



The Planning Inspectorate

The Planning Act 2008

Application for Development Consent for the Sea Link Project

Case Ref: EN020026

The Examining Authority's Note of an Unaccompanied Site Inspection

Background

The Examining Authority (ExA) undertook an unaccompanied site inspection (USI) to support the examination of an application for development consent for the proposed Sea Link Project (the application) on the afternoon of Monday 23 June 2025.

The ExA carried out its USI from publicly accessible land (roads, footpaths and bridleways).

The USI was undertaken to view the location of the proposed development including the proposed landfall areas and proposed locations of a substation, convertor station and construction compounds, and to observe the existing character, appearance and environment of the surrounding area and adjoining land uses.

Particulars of the Unaccompanied Site Inspection

The USI was undertaken by: Sarah Holmes, Richard Hunt, Steven Rennie, Nancy Thomas and Simon Warder. The ExA was accompanied by Louise Harraway from the case team and Marie Shoesmith from the environmental services team.

The USI was undertaken on foot and by car. Weather conditions were dry and sunny with a temperature circa 25 degrees centigrade. Weather conditions were suitable to appreciate long range views. The USI commenced at approximately 13:50 and finished at approximately 16:50. A list of the locations visited is attached at Annex A.



Annex A: List of locations visited on the Unaccompanied Site Inspection on the afternoon of Monday 23 June 2025

The ExA commenced the USI from Pegwell Bay Country Park on foot, heading north east from the car park along the King Charles III England coast Path towards the old hoverport and wider Pegwell Bay, with its associated environmental designations. The ExA observed bird life on shallow areas in the bay and took in views to the south towards the seal haul out areas on the River Stour and of viewpoint VP2. The ExA observed the coastal and intertidal habitats and associated bird life.

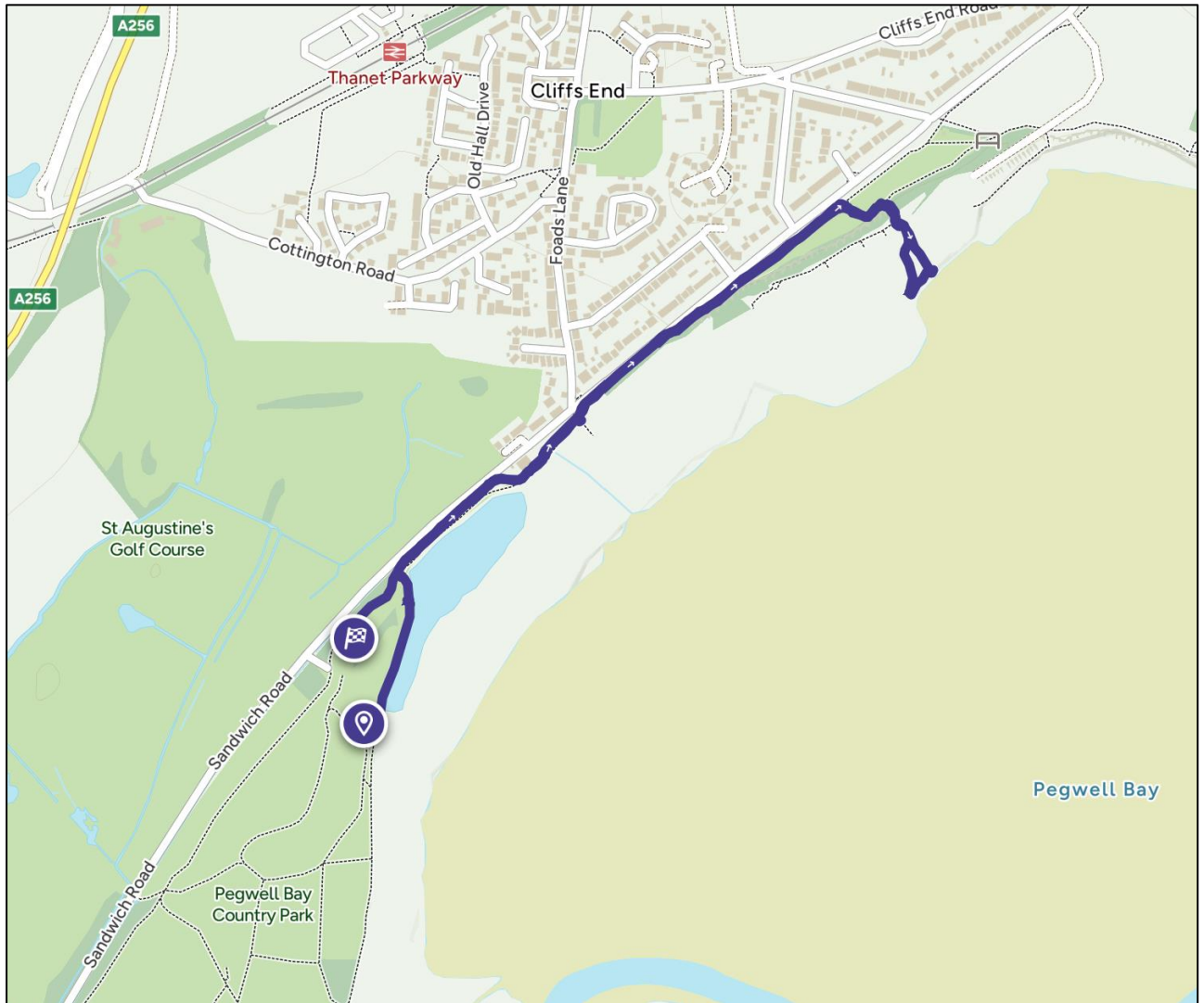
North of Pegwell Bay Country Park, the ExA noted the approximate location of the Nemo Link excavations adjacent to the north and west of an unnamed lagoon and observed the variations in vegetation cover in this area. The ExA proceeded to the replica “Hugin” Viking Ship and from there took the steps down to the old hoverport and footpath TR33.

At the hoverport, the ExA observed the established scrub vegetation and the recreational use of the site (e.g. by walkers, dog walkers and as a place to sit and take in the sea views). The ExA observed the proposed access route into the bay area via Sandwich Road and a former hoverport access, noting the proximity of residential receptors in Cliffsend. The ExA observed the Manston Airport outfall, which bisects the hoverport hardstanding area.

The route is shown below.



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From Pegwell Bay Country Park the ExA travelled south by car on Sandwich Road and the A256 to Richborough Castle, passing St Augustine's and Stonelees golf courses, the site of the Nemo Link Converter Station and the proposed area of functionally linked land (FLL) to the west of the A256.

At Richborough Castle the ExA observed viewpoint VP8 and the context of the castle as a scheduled monument. The ExA then took the footpath east of the castle (EE44), turning north onto the Saxon Shore Way (EE42). Crossing the railway line, the ExA then took in views south across the river to the proposed area of FLL. The ExA also observed the derelict military building located adjacent to the Saxon Shore Way. From there, the ExA proceeded to viewpoint VP3 on footpath EE42 viewing the route of the proposed overhead line (OHL) to the west and the proposed converter and substation site to the north. The ExA observed a number of vessels moored on the River Stour and one vessel cruising southwards at the time of the USI.



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The ExA then returned to Richborough Castle before driving to Whitehouse Drive, noting the local residential and farm properties. The ExA drove to the northern extent of Whitehouse Drive to observe the proposed OHL route and the area of the proposed River Stour crossing. The ExA continued by car to viewpoint VP9 to view the siting of the proposed converter station, substation and OHL.

The route is shown below.

