

Dear Planning Inspectorate Team,

Following the statement that was read on our behalf at the hearing in Sandwich on Wednesday, 12th November, We are writing to formally reiterate and expand upon our concerns regarding the Sea Link project.

We own the Viking Ship Café, located on the Hugin Green directly above the Hoverport. Despite being situated immediately adjacent to the proposed works, we have not been contacted by National Grid at any stage in respect of their revised plans to use the Hoverport as a major compound and construction area. This omission is unacceptable, given the significant disruption and potential damage that could occur to our business over the course of the 4–5 year construction period.

We must ask, on record, why a national infrastructure project of this scale has failed to engage with a local business located directly at its point of impact. This lack of communication alone raises serious concerns about the planning, transparency, and consideration of local stakeholders.

We would also like to repeat a question that National Grid has so far ignored in previous correspondence: What provisions are being made for the local businesses that will be financially affected by this development, and will compensation be offered for loss of earnings? Furthermore, what guarantee is there that access to Hugin Green will not be restricted or closed during the construction period — and what happens to our business if this occurs?

Key Points of Objection

1. Working Hours and Impact on Tourism

The proposed working hours include weekends. This is a popular tourist destination, and weekend trade is vital to the local economy. Prolonged disruption during peak visitor periods will significantly impact not only our business but the wider tourism sector.

2. Cumulative Impact of Multiple Major Developments

Within a 5km radius, there are already:

- 7 energy-related projects proposed or approved
- The redevelopment of Manston Airport
- 9 new housing developments in addition to existing planned growth

All of this will add substantial traffic pressure to an area with a single main road into Thanet. The Thanet Way (A299) is already in poor condition and unsuitable for further heavy usage. Local roads such as Sandwich Road are fragile — as demonstrated when a major sinkhole opened in Summer 2025.

3. Severe Traffic and Highway Impact

The existing road network is not capable of supporting the additional construction traffic associated with this project without major disruption to residents, businesses, and tourism.

4. Loss and Degradation of Public Rights of Way

The proposed works include closure or disruption to footpaths, bridleways, cycle routes, and byways — including the Viking Coastal Trail which runs directly past the café. This route is essential for leisure, tourism, active travel, and daily commuting. Restricting access will negatively affect public health, wellbeing, and local income streams.

5. Environmental Damage to the Hoverport and Habitat Loss

National Grid has not completed any environmental surveys of the Hoverport despite being informed of protected species, including orchids and rare moths. Heavy machinery risks irreversibly damaging the hoverport's surface and its mosaic habitat. There is also a risk that the site will be left unsafe or unusable by the public after construction.

6. Failure to Apply the Mitigation Hierarchy

The Government's own policy document "Unlocking the Benefits of Clean Energy Economy" (30 October) commits to protecting countryside and biodiversity while delivering renewable infrastructure. The Sea Link proposals do not adhere to this principle and are therefore inconsistent with stated national policy.

7. Flood Risk

Covering nearly 1 square kilometre of marshland with impermeable surface will significantly increase flood risk in an already low-lying area. When combined with other planned developments and recent extreme weather events (including the flash floods of June), the potential consequences for Thanet are considerable.

Summary and Requests

The local community has repeatedly raised concerns about this project, as have councils and MPs, yet core issues such as environmental protection, infrastructure capacity, and economic impact remain unaddressed. At minimum, affected businesses should be directly consulted, informed, and compensated. At present, this has not happened.

We formally oppose this application in its current form and request:

1. A full explanation for the lack of communication with affected local businesses
2. Confirmation on whether compensation will be available for loss of earnings
3. Guarantees that public access to Hugin Green will be preserved
4. Immediate environmental assessment of the Hoverport
5. Full reconsideration of the works proposed at this location

We expect a response from both the Planning Inspectorate and National Grid addressing these concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Hannah Mckeown and Nick Severn

Owners, Viking Ship Café

Hugin Green, Cliffsend