

# EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

## Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

**Name:** Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries

**Unitary Authority/County:** Suffolk

**SAC status:** Designated on 1 April 2005

**Grid reference:** TM444509

**SAC EU code:** UK0030076

**Area (ha):** 1561.53

**Component SSSI:** Alde-Ore Estuary SSSI

### Site description:

This estuary, made up of three rivers, is the only bar-built estuary in the UK with a shingle bar. This bar has been extending rapidly along the coast since 1530, pushing the mouth of the estuary progressively south-westwards. The eastwards-running Alde River originally entered the sea at Aldeburgh, but now turns south along the inner side of the Orfordness shingle spit. It is relatively wide and shallow, with extensive intertidal mudflats on both sides of the channel in its upper reaches and saltmarsh accreting along its fringes. The Alde subsequently becomes the south-west flowing River Ore, which is narrower and deeper with stronger currents.

The smaller Butley River has extensive areas of saltmarsh and a reedbed community bordering intertidal mudflats. It flows into the Ore shortly after the latter divides around Havergate Island. The mouth of the River Ore is still moving south as the Orfordness shingle spit continues to grow through longshore drift from the north. There is a range of littoral sediment and rock biotopes (the latter on sea defences) that are of high diversity and species richness for estuaries in eastern England. Water quality is excellent throughout. The area is relatively natural, being largely undeveloped by man and with very limited industrial activity. The estuary contains large areas of shallow water over subtidal sediments, and extensive mudflats and saltmarshes exposed at low water. Its diverse and species-rich intertidal sand and mudflat biotopes grade naturally along many lengths of the shore into vegetated or dynamic shingle habitat, saltmarsh, grassland and reedbed.

The adjacent shingle and lagoon habitats are designated separately as the Orfordness-Shingle Street SAC.

**Qualifying habitats:** The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)
- Estuaries
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide. (Intertidal mudflats and sandflats)

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0030076

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs