

Holehaven Creek rRA no 3

Marine Conservation Zone: Selection Assessment Document

Version and Issue date	Amendments made
V1.0 31.8.11	Draft final recommendations refined by the RSG and Local groups in July 2011 and finalised by the RSG 2/3 August 2011.

1. Site name Holehaven Creek recommended Reference Area no. 3	3. Site surface area 209ha 2.09km ²
2. Site centre location ETRS89 N51 31' 27.938" E0 31' 28.948" N51 31.466' E0 31.482' (N.B. WGS 84 UTM 31N coordinates are provided in the map vertices)	4. Biogeographic region Southern North Sea

5. Features identified for specific protection within Holehaven Creek¹

Feature type	Feature name	Area / No. of records ²
Broad-scale habitat	A2.2 Intertidal sand and muddy sand	0.01 km ²
	A2.3 Intertidal mud	1.5 km ²
Habitat FOCI	Sheltered muddy gravels	1 record

6. Other features occurring within Holehaven Creek (to be protected)

Feature type	Feature name	Reason not specifically identified for reference area protection
Broad Scale Habitats	A5.3 Subtidal mud	Not viable for subtidal broad scale habitat RA

7. Map of site (see below)

8. Site summary

The site encompasses the entirety of Holehaven Creek, a tributary of the River Thames and incorporated within the Thames Estuary rMCZ 5. Originally identified for sheltered muddy gravels, it also captures two intertidal broad scale habitats (A2.2 and A2.3) and a small amount of subtidal mud (A5.3). Despite it being less than the viable minimum dimension for broad-scale habitats (i.e. 5km), this site was submitted in the Draft Final Recommendations as a contingency Reference Area for A5.3 subtidal mud after several attempts to find a viable site for the habitat failed. A second alternative site (rRA 8 Hythe Flats) was also suggested, and is currently the preferred option for protecting subtidal mud. Please see Section 2.3.h 'Recommended Reference Areas' in the Final Recommendations Report in the main report for more details. The area has been flagged up as supporting high biodiversity through EA surveys. This is the only RA where sheltered muddy gravels have been captured. Holehaven Creek is an existing SSSI abutting the west side of Canvey Island, Essex and protecting littoral sediments.

9. Detailed site description

For further details please see detailed site description for rMCZ 5.

10. Site boundary

The site boundary would follow the existing Holehaven Creek SSSI boundary.

11. Conservation objectives

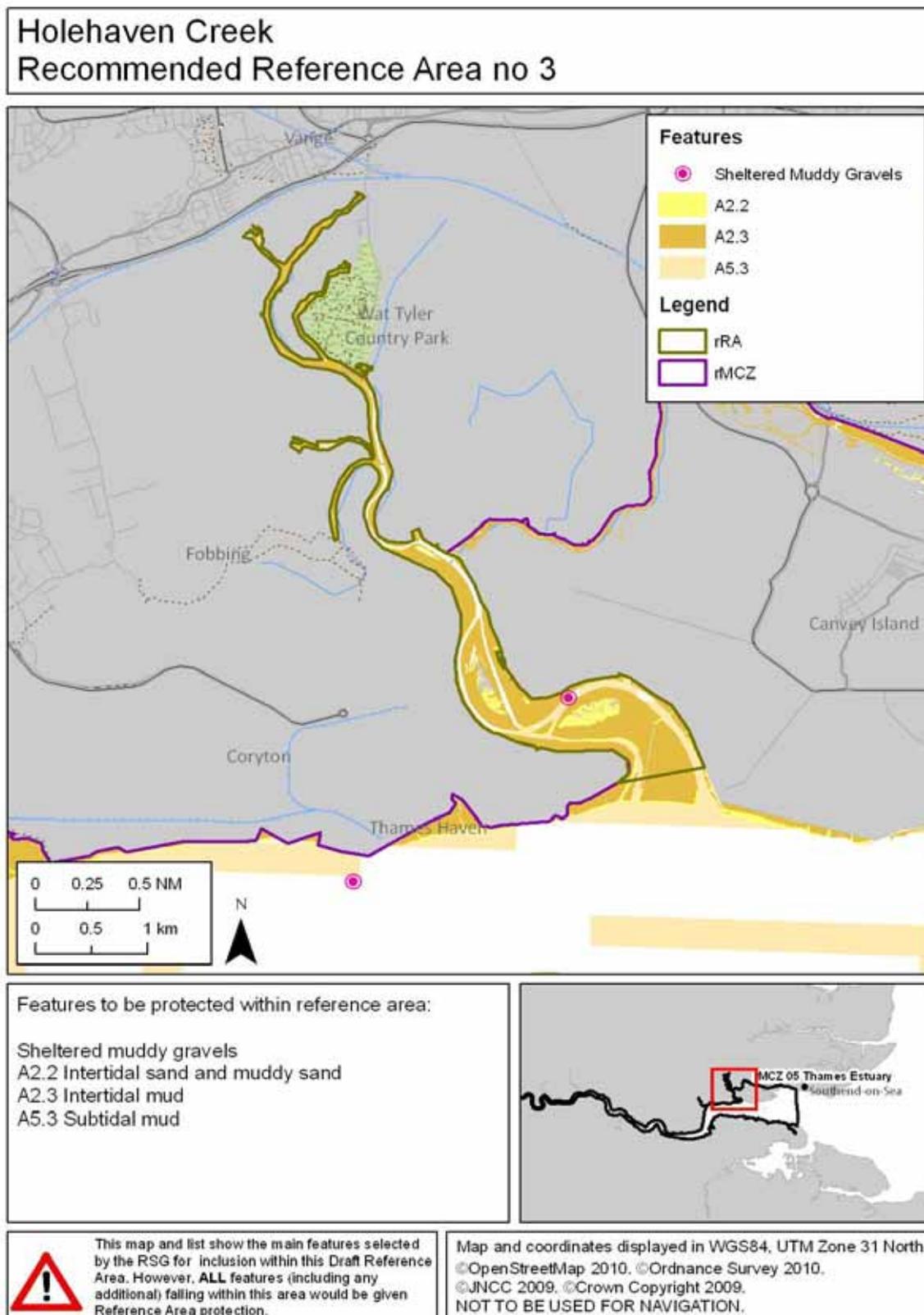
Individual conservation objective forms for each feature can be found in Appendix 1. In selecting the reference areas, Stakeholders have identified specific features that merit reference area protection.

¹ Sources of information relating to these features are listed in Section 13.

² Areas have been calculated according to spatial GIS data and are indicative only. A "record" is a survey point where a single individual, population or habitat has been found.

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However, ALL features in a reference area will, by default, have a Conservation Objective of "RECOVER to Reference Condition."



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12. Sites to which this site is related

This site is concurrent with Holehaven Creek SSSI and within the Thames Estuary rMCZ.

13. Supporting documentation (information relating to ENG features only)

Information	Type of information	Source	Name of survey	No of points	Dates
All broad scale habitats	Modelled and survey data	UKSeaMap/MESH v7	Combined	n/a	2011
Sheltered muddy gravels	Survey	National contract data, DEFRA MB102 2C		1	01/01/2003

References

Please refer to the references in the site description of rMCZ 5.

14. Stakeholder support for the site

There was split consensus within the Local Group (July 2011) with some sectors thinking this was not a viable site for an RA and others strongly supporting it due to its high biodiversity. The RSG subsequently agreed that due to the lack of another area for sheltered muddy gravels the site should be put forward in the Final Recommendations but noted the serious objections and the large number of activities that take place within the creek (as outlined below in section 16).

Individual sectors wishing to note their support or concerns about the site recorded the following at the final RSG meeting in August 2011; their comments have been transcribed verbatim from the form that they completed:

SECTOR	ORGANISATION	COMMENT for Holehaven Creek rRA 3
Yachting	RYA	Boundaries and extent of dredging need to be resolved before consideration can be given to possible designation.
Sea Angling		Concerns raised. More research required.
Ports		See Nicola Jenkin's comments for ports. Commercial / maintenance dredging programme not suitable with a RA.
	Local Fisheries Representatives	Unsuitable site due to activity levels. Uncertainties in data, may be resolved by boundary changes.
Birds	RSPB	Need to confirm whether maintenance dredging overlaps with sheltered muddy gravels - if there is no overlap, this should go forward as Reference Area.
Wildlife Trusts	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	Support this site; there is inconsistency with dredging data and whether it happens. If this site doesn't go ahead another must be found.
Marine Ecology	Seasearch	Strong support for this, shown to support high biodiversity in the EA database. It represents a compromise for this habitat FOCI, as other rich muddy gravel areas were rejected by fishing interests.
Marine Wildlife	Marine Conservation Society	<u>Support.</u>
Heritage and Archaeology	English Heritage	Probably best to drop it. Too many activities.

15. Evolution of the site recommendations

The site was originally identified as an RA for sheltered muddy gravels, when it was thought that occurred here. At the Local Group (July 2011) the Ports sector said that maintenance dredging is essential in certain parts of this site for safety reasons, although some sectors thought this was not the case. Alternative reference areas for sheltered muddy gravels were looked for in the River Deben (Suffolk) and Hamford Water (Essex) but both these areas were considered to be unsuitable due to the higher level of recreational use.

Despite it being less than the viable minimum dimension for broad-scale habitats (i.e. 5km), this site was submitted in the Draft Final Recommendations as a contingency Reference Area for A5.3 subtidal mud after several attempts to find a viable site for the habitat failed. In response, the SAP recommended the inclusion of more subtidal mud within RA boundaries (i.e. at the mouth) but stakeholders were concerned that this would overlap with existing activities and the site boundaries remained as they were. Although Holehaven Creek is not viable as a site to protect subtidal mud, it was thought that it would have less impact socio-economically. When the RSG and Local Group discussed this option, the Ports sector has made it clear that the site would not be acceptable, as they are required to keep the channel dredged to allow access to vessels. The RSG decided to put the site forward in its current form as there is no obvious alternative for sheltered muddy gravels but noted that further information is needed on the site before it goes forward.

For greater detail on discussions relating to the site and the network, please refer to both RSG and Local Group stakeholder meeting reports at www.balancedseas.org.

16. Implications for Stakeholders

The following issues are associated with this site:

- Charter boats operate out of Holehaven Creek and Canvey Island; extensive moorings are installed and is a popular place for anchoring in the summer, although the numbers are still low in comparison to other areas.
- The Ports sector (PLA) is strongly opposed to this reference area due to large amount of commercial activity and the need for maintenance dredging. This includes navigational dredging in Pitsea Creek, although this has not been necessary for several years due to natural scouring by the tide; however the PLA need to retain the option to carry this out for safety reasons and in case of any changes brought about by the capital dredge in the Outer Estuary. The Ports sector suggested that at least half of the area is dredged; others thought this was not the case, but there may have been some confusion over the boundaries and area being discussed at the time.
- Recreational sea angling from some of the jetties
- Landfill site at the top of creek which will be capped by 2016 – landfill from Crossrail vessels that come in on high tide and may have to anchor in the entrance to wait for the tide. NE/PLA will be surveying the disturbance of birds by the barges over the winter
- The conservation sector strongly supported the site due to its high biodiversity and with the protection afforded to the land and intertidal areas through existing MPAs this could create an area of total protection from land to sea.

This list represents only the major issues associated with the site. To see all stakeholder discussions, please refer to the Balanced Seas RSG and Local Group meeting reports at www.balancedseas.org.