



The Stour and Orwell Estuary Management Strategy Consultation Questionnaire

What actions would you like the Stour and Orwell Estuaries Management Group to include for consideration in the Strategy?

Name (optional) Stour and Orwell Society

Recreational activity

The Strategy needs to strike the right balance between encouraging responsible recreational uses of the area and protecting the natural environment which is the reason that people visit and admire the area. Visitors come to the peninsula for quiet enjoyment and this should be maintained.

Generally, sailing is a benign sport in terms of its impact on the environment, but there does need to be restraint on the number of new moorings or marina berths to protect the openness and beauty of the area. There is an increasing amount of speedboat and waterskiing activity, particularly in the Orwell, and although this is contrary to the harbour authority bye-laws these are rarely enforced. There needs to be better enforcement to prevent erosion of river banks, noise disturbance to wildlife (and possible physical injury to seals in the estuary) and disturbance to people seeking quiet enjoyment in this area.

Cycling should be encouraged more, and consideration needs to be given to the provision of more cycle paths, in an integrated way.

Integrated planning and sustainable development

The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty together with the Special Project Area (SPA) makes up the Shotley peninsula. We know that pressure has been applied to upgrade the SPA to full AONB status and this should be a principal target of the Stour and Orwell Estuary Management Strategy.

The aim of policy should be to conserve and enhance the special character of the area similar to policies that cover the Dedham Vale AONB. We support sustainable development in the area but unfortunately there have been a number of significant planning applications, particularly the Ganges redevelopment, that have paid scant regard to the principle of sustainability. Central to this is the concept of providing jobs as well as housing to minimise the need to travel to work and to add something to the local economy. In addition, there needs to be careful consideration given to public transport and the provision of cycle routes. These facilities are poor, particularly on the Shotley peninsula, which will lead to more traffic on the only main road on the peninsula, more noise, more air pollution, more severance in villages that the road passes through.

We feel there is a growing inconsistency between the development of the Shotley peninsula in a sustainable way and the aims of the strategies adopted by the Haven Gateway Partnership. Their aim through the Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Strategy is to saddle the area with the responsibility for providing recreational areas for the proposed enhanced populations of both Ipswich and Colchester. The pressures on the Shotley peninsula are considerable and this additional burden is unwelcomed, illogical and defeats the overarching aim of providing quiet enjoyment for those visiting the peninsula. It is a national resource and its tranquillity should be left for future generations to enjoy and the proposal to include areas around Alton Water for the benefit of the enhanced urban areas of Ipswich and Colchester is a short term fix and the areas national importance has been totally overlooked by the expediency of the Haven Gateway's objective.

There needs to be continuing pressure on the planning authorities to ensure that a broad view of sustainability is taken onto account when strategic planning or development control decisions are being made.

Coastal and environmental change

There have been significant changes to the coastal environment in the Stour and Orwell estuaries over the past few decades, driven by increasing recreational use, increasing urbanisation and, particularly, growth in the port facilities. Whilst there has been some compensatory habitat creation, this has been of little value compared with the natural resources that have been lost or compromised, particularly the mud flats and salt marshes.

Any future planning decisions need to strike a better balance between economic development / jobs and protection of the natural environment. In particular, there needs to be a more robust approach to requiring real, effective mitigation measures together with a regime that enforces these.

The Stour and Orwell estuaries are of international significance for bird life and recent studies by Suffolk Wildlife Trust have shown significant falling numbers of visiting birds which may well threaten the international standing of the estuaries. This is an alarming development and one which needs constant monitoring and should remain central to coastal management of the area. It may be necessary to put a moratorium on future development whilst this situation is investigated as fully as possible.

Supporting sustainable commercial activities and tourism

Sustainable commercial activities and tourism should be encouraged, having regard to the principles set out above. Key considerations are the nature of the activity, the scale of the activity, how it would fit in to an integrated, sustainable approach to development and, above all, a creative and visionary approach that takes the long term needs of the area and its people into account.

This objective would be helped by a more inclusive approach by the planning authorities to actively seek the views of the local population and their various representative organisations.

Please return the form/comments to:

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