note the implications for the Borough of the requirements contained in national legislation for local authorities to demonstrate a duty to co-operate in the development of their Local Plans.

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 The Local Plan Committee is requested to note the requirements for the Council to co-operate with relevant stakeholders on strategic cross-boundary issues in the development of its Local Plan and to initiate joint work with adjacent authorities and others as needed to demonstrate compliance with this requirement.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To ensure the Council addresses the need to engage with relevant stakeholders to demonstrate its compliance with the duty to cooperate as part of developing a Local Plan that would be expected to be judged 'sound' at examination.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 It is clear the Council must meet duty to cooperate requirements to achieve a sound Local Plan. A more minimal approach to satisfying the requirements could be pursued, but current evidence indicates that authorities are frequently challenged on this point and need to ensure more rather than less joint work is undertaken to ensure compliance.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), as amended by Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011 places a duty upon local authorities and other public bodies to co-operate on strategic matters of cross-boundary significance, which includes housing supply. Before a Planning Inspector can begin the process of examining a Local Plan, he or she needs to be satisfied, with evidence, that the

local authority has done everything it can to ensure effective co-operation with neighbouring authorities and other partner organisations and has sought to resolve, as far as is possible, any cross-boundary planning issues.

- 4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Public restates the requirement under paragraphs 178 – 181. Bodies will have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to strategic priorities. The Government expects joint working on areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken for the mutual benefit of neighbouring authorities. Local planning authorities will be expected to demonstrate evidence of having effectively cooperated to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts when their Local Plans are submitted for examination. This could be by way of plans or policies prepared as part of a joint committee, a memorandum of understanding or a jointly prepared strategy which is presented as evidence of an agreed position. Cooperation should be a continuous process of engagement from initial thinking through to implementation, resulting in a final position where plans are in place to provide the land and infrastructure necessary to support current and projected future levels of development.
- 4.3 The duty to cooperate issue is becoming increasingly important in determining the progress and outcome of Local Plan examinations. Recent research by planning consultancy Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NL) found that of the 109 local development plans outside London that have been examined or submitted for examination since the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced in 2012, only 40 have been found sound, while 15 plans have been withdrawn and 54 are ongoing but half of these have experienced delays. The main reason for almost three quarters of withdrawals has been the provision of housing. Housing provision issues are closely linked to duty to co-operate requirements, and some authorities have fallen short of the requirement to demonstrate that their housing numbers reflect the situation in surrounding authorities. The report found ‘signs of increasing pressure on localities to make the duty to co-operate process work more effectively’, with three plans being withdrawn over their failure to meet the legal duty in the second year of the NPPF compared to none in the first year.
- 4.4 The adjacent authority of Tendring has decided not to proceed with its current draft plan in part based on concerns over whether it would meet duty to co-operate requirements. TDC Officers reported to their Cabinet in March 2014 that they were ‘of the strong view that the emerging Local Plan, in its current revised form, will not survive the scrutiny of an examination given the government’s ‘uncompromising line’ on promoting housing growth and the importance that the government attaches to the legal duty to cooperate.’ This view was reinforced by submissions from both Colchester BC and Essex CC noting concerns about the extent to which the plan met duty to co-

operate requirements. Tendring DC has accordingly agreed to delay submission of its plan to undertake further work, including joint work with stakeholders including Colchester BC and Essex CC.

- 4.5 A statement has been released by TDC which states the following and demonstrates their willingness to co-operate in plan making going forward;

“Following the objections received from Essex County Council, Colchester Borough Council and other stakeholders in response to its 2014 Local Plan: Pre-Submission Focussed Changes, and having taken advice from the Planning Inspectorate, Tendring District Council (TDC) has decided that further changes to the Local Plan would be required before it can be submitted to the Secretary of State to be examined.

The most fundamental issues that will need to be resolved relate to meeting the objectively-assessed need for housing, in full, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework – one of the main concerns raised by Colchester Borough Council and others. TDC estimates that land for approximately 11,000 to 12,000 new homes will need to be identified in the Local Plan to meet the objectively-assessed need between now and 2031, around three times as much land as was identified in the last version of the plan.

In planning for additional growth, it will be essential that TDC and Colchester Borough Council engage in a constructive and effective manner to comply with the legal duty to cooperate and to ensure that the development needs of both areas are met in a way that maximises the benefits for both our economies and our residents.

To oversee this work from Tendring’s side, TDC agreed (at its meeting of Full Council on 25th March 2014) to set up a dedicated Local Plan Committee, similar to Colchester’s but with 13 elected members to ensure all political groups are represented. The new Committee’s first meeting will be at 6.00pm on Tuesday 13th May 2014.”

- 4.6 Colchester is already co-operating with adjacent authorities in developing a common understanding of housing requirements which will help it meet duty to co-operate requirements. Joint work includes the demographic work being undertaken on behalf of all Essex authorities (and some authorities in adjacent counties) by Edge Analytics as well as a Strategic Market Housing Assessment which is being undertaken jointly with Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford and Maldon. This work will help the authorities demonstrate that they have a solid basis for calculating future housing requirements that takes into account wider influences on housing market areas.

- 4.7 In addition to joint evidence based work on housing numbers, the Council will also need to work with adjacent authorities to develop a

shared approach to the allocation of strategic growth sites and the provision of associated infrastructure. This is particularly the case for the period after the current adopted Local Plan expires in 2021, but given growth pressures in the South East and increasing requirements to find more land for housing, the Council will also be under pressure from developers to consider additional new sites which could start to be delivered before 2021.

4.8 Tendring is particularly vulnerable to this pressure given that it does not currently have an adopted Local Plan. Braintree has the advantage of an adopted Core Strategy which runs to 2026 and has just finished its Pre-Submission consultation on Site Allocations and Development Management Documents. Braintree, however, like Colchester, will need to reconsider its adopted Core Strategy housing targets given that they were linked to the now-revoked Regional Spatial Strategy targets. These have been replaced by the requirement for each authority to demonstrate it is meeting a documented local Objectively Assessed Need. Maldon is expected to submit its draft Local Plan for examination imminently, having revised it to better address housing need requirements.

4.9 Finding sites to meet new Objectively Assessed Need numbers for 5, 10 and 15 year periods will involve considering new areas, particularly for the later periods. Sustainability considerations suggest that larger settlements may be required as they would achieve the critical mass needed to fund and support essential new infrastructure. The Councils will accordingly need to work together to assess new greenfield proposals that are adjacent to or cross district boundaries.

5. Proposals

5.1 The Committee is asked to note work to date in developing a shared evidence base to address duty to cooperate requirements. This work will continue and develop further as the Council progresses towards its first consultation on the new Local Plan.

5.2 The first stage of consultation is known as “Issues and Options.” Prior to drawing up an overall strategy for the area, it will be necessary to consider the key choices for the future. This should involve a real challenge to established thinking, and not rule anything out at this early stage, although it is not about identifying radical alternatives which fly in the face of government policy and which could not in fact be taken forward. The Committee is therefore also asked to note that officers will be exploring all options and alternatives which will involve working with colleagues in Essex County Council and neighbouring authorities as appropriate to develop joint approaches to strategic growth options.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan Action Plan contains a number of priority areas and outcomes to be achieved. Those of relevance to this report are:
- Regenerating the Borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure
 - Bringing investment to the borough
 - Improving opportunities for local businesses to thrive, including retail
 - Promoting sustainability and reducing congestion.

7. Consultation Considerations

- 7.1 The Council will need to develop joint protocols with relevant authorities on consultation on strategic cross-boundary issues to ensure that consultation measures satisfy all relevant Statements of Community Involvement.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 There is likely to be continued interest in strategic cross-boundary issues as the Local Plan progresses resulting in publicity for the Council, and publicity will need to be co-ordinated with adjacent authorities.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 A budget has been allocated for the Council's Local Plan review which will be used to fund the Council's share of joint work on updating of evidence based documents and consultation.

10. Equality, Diversity or Human Rights Implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Development Framework and is available to view by clicking on this link:- <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/4962/Strategic-Policy-and-Regeneration> or go to the Colchester Borough Council website www.colchester.gov.uk and follow this pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Commercial Services > Local Development Framework.

11. Risk Management Implications

- 11.1 Early and thorough attention to duty to cooperate requirements should help to reduce the risk of the Council's Local Plan documents being found unsound at Examination with consequent detriment to the achievement of sustainable growth in the Borough.

12. Disclaimer

- 12.1 The information in this report was, as far as is known, correct at the date of publication. Colchester Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any error or omissions.

