

# Sea Link

EN0200026

## **Written Submission on the Proposed Examination Timetable and Request to be Heard.**

**Suffolk County Council**

SEAL-AP240

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## Glossary of Acronyms

<i>ExA</i>	<i>Examining Authority</i>
<i>ExQ1</i>	<i>Examining Authority's First Questions</i>
<i>IAP1</i>	<i>Initial Assessment of Principal Issues</i>
<i>ISH</i>	<i>Issue Specific Hearing</i>
<i>OFH</i>	<i>Open Floor Hearing</i>

*"The Council" / "SCC" refers to Suffolk County Council.*

## Purpose of this Submission

Suffolk County Council has prepared this document in response to the Examining Authority's (ExA) Rule 6 Letter, dated 19 September 2025. This submission will state the Council's position on the procedure of the Examination, the contents of the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (IAP1) and outline requests to participate and be heard in the Preliminary Meeting.

### 1 Comments on the Procedure for Examination

- 1.1 The Council notes that the Preliminary Meeting will be held virtually on 5 November 2025 and is content that a virtual event is appropriate for the Preliminary Meeting.
- 1.2 The Council is content for the Examination to proceed on the basis that the ExA will be flexible regarding the format of the hearings, which will either be fully virtual or in person with the option to participate virtually, i.e. blended events. The Council has an overall preference for blended events rather than fully virtual events so as to maximise the opportunity for participation by Interested Parties (IPs) who are not comfortable (or less comfortable) with virtual working. However,

the Council would like to stress the importance of the technological support provided at venues where there are blended events to ensure that those participating remotely are not disadvantaged.

- 1.3 The Council notes that the ExA recognises the considerable interest in the Sea Link project and supports the decision to hold the initial OFHs as blended events in Suffolk and Kent. The Council is also content that ISH1 will be a fully virtual event only. The Council suggests where subsequent OFHs or ISHs contain items which are equally relevant to both the Kent and Suffolk ends of the Sea Link scheme, and a blended event is considered appropriate, that a location in Central London could logistically be the most convenient to allow the opportunity for parties from each county to participate in person if they so choose.
- 1.4 Therefore, on the assumption that most subsequent events will be blended events, the Council will consider whether it is appropriate to attend hearings physically or virtually depending on the subject matter, the likely scale of Council involvement, location, and availability of relevant staff. The Council will indicate, where required, which mode of attendance will be used when making a request to be heard.

## **2 Request to be Heard Orally at the Preliminary Meeting**

- 2.1 The Council requests to be heard orally at the Preliminary Meeting and will ensure event participation forms will be completed for all participants by the deadline, 11.59pm, 8 October 2025.
- 2.2 The Council will be represented by Michael Bedford KC, Graham Gunby (National Infrastructure Planning Manager), Roly Arbon (Project Manager), and Zachary Farndon (Planning Officer).
- 2.3 The Council wishes to contribute to the following items: -
  - Item 3 – Initial Assessment of Principal Issues
  - Item 4 – Draft Examination Timetable
- 2.4 Sections 3 and 4 of this submission will address the key points which the Council will make at the Preliminary Meeting.

## **3 Comments on the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (IAP)**

- 3.1 The Council refers to Annex C of the Rule 6 Letter which sets out the IAP.
- 3.2 The Council is content that the IAP is representative of those issues which have been raised up by the Council to the point of Examination. The Council notes that matters relating to the proposed changes, as recently requested by the applicant, are not covered in the IAP, and understands the reason for this to be that no

decision has yet been made as to whether to accept any change application. The Council is content with this position.

- 3.3 The Council does wish to raise one matter regarding terrestrial and marine biodiversity, whilst principally an East Suffolk Council concern, which is that there is a Biodiversity Net Gain area proposed by the applicant, and the Council considers that express mention of BNG could be included in the IAPI for discussion, as it would not appear to fit neatly within any of the individual bullet points currently listed.

## **4 Comments on the Draft Examination Timetable**

- 4.1 The Council refers to Annex D of the Rule 6 Letter which outlines the draft Examination timetable.
- 4.2 The Council notes that ISH1 is scheduled to be held virtually on 11 November 2025 on the subject 'scope of development'. Potentially, this is a very broad topic with no obvious parameters. Noting that the detailed agenda for ISH1 will be issued 'at least five working days' beforehand (and experience from other examinations suggests that it may be no earlier than five working days), it would be very helpful to receive clarification of the breadth of ISH1 as soon as is practicable, to allow the Council to manage the logistics of ensuring relevant officers are available to participate. If possible, the Council would welcome some clarification on the ambit of ISH1 by either the early issue of the detailed agenda or an outline agenda before the end of October 2025.
- 4.3 The Council is generally content with the proposed timetable of the deadlines, however notes that the ExA's First Written Questions (ExQ1) are scheduled to be published on 17 December 2025 with the deadline for responses (Deadline 3) currently 7 January 2026. The Council requests that this deadline is extended to the 9 January 2026 (i.e. the Friday of the same week) to allow sufficient time to provide responses, considering likely absences of relevant staff between 24 December 2025 and 1 January 2026, and noting from its experience of other examinations that the First Written Questions can often be considerable in number.