

Dear Examining Authority,

I would have liked to have written a formal response for Deadline 2 of the Sea Link DCO, but although I consider myself to be quite capable and hold a law degree – albeit only in medical law – I don't have any knowledge of planning law and find it so difficult to navigate the DCO documentation and National Policy Statements that I have decided to "have my say" by writing a letter to you instead to try to explain to you what it's like living in a region dominated by major infrastructure development.

Adverse impacts from infrastructure development first became a source of community concern locally when more than 23,000 trees were felled and the SZC works began. Even though construction at SZC is still only at an early stage, it is affecting the local community in multiple ways and we are already being significantly impacted by – disruption on our local roads, tourism numbers beginning to dip, finding increasing difficulty with parking in our local towns, experiencing extremely busy periods at our supermarkets and take-away outlets, seeing a shift in the housing market with some long-term tenants in Leiston being asked to move out of their homes by landlords who stand to make more money by providing accommodation to SZC workers and often enduring a muddy water supply as a result of excessive water abstractions from local hydrants for construction at SZC etc. This is all incredibly stressful, but as there are currently fewer than 2,000 workers on site, we are worrying about what life will be like when this number rises to more than 10,000 and the additional workforces required to develop all the other infrastructure projects are also in the region. Will more and more major projects continue to be crammed into the same small area until it is too late and we have reached breaking point or will our concerns be addressed in time?

Most people know about SZC, but very few people really understand what's going on with all the other projects. This lack of accurate awareness is further compounded by the release of biased information such as that seen in the Sea Link Newsletter issued in November that presented Sea Link as unobtrusive cable laying in Aldeburgh without any reference to Saxmundham where residents will of course be greatly impacted when work begins at the converter station site which sits right next to the town. If an impartial poll was carried out to assess local community awareness, it would probably reveal that an alarming number of people still aren't properly informed about the implications of developing Sea Link at Saxmundham and in fact, people of a certain age are almost as likely to say that they think Sea Link is a defunct ferry company as an electrical infrastructure project!

The daily cap on Sizewell HGVs is almost being reached already and it is highly likely that this number will be exceeded on a regular basis when the earthworks begin. What will happen about the extra vehicles that will be required for construction of EA2, EA1N, the National Grid connection hub at Friston, Sea Link, Lion Link, the Pigeon development of 800 houses and an industrial retail unit at Saxmundham, the Suffolk Water project, at least two mega solar parks and the multiple other infrastructure projects such as battery storage units and data centres that will surely be joining our local NSIP tally? Will they just keep being added on top of the SZC vehicles even though our roads are not designed for this sort of onslaught? Going from Kelsale to Leiston for a SZC Community Forum meeting a few weeks ago was a bit like being stuck in a toxic video game with desktop study diversions taking me down little narrow country lanes and dozens of vehicles coming in the opposite direction which forced me to squeeze into hedges and ditches which I found extremely distressing.

If Hinkley Point C is anything to go by, it's likely that construction at SZC will take at least 10 years to complete and if Sea Link, Lion Link, the houses, the solar parks, the water project and the other projects are added in along the way, we will probably be looking at 10 to 15 years of major infrastructure development in our region. You may think that we will be fine to just stick it out whilst we wait for construction to finish and hope and pray that things might be able to get back to normal, but the stress associated with living in an NSIP construction hotspot for more than a decade and the difficulty with making future plans is a genuine concern for us. We can't even attempt to move away from the stress because no one will buy our houses with so much infrastructure development on our horizon?

Planning for so many major projects locally is also having an adverse impact on local people's workloads. The other day I spent the whole day attending online meetings and writing and replying to emails about East Suffolk's infrastructure projects. In the evening, I took my laptop to a local village hall where I spent an hour in the kitchen joining an online meeting with East Suffolk Council about Local Government Reorganisation whilst my colleagues held an in-person meeting about the energy projects in the room next door. When the ESC meeting finished, I joined my colleagues for the last 30 minutes of the energy project meeting before rushing home to join a two-hour online meeting about the Suffolk Water Recycling, Storage and Transfer DCO. Although that was quite an extreme day, I am impacted to a greater or lesser extent by infrastructure matters almost every single day and am having to compromise other areas of my life in order to keep up with this workload.

The bigger picture here is that there is obviously an urgent requirement to tackle the climate change crisis and secure an increased reliable renewable energy supply using a holistic, strategic approach, but this should not be at any cost and should not be at the expense of the local community. The Saxmundham site was identified as the preferred option at a late stage without going through the same scrutiny as sites that were excluded at an earlier stage and before construction of the Sizewell Link Road had been secured and accurate information about the problem of getting super-heavy loads over the weight-restricted Benhall Railway Bridge was withheld during the access route consultation. These issues bring the whole validity of the choice of the Saxmundham site and Benhall access route into question. In addition, the adverse cumulative impacts and the disproportionate harms of proceeding with development at the Saxmundham site could potentially be so overwhelming that it will not be possible to mitigate or compensate for them. The best way to address all these issues would be to identify a more suitable site – preferably a brownfield site, but if development at the Saxmundham site proceeds, the best landscape and planting mitigation must be ensured and the possibility of identifying a less impactful way of accessing the site via a northern approach using the Sizewell Link Road should be considered. Thank you.