The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Sea Link

Volume 9: Examination Submissions

Document 9.35.4: Applicant's Comments on Local Impact Report from Thanet District Council

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1. About this Document

1.1 Purpose of this Document

1.1.1 This document provides National Grid Electricity Transmission plc's (the Applicant's) comments on Thanet District Council's Local Impact Report (LIRs) submitted at Deadline 1 in response to the application for development consent for the Sea Link Project.

1.2 Project Overview

1.2.1 National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant') has submitted an application for development consent for the Sea Link Project, which proposes to reinforce the electricity transmission network between Suffolk and Kent. The Project comprises the construction and operation of a new high-voltage electricity transmission connection, including underground cables, converter stations, grid supply point substations, and associated infrastructure. It also includes the removal of sections of existing infrastructure and various ancillary works.

1.2.2 The application for development consent was accepted for Examination on 23 April 2025.

1.2.3 A full description of the Project is provided in **Application Document 6.2.1.4 (D) Part 1 Introduction Chapter 4 Description of the Proposed Project [REP1A-003].**

1.3 Structure of the Document

1.3.1 The Applicant has reviewed and provided comments on the sections of Chapter 5 Assessment of Local Impacts and Chapter 6 Summary of **Thanet District Council's Local Impact Report [REP1-132**] which sets out the Council's assessment of local impacts. Comments are provided against the paragraph numbers used in the LIR, with paragraphs grouped where appropriate for clarity and efficiency.

2. Applicant's Comments on Section 5.1 Thanet District Council Position Statement and Section 5.2 Principle of Development

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Table 2.1 below provides the Applicant's comments on Section 5.1 Thanet District Council Position Statement and 5.2 Principle of Development.

2.2 Comments Table

Table 2.1 Applicant's Comments on Sections 5.1 and 5.2

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
5.1 Thanet District Council Position Statement			
5.1.3	Impact on the environment	The Council is supportive of the aims of the Project to reinforce the existing transmission network and build new electricity infrastructure to support new sources of renewable and low-carbon energy, providing a national benefit to energy security and net zero targets in the long term. However, the Council has specific concerns in relation to the impact on the environment from the Project at the local and regional level.	The Applicant welcomes the Council's support for the aims of the Proposed Project and acknowledgement of the need for new electricity transmission infrastructure. We address the environmental impacts of the proposed Project below.
5.2 Principle of Development			
5.2.6	Location	The primary issue with the location of the proposed development, and specifically the substation and converter station, is that it is located in an area of the District that is largely undeveloped. Built form and urban areas in Thanet are generally concentrated along the north coast and in the east of the District.	As set out in **Application Document 8.1 Corridor Preliminary Routeing and Siting study (October 2022) [APP-368]** the search area for the routeing and siting of the Proposed Project is based on proximity to the network connection point. Within that search area there was limited opportunity to identify brownfield sites that could accommodate the technical parameters required. Therefore, the identification of converter site option areas was based on avoidance of designated sites as far as possible, landform, opportunities for natural screening and to minimise visual impacts on settlements.
5.2.7	Number of energy developments	In recent years, a number of energy and infrastructure developments have come forward to the south of the converter and substation around Richborough Port and the former Richborough Power Station (now demolished) which have largely been driven by the Nemo-Link project which is another National Grid NSIP that is now complete. This has led to incremental energy related development spreading north from Richborough Port including multiple Battery Energy Storage Systems and a new National Grid, grid stability facility, adjacent to the existing Weatherlees Hill WWTW, and the relatively small Ebbsfleet Farm solar farm.	The cumulative impacts of the Proposed Project together with other projects have been assessed and reported in **Application Document 6.2.3.13 Part 3 Kent Chapter 13 Kent Onshore Scheme Inter-Project Cumulative Effects [APP-073**] in line with guidance on cumulative effects assessment published by the Planning Inspectorate. This assessment has taken account of the construction periods of the other projects. The assessment includes consideration of the cumulative effects relating to noise and vibration, traffic and transport, agriculture and soils, ecology and biodiversity and landscape and visual effects. The assessment of inter-project cumulative effects set out in **Application Document 6.2.3.13 Part 2 Kent Chapter 13 Kent Onshore Scheme Inter Project Cumulative Effects [APP-073]** was undertaken in accordance with the Planning Inspectorate's

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Cumulative Effects Assessment' (Planning Inspectorate, 2024).
5.2.8	Extension into open farmland	In determining the application for the grid stability facility, TDC recognised the need for this infrastructure to facilitate the use of renewable energy sources and provide flexibility and stability to the grid as well as the requirement to be located close to the National Grid Substation at Richborough. A key factor in allowing the grid stability facility was balancing the need for the impact against the harm to the landscape with a view that the site is relatively enclosed, with low lying built form and separated from the land to the north particularly by existing landscaping and streams, therefore forming a distinct edge and separation point from the existing infrastructure development and the open farmland to the north. The proposed development would extend well beyond the distinct line and would be sited in an area which is far more exposed.	As set out in Section 6.2 of **Application Document 7.1 Planning Statement [AS-057]**, the principle of development for the Proposed Project has been established through its need case and through the identification of the preferred location for the Proposed Project following a robust site selection process. Policy SP24 of the Thanet Local Plan only supports new development in the countryside in a limited set of circumstances, which do not include infrastructure proposals such as the Proposed Project. However, as acknowledged by Thanet District Council (TDC), the Proposed Project is nationally significant and falls under the definition of Critical National Priority (CNP) infrastructure defined in NPS EN-1. Compliance with Policy SP26 is discussed further below in response to comment 5.3.24.
5.2.9	Establishing principal of development in countryside	Concerns are raised that in allowing the proposed development, it would put TDC in a difficult position to prevent further energy and infrastructure related development from encroaching into the surrounding countryside and significantly changing the landscape from undeveloped to developed.	Future development must be judged on its own merits against the relevant policies at the time of determination. There is therefore no presumption that one project should make another future project acceptable.
5.2.10	Non-compliance with planning policy	The proposed development conflicts with both policies SP24 and SP26 in terms of the principle of the development. Policy SP24 does not provide any route for exemptions whereas Policy SP26 allows development to be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the development is essential for the economic or social well-being of the area.	Following a direction from the Secretary of State under Section 35(1) of the Planning Act 2008, Sea Link (the 'Proposed Project') is to be treated as development of national significance for which development consent is required. As such, Section 104 of the Planning Act 2008 provides that the Secretary of State must decide such applications in accordance with the relevant National Planning Policy Statements (NPS), which are: Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (NPS EN-1), National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3) and National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5). Therefore, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires proposals to be decided in accordance with the Development Plan, does not apply to the Proposed Project although it is considered that the policies of the Thanet Local Plan are important and relevant matters in the decision making process for the Application as prescribed by Section 104() of the Planning Act 2008. **Application Document 7.1 Planning Statement [AS-057]** assesses the Proposed Project against the relevant local policies and concludes that the Proposed Project is in accordance with the relevant national policy statements and local policy considered to be important and relevant.
5.2.11	Principle of development	It is acknowledged that the proposed development falls within the definition of Critical National Priority (CNP) Infrastructure as set out in National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy (EN-1), in which there is an urgent need. The Planning Statement [AS-057] does not set out why the development is acceptable in principle on the basis that NPS EN-1 does not require the need for CNP infrastructure to be demonstrated. Consequentially the application does not discuss the principle of the development per se but does set out the need and the site selection process undertaken.	
5.2.12	Overriding need for development	However, it is essential for the applicant to demonstrate an overriding need for the development that will contribute to the economic or social well-being of the area. It is noted that there will be some limited local economic benefits in terms of temporary construction jobs (15 FTE per annum) and a contribution of £1.1 million to the local economy but these benefits are distributed throughout the affected Districts and Boroughs in Kent. Furthermore, concerns are raised with regard to the negative impact on the tourism and recreation sector in Thanet which forms a key part of the local economy as a coastal district which may counter the limited economic benefits. This is discussed in further detail in section 5.4.	Section 7 of **Application Document 7.1 Planning Statement [AS-057]** sets out the local positive impacts of the Proposed Project for Kent which include ecological enhancements and employment generation during the construction period. With regards to tourism concerns, a response to this comment is provided in section 5.4 below.

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant’s Comments
5.2.14	Negative impact	The proposed development would have a negative local impact on the basis of the conflict with the TLP and the risk of further development encroaching into the countryside.	

3. Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.3 Landscape and Visual

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Table 3.1 below provides the Applicant’s comments on Section 5.3 Landscape and Visual.

3.2 Comments Table

Table 3.1 Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.3 Landscape and Visual

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant’s Comments
5.3.19	Introduction of tall infrastructure	The proposed development will introduce significantly tall infrastructure that would be seen throughout much of the local area well beyond the site. The existing energy and infrastructure development to the south of the site is generally lower in scale and mass which has a lesser impact on wider landscape character and visual amenity compared to the converter, substation and pylons.	The visualisations submitted as part of the Environmental Statement (**Application Document 6.4.3.1 ES Figures Kent Landscape and Visual [APP-241 and APP243]**) show the maximum parameters of scale and massing of the proposed Minster Converter Station and Substation and other aspects of the Proposed Project including the HVAC overhead line. Whilst the existing built form to the south may be generally smaller in scale and mass, for the local landscape character and visual amenity, the Proposed Project would predominantly read as a similar addition in the landscape within this context. From elevated viewpoints, including Viewpoints 8 and 11, the Proposed Project would appear comparable in height and overall character to the existing energy infrastructure, partly because the Proposed Minster Converter Station and Substation would not break the skyline. From the surrounding low-lying landscape, views would also be broadly similar, except for receptors immediately to the north, where the Proposed Project would be closer than the existing energy development to the south of the site. These receptors would be highly localised due to the rising landform towards the Manston chalk plateau and this is reflected in the significant adverse effects reported at operation Year 1 and Year 15 (Viewpoints 4, 5, 6 and 11) (**Application Document 6.3.3.1.D ES Appendix 3.1.D Visual Amenity Baseline and Assessment [APP-146]**). This relationship is further demonstrated in the illustrative visualisations (refer to **Application Document 9.14 Suffolk and Kent Illustrative Visualisations Part 1 of 2 [REP1-296]** and **Application Document 9.14 Suffolk and Kent Illustrative Visualisations Part 2 of 2 [REP1-297]**). In terms of the proposed location of the Minster Converter Station and Substation and their influence on the wider landscape character and visual amenity, the existing pattern of industrial development extends from Richborough Energy Park westwards to the railway line and northwards towards the A256 with the existing Weatherlees Hill Wastewater Treatment Works and the consented Richborough Grid Stability Facility. These extents are similar to the proposed location of the Minster Converter Station and Minster Substation, which would extend slightly further north and west than the existing and consented built form in the locality. The immediate site surroundings, railway line and wider Richborough Energy Park comprise

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			mature vegetation cover which provides a degree of containment and separation from the wider relatively open and less built form within the landscape to the west of the railway line. The proposed landscape planting (**Application Document 7.5.7.2 (B) Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan- Kent [PDA-035]**) would reinforce this separation and containment, especially by operation year 15.
5.3.21	Conclusions of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	In summary, TDC has concerns with the conclusions, assessments and assumptions set out in 6.2.3.1 Part 3 Kent Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual [APP-061]. TDC remains concerned that the design principles are too vague and allow too much flexibility that has not been properly assessed. Given the size and scale of the proposed development there is an agreement between TDC and the Applicant that the landscape impacts cannot be mitigated. Therefore, TDC fundamentally disagrees with the conclusions of the 6.2.3.1 Part 3 Kent Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual [APP-061] in that there are no residual significant adverse effects expected at Year 15 of operation across the landscape and seascape receptors and there are a number of viewpoints that would be significantly affected throughout the lifetime of the proposed development. TDC are of the view that the effect of the landscape mitigation has been overstated as there is only a limited effect landscape planting can have in mitigating the mass of a 28m tall building.	The differences in opinion on the assessment of effects within **Application Document 6.2.3.1 Part 3 Kent Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual [APP-061]** are noted. The Applicant disagrees that "*there is an agreement between TDC and the Applicant that the landscape impacts cannot be mitigated*". In previous correspondence it has been acknowledged by the Applicant that the proposed planting would never fully screen the proposed converter station and substation and therefore cannot be fully mitigated as reflected in the residual assessment rather than the landscape impacts cannot be mitigated. This is set out in further detail within section 6.2.6 of **Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115]**. Paragraph 5.10.6 of NPS EN-1 (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2024) explains how projects need to be designed carefully, with regard given to the potential impact on the landscape in terms of siting, operational and other relevant constraints. It states :"*the aim should be to minimise harm to the landscape, providing reasonable mitigation where possible and appropriate*". NPS EN-1 (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2024) paragraph 5.10.5 further explains that *"Virtually all nationally significant energy infrastructure projects will have adverse effects on landscape".* As explained in Design Approach Document **(Application Document 7.11.2 Design Approach Document - Kent) [REP1A-029]** it is evident that the Proposed Project has been designed carefully and incorporates measures to mitigate harm to landscape and visual receptors. With regard to design principles, these are secured in Requirement 3 of **Application Document 3.1 draft Development Consent Order (DCO) [REP1-036]** for the Converter Station and through **Application Document 7.5.3.2 CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) [APP-342]** secured through Requirement 6. The Key Design Principles define the design outcomes and embedded mitigation measures that are to be implemented to ensure the final proposals are in line with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).
5.3.22	Height parameters in ES	Another key concern is whether the Environmental Statement (ES) has assessed the full worst case scenarios set out in the parameters for the proposed development particularly as the height parameters set out in Article 5 differ from the heights set out in the description of development in the ES. Clarity is needed with regard to the full extent of the design parameters and	The LVIA has been undertaken using the worst-case scenario parameters and this has been responded to within section 6.2.9 of **Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115]**. These worst-case parameters have also been assessed with respect to impacts on the setting of heritage assets. Where relevant, other topics have also assessed the maximum

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
		confirmation as to whether all assessments have been undertaken based on the maximum extent of the parameters.	parameters, though this parameter is typically only relevant to the above two topics.
5.3.23	Lighting Assessment	It is also not clear from the application documents as to whether a lighting assessment has been undertaken. It is noted that average lux levels have been set but given the sensitive location a full lighting assessment should be undertaken in accordance with Policy SE08 to assess the max light levels and proposed appropriate lighting mitigation. No clear operational lighting mitigation has been proposed in the CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) [APP-342].	The mapping within the published Thanet Landscape Character Assessment (2017) for tranquillity and dark skies is acknowledged. Regarding dark skies and Policy SE08 (light pollution) of the Thanet Local Plan, the proposed Minster Converter Station and Minster Substation would be located within a relatively dark part of the Thanet District landscape which is noted as being an 'intrinsically dark' (E1) landscape in the text attached to Policy SE08 in the Thanet Local Plan. The context of more lit and urbanised areas in close proximity is also noted, including the edge of Ramsgate which influences the local landscape. As requested in Policy SE08 for proposed developments that fall within the E1 category, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken including consideration of the effects of lighting on landscape and visual receptors. A full response to this comment on lighting including how the Proposed Project would minimise lighting effects and how this is secured is set out at sections 6.2.12, 6.17.104 and 6.17.105 of **Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115]**. Regarding tranquillity and similar to the dark skies mapping, the proposed Minster Converter Station and Minster Substation would be located within a relatively tranquil part of the Thanet District landscape, though in close proximity to areas of low tranquillity including the urban edge of Ramsgate. It is acknowledged within the detailed assessment on the Stour Marshes Landscape Character Area (LCA) E1 (within **Application Document 6.3.3.1.C ES Appendix 3.1.C Landscape Designation and Landscape Character Assessment [APP-145]** that at construction and operation year 1 there would be localised influence on the perceptual aspects of the landscape character. The mapping for dark skies and tranquillity is at a large scale and for the site in question this would be within the context of existing infrastructure including the Weatherlees Hill Wastewater Treatment Plant, Richborough Energy Park, railway line and A256, which lessens the Proposed Project's influence on these perceptual qualities even at the local scale. Converter Station Design Principle N.4, Lighting, in Table 3.1 of **Application Document 7.12.2 Design Principles – Kent [APP-367]** sets requirements for following a dark skies strategy. Design Principle N.4 is secured by draft DCO Schedule 3 Requirement 3. In discharging requirement 3 of the draft DCO **[REP1-037]** the Applicant can provide a technical statement, as suggested under design principle N.4 in Table 3.1 of APP-366, to demonstrate that operational lighting design for the Converter Station is

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			reduced to the minimum operational requirements, in accordance with the dark skies strategy. As part of discharging DCO requirement 3, details will be submitted to Thanet DC, and also Kent County Council are required to be consulted, to confirm the details are in general accordance with this design principle.
5.3.24	Non-compliance with policy	The proposed development would be in direct conflict with Policy SP26 meaning that the development should only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the development is essential for the economic or social well-being of the area. As discussed in sections 5.2 and 5.4, TDC are of the view that there are limited beneficial effects to the economy of Thanet as a result of the proposed development.	As documented in **Application Document 7.1 Planning Statement [AS-057]** whilst the Proposed Project is not in accordance with the TLP policy SP26, it is acceptable given paragraph 4.1.15 of NPS EN-1 (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2024). Notwithstanding this, the Applicant has addressed below how the Kent Onshore Scheme responds to the six points cited in Policy SP26 to conserve and enhance Thanet's local distinctiveness. • "*Its island quality surrounded by the silted marshes of the former Wantsum Channel and the sea*": the Kent Onshore Scheme is located partly within LCA E1: Stour Marshes (as set out within the Thanet District Council Landscape Character Assessment (2017)), which is one of the two marshland landscapes (together with E2: Wade Marshes) that formed part of the former Wantsum Channel. The Stour Marshes LCA (E1), together with the Wade Marshes LCA (E2), extends for approximately 17 km around the edge of Thanet District, and beyond into the adjacent administrative areas of Dover and Canterbury. It is acknowledged that the Kent Onshore Scheme would result in a localised increase in development on the edge of LCA E1 however due to existing infill and other development including the railway line and vegetation cover within the former Wantsum Channel, it is considered that the location of the proposed Minster Converter Station and Minster Substation are more attributed with the former northern shore. This is separate from the wider low-lying landscape associated with the former marshland and Wantsum Channel to the west of the railway line and River Stour, therefore the island quality is not considered to be further degraded due to the introduction of the Kent Onshore Scheme. • "*A sense of openness and 'big skies', particularly in the central part of the District*": the Kent Onshore Scheme will not affect the central part of the district as it is located on the southern edge. The introduction of the proposed Minster Converter Station and Minster Substation would have a localised effect on openness however this would be limited to the existing context of mature vegetation cover and development to the east of the railway line. The wider openness that is experienced across the former marshland landscape would not be further degraded due to the siting of the operational infrastructure near to existing development with a similar influence across the landscape and as the proposed Minster Converter Station and Minster Substation do not break the

skyline when viewed from the elevated positions to the north (Viewpoint 11) and south (Viewpoint 8).

- "*Its long, low chalk cliffs and the sense of 'wildness' experienced at the coast and on the marshes*": the Kent Onshore Scheme would not affect the 'wildness' experienced at the coast and on the marshes. The Kent Onshore Scheme does not propose above ground infrastructure on the coast and is located on the edge of the marshland, in the context of existing infrastructure including a communication mast, Weatherlees Hill Wastewater Treatment Plant, Richborough Energy Park, railway line and existing towers and overhead lines.
- "*Gaps between Thanet's towns and villages, particularly those areas designated as Green Wedges*": the Kent Onshore Scheme would not affect any gaps between Thanet's towns and villages, or areas designated as Green Wedges.
- "*Long-distance, open views, particularly across the Dover Strait and English Channel, north Sea and across adjacent lowland landscapes*": As noted above, the sense of openness and long views would not be further degraded with the addition of the Proposed Development due to existing context of similar development and vegetation cover in the near vicinity.
- "*Subtle skylines and ridges which are prominent from lower lying landscape both within and beyond the District*": the Kent Onshore Scheme would not influence the differing topographies which would remain to be perceived in the landscape, between the higher land at Richborough, low-lying land of the former Wantsum Channel and then the skyline formed by the Manston chalk plateau.

The policy also requires development proposals to "*demonstrate how they respect and respond to the character, key sensitivities, qualities and guidelines of the relevant landscape character areas, as detailed in the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)*". Thanet District Council's Landscape Character Assessment (Thanet District Council, 2017) forms the basis of the landscape assessment presented in **Application Document 6.3.3.1.C Appendix 3.1.C Landscape Designation and Landscape Character Assessment [APP-145]** and summarised in **Application Document 6.2.3.1 Part 3 Kent Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual [APP-061]**.

The Minster Converter Station and Substation is proposed to be located within the Stour Marshes (LCA E1) which is referred to locally as the Minster Marshes. This name reflects the history of this area, which included the silting up of the Wantsum Channel during the medieval and post-medieval period before the land was reclaimed. It is important to note, however, that despite the name and history of this area, the site of the proposed Minster Converter Station and Minster Substation is not undisturbed nor is it a functional coastal or floodplain grazing marsh. The 'former' marshland and subsequent land

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			draining for use as agricultural land, is noted in paragraph 5.3.18 of **Thanet District Council Local Impact Report [REP1-132]**.
5.3.25	Design parameters for converter station	In terms of the Development Consent Order (DCO) itself Requirement 3 secures that the details of the converter station are to be approved by the relevant planning authority and must be in general accordance with the Key Design Principles set out in the Converter Station Design Principles. This wording is currently too vague and allows too much flexibility. Rather it should require accordance with the relevant design principles document for Kent or Suffolk. The Design Principles – Kent (and Design Principles – Suffolk) should then be a certified document to provide assurance that the converter station will be constructed in accordance with the design parameters.	The Applicant considers that the current wording of Requirement 3 of **Application Document 3.1(E) (Version 2, Change Request) draft Development Consent Order (Clean) [CR1-027]** is clear, setting out a requirement that details of the layout, scale and external appearance have been submitted to the relevant planning authority, and the relevant planning authority has confirmed, in consultation with the relevant county council, that the details are in general accordance with the Key Design Principles. The Applicant can add the Design Principles for Suffolk and Kent to the list of certified documents. The Applicant notes that the Key Design Principles set out in the Converter Station Design Principles are secured by virtue of the requirement, even if not listed as a certified document. The detail of the substation is within the **Application Document 7.12.2 Design Principles – Kent [APP-367].** The Key Design Principles are within Table 4.1. **Application Document 7.5.3.2 CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) [REP1-102]** secures that the design of this work will be progressed in general accordance with the Key Design Principles set out in this table. The pylons are not considered within the design scope and details of pylon design are generally dealt with by the Applicant as operational matters under its Electricity Transmission Licence, and it is not usually appropriate for these to be the subject of DCO Requirements. The Applicant considers that the provisions of Requirement 3 are clear and enforceable.
5.3.26	Design parameters for substation and pylons	In addition, the DCO does not currently require details of the substation or pylons to be approved by the relevant planning authority. TDC requests that a requirement similar to Requirement 3 is added to the DCO to provide assurance that the substation and pylons will be constructed in accordance with the design parameters.	
5.3.27	Site wide detailed design	Alternatively, Requirement 3 should be replaced with a site wide detailed design approval that requires details of the design of all elements in accordance with the design principles/parameters for avoidance of doubt.	
5.3.28 and 5.3.29	Height of pylons	Article 5(1)(a) indicates that pylons in Kent would be 54m above finished ground level with a vertical limit of deviation of 6m. This takes the height to 60m. The Design and Layout Plans [APP-037] Design Approach Document – Kent [APP-365] and Design Principles – Kent [APP-367] proposes standard height pylons in Kent of c. 46m. A vertical limit of deviation of 6m is a significant variation in height from the assessed 46m allowing pylons up to 52m. The ES has currently only assessed the pylons at a height of 46m as set out in the design documents and not a worst-case scenario of 52m. This could result in an effect becoming significant and/or more adverse.	The LVIA has been undertaken using the worst-case scenario and this has been responded to within Section 6.2.9 of **Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115]**. These worst case parameters have also been assessed with respect to impacts on the setting of heritage assets. Where relevant, other topics have also assessed the maximum parameters, though this parameter is typically only relevant to the above two topics.
5.3.30	Negative landscape impact	The proposed development would have a negative local impact due to the conflict with the TLP and significant change to landscape and adverse impacts on the visual amenity particularly given that due to size and scale of the proposed development that the landscape impacts cannot be mitigated.	It is agreed that the Kent Onshore Scheme would have a negative local impact on landscape character and visual amenity. It is considered by the Applicant that regarding the local landscape character effects, the significant adverse effects would not remain at operation year 15 as the landscape planting (**Application Document 7.5.7.2 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan – Kent [PDA-035]**) around the Minster Converter Station and Minster Substation would have matured and would contribute to reducing perceptual changes arising from the Kent Onshore

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			Scheme on the remainder of the LCA and the wider landscape. The landscape planting, once established, would provide further containment to the permanent infrastructure of the Kent Onshore Scheme, contributing to ensuring that the overall sense of identity and distinctiveness of the wider former marshland and Wantsum Channel landscape to the west is retained. The planting would not visually contain the proposed Minster Converter Station and Minster Substation but would soften views and provide further differentiation between the wider former marshland and Wantsum Channel landscape to the west and the site. Regarding visual effects, there would be significant residual visual effects from 4 of the 14 representative viewpoints (Viewpoints 4, 5, 6 and 11) as a result of the introduction of the Kent Onshore Scheme in these views which are localised around the proposed Minster Substation and Minster Converter Station.

4. Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.4 Socio-economic Impacts and Tourism

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Table 4.1 below provides the Applicant’s comments on Section 5.4 Socio-economic Impacts and Tourism.

4.2 Comments Table

Table 4.1 Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.4 Socio-economic Impacts and Tourism

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant’s Comments
5.4.10	Relevant representations, PADSS and SoCG	A number of issues have been raised in TDCs Relevant Representation [RR-5372], Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statements (PADSS) [AS-079] and Statement of Common Ground [APP-326] and these remain relevant.	The Applicant notes this comment.
5.4.11	Impacts of scheme on tourism	In summary, TDC are concerned that the application has not adequately considered the impacts of the scheme on tourism within Thanet which, as a seaside/coastal District, relies heavily on tourism particularly during the summer months, weekends and bank holidays. During the construction period, there will be significant impacts on the visitor economy in terms of impact on the highway network and recreational infrastructure in the area affecting the long-term perception of Thanet as an attractive place to visit.	A response to this comment can be found in Table 6.2 (Reference 6.2.25) of **Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115]**.
5.4.12	Returning visitors	As set out in Thanet Visitor Survey 2025, the majority of visitors are returning visitors to Thanet and will likely have good knowledge of the District. The proposed construction of the proposed development will significantly affect whether returning visitors would choose to return to Thanet or seek alternative destinations given the disruption caused by the proposed development both individually and cumulatively.	The Thanet Visitor Survey 2025 is noted. The Applicant also notes concerns about the potential impact of the Proposed Project on visitor perceptions of the local area. The Applicant has undertaken a review of other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and their potential effects on tourism and visitor activity since the DCO submission. Sizewell C, Bramford to Twinstead, and East Anglia ONE North, each adopted methodologies comparable to those used for the Proposed Project, and all concluded that the developments would not result in significant effects on tourism or visitor numbers. A review of published monitoring reports of actual impacts observed from Sizewell B and Hinkley Point C found that initial concerns observed in surveys have not translated into measurable reductions in visitor numbers or tourism-related employment. On the contrary, the local tourism sector remained confident and continued to grow during the construction period. On that basis there is limited robust evidence to suggest that negative visitor perception identified / observed in surveys prior to construction will result in material adverse effects on tourism. Therefore, the evidence suggests that there will be no significant adverse effects on visitors or tourism as a result of the Kent Onshore Scheme, as concluded within **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism (Clean) [REP1A-007].**
5.4.13	Traffic and transport impacts	Construction vehicles are predicted every day of the week with a limit of 30 HGVs on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Whilst the Traffic and Transport Chapter of the Environmental Statement states that it is not anticipated that the Proposed Project would have any traffic and transport impacts on	Responses to this comment have previously been provided within Table 6.2 regarding Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism, Traffic and Transportation of the Applicant’s response to the Thanet District Council RR

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
		Sundays/Bank Holidays (with the restrictions identified in the Outline CTMTP - Kent). There has been no assessment of the impact of construction during Sundays and Bank Holidays in which traffic congestion can be a significant issue. As set out in the Thanet Visitor Survey 2025, traffic is a key issue of concern and any increase in traffic would reduce the attractiveness of visiting Thanet.	**Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115]**.
5.4.14	Impact on PRoW users	The operational element of the proposed development creates a further negative connotation and experience when visiting Thanet by introducing significant energy infrastructure to an undeveloped site, adversely changing the perception of the area as being remote and tranquil. This would be particularly evident for users of the public right of way network and other recreational routes and would be viewed from key gateways into the District.	The visual amenity of recreational receptors, including along the public right of way network and other recreational routes as well as views from key gateways into the District (railway line, A299 and A256), are assessed within **Application Document 6.3.3.1.D ES Appendix 3.1.D Visual Amenity Baseline and Assessment [APP-146]**. This assessment is summarised within **Application Document 6.2.3.1 Part 3 Kent Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual [APP-061]** and Section 1.7.25 sets out a summary of visual receptor groups including those considered to be recreational. The significantly affected recreational receptors would include users of the local Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network within the study area, including public footpaths and public bridleways, users of the Saxon Shore Way and Viking Coastal Trail. A summary of the effects are set out within section 1.11 within the Landscape and Visual chapter which demonstrates the highly localised nature of visual effects, context of existing energy infrastructure in views and the proposals typically set against mature vegetation.
5.4.15	Economic benefits	It is acknowledged that there would be some limited local economic benefits in terms of temporary construction jobs (15 FTE per annum for local residents within 60 minute drive) and a contribution of £1.1 million to the local economy but these benefits are distributed throughout the Districts and Boroughs in Kent and would not be fully attributed to Thanet. In addition, once operational, the proposed development is not anticipated to generate any local employment or contribute to the local economy but will significantly change the landscape and visual amenity of the area and the attractiveness for visitors and residents who will also be negatively impacted in terms of leisure and recreation.	An assessment of construction workers impacts is set out in **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-economics Recreation and Tourism (Clean) [REP1a-007].** The Applicant agrees that the majority of construction jobs will be sourced from outside the Study Area. As set out in Table 10.20, in the construction phase, an estimated 50 net additional jobs per annum will be created by the Proposed Project. The calculation of employment generation has also accounted for leakage, i.e. the proportion of jobs taken-up by people who live within the Study Area, here defined as a 60-minute travel area. Based on professional judgement and experience from other similar schemes, given the specialised nature of the construction roles, this has been estimated to be 30%. Therefore 15 jobs per annum are expected to be taken up by residents in the Study Area. As shown in Table 10.22, applying the average gross direct value added per construction worker in the South East of England to the total number of construction workers generated from the Kent Onshore Scheme gives the total GVA arising from the construction period. It is estimated that construction will contribute approximately £3.5 million to the national economy, of which approximately £1.1 million would be applicable to the Study Area. The Applicant is working to understand local and regional aspirations and priorities, and encourages its contractors to use local services and labour where possible. The Applicant recognises that there is potential for visual effects arising from operation of the Kent Onshore Scheme to impact on the amenity of residents, businesses and users of open spaces and community facilities within 500 m of the Order Limits. Amenity impacts on these receptors are assessed in

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			Application Document 6.2.3.11 Part 3 Kent Chapter 11 Health and Wellbeing [AS-003]. No significant adverse amenity effects are identified with regards to human health and wellbeing, with no significant effects on tourism assets arising from the construction of the Kent Onshore Scheme.
5.4.16	Business disruption	There are a number of other local businesses in the area that would experience significant disruption and harm particularly during construction that could have long-lasting effects once operational. This includes tourist and leisure uses in which Pegwell Bay and the views across the bay are key features that attract visitors such as The Lookout Café, Bell Vue Tavern, Sir Stanley Gray pub, Pegwell Bay Hotel, Nord Café, The Viking Shop Café and Dog Walkers Rest and Cycle Café. In addition, the construction period would severely disrupt other local businesses and services in the area including the Great Oaks Small School which is a small independent school for neurodiverse students aged 11 – 19 and the two golf courses (Stoneless and St Augustine's). The Great Oaks Small School benefits from the natural environment and local wildlife and is likely to be significantly disrupted by the construction of the proposed development.	The Applicant recognises that the potential for future environmental changes associated with the Proposed Project during construction, operation and decommissioning are a source of concern for some local businesses. Section 10.9 of **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-economics Recreation and Tourism (Clean) [REP1a-007]** assesses potential effects of the Proposed Project on private and community assets, recreation and tourism, which identified no likely significant residual effects. This considered potential severance impacts on access to recreational routes and PRoW, residential properties, local businesses, visitor attractions community facilities and open space as a result of the Proposed Project. The Applicant also recognises that there is potential for noise, air quality, visual and traffic effects on Bank Holidays and Weekends arising from construction of the Kent Onshore Scheme to impact on the amenity of residents, businesses, development sites, and users of open spaces and community facilities within 500 m of the Order Limits, including Great Oaks Small School. Amenity impacts on these receptors are assessed in **Application Document 6.2.3.11 Part 3 Kent Chapter 11 Health and Wellbeing [AS-003].** No significant adverse amenity effects are identified with regards to human health and wellbeing.
5.4.17 – 5.4.19	Disruption to recreational infrastructure	The disturbance to the recreational infrastructure (Pegwell Bay, Pegwell Bay Country Park, PRoW and other recreational routes) will have a significant impact on the ability for visitors and local residents to enjoy the tranquillity and openness of the landscape and to view the wildlife which is a key attraction. The applicant does not fully consider the impact on the mental health and well-being that the construction period will have on the ability to use the area for recreational and health activities. The construction activities will have both a direct and indirect effect on recreation and health. Whilst a number of routes will be diverted or managed to maintain access, the indirect effects of perception and level of activity will adversely affect the ability to enjoy the recreational routes and activities. The extensive construction activity and period will have a negative effect on the mental health and well-being of local residents that use the recreational infrastructure for exercise, escapism and relaxing. Once operational, the presence of the converter station, substation and pylons in the Minster Marshes will permanently change the context and connotations associated with the Minster Marshes which is one of remoteness, tranquillity and openness. Therefore, the ability to enjoy the recreational routes for exercise and mental health reasons will be adversely affected by the proposed development.	The Applicant notes the local concerns set out by the Council regarding the impact the local PRoW network and recreational routes. Section 10.9 of **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-economics Recreation and Tourism (Clean) [REP1a-007]** assesses the potential effects of the Proposed Project on disruption to the use of PRoW and recreational routes. Appropriate route diversions, closures and management measures are proposed as embedded mitigation and outlined in Section 10.8. The criteria for determining the sensitivity of users of PRoW and recreational trails and the magnitude of impact of disruption is outlined in Section 10.4. For example, recreational routes' sensitivity criteria considered several factors, including: • the quality of user experience; • quality of the route; • purpose of usage; and • potential for substitution. Overall, it is concluded that no significant socio-economic, recreation and tourism effects are anticipated. Paragraph 10.9.74 notes that there is potential for noise, air quality, visual and traffic effects arising from construction of the Kent Onshore Scheme to impact on the amenity of private, community, recreational and tourism assets within 500 m of the Order Limits. Amenity impacts on these receptors are assessed in **Application Document 6.2.3.11 Part 3 Kent Chapter 11 Health and**

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			Wellbeing [AS-003]. PRoW, amenity impacts are assessed under the determinant 'Social Cohesion and Community Identity'. As defined in in **Application Document 6.2.3.11 Part 3 Kent Chapter 11 Health and Wellbeing [AS-003]**, this considers the "*potential adverse impacts on health and wellbeing resulting from disruption to community connectivity and potential changes to landscape and visual amenity, which could impact mental health*". This assessment draws on evidence across multiple environmental disciplines to provide a comprehensive assessment, including the landscape and visual, socio-economics, and traffic and transport effects. Drawing on this evidence, and applying professional judgement, the assessment concludes that there would be no significant effects on social cohesion and community identity, including amenity impacts on PRoW and other recreational receptors. Additionally, impacts related to access to PRoW for active travel caused by the construction of the Proposed Project is assessed under the "Transport modes, access, connections and physical activity" determinant within **Application Document 6.2.3.11 Part 3 Kent Chapter 11 Health and Wellbeing [AS-003]**. This draws on assessments from **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-economics Recreation and Tourism (Clean) [REP1a-007]** and **Application Document 6.2.3.7 Part 3 Kent Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-067]**. Taking residual conclusions into account that the routes will remain open and usable throughout construction, alongside the embedded mitigation set out in the **Application Document 7.5.9.2 Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan – Kent [APP-353]**, **Application Document 6.2.3.11 Part 3 Kent Chapter 11 Health and Wellbeing [AS-003]** assesses the likely impact on health and wellbeing in terms of where physical activity and community connectivity may be compromised for users. It concludes that there would be no significant adverse effects on health and wellbeing. Cumulative effects are also assessed in **Application Document 6.2.3.13 Part 3 Kent Chapter 13 Kent Onshore Scheme Inter-Project Cumulative Effects [APP-073]**, with the same conclusion.
5.4.20	Negative impact on socio-economic and tourism	The proposed development would have an overall negative local impact on socioeconomic and tourism due to the conflict with the TLP, significant change to landscape, adverse impacts on the visual amenity and the attractiveness and perception of Thanet as a visitor and tourist destination. The long-term economic benefits of the proposed development are very limited and the short-term construction benefits are minimal once disrupted within the study area.	A response to this comment has previously been provided within Table 6.2 Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism of the Applicant's response to the Thanet District Council RR in **Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115].**

5. Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.5 Traffic and Transport

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Table 5.1 below provides the Applicant’s comments on Section 5.5 Traffic and Transport.

5.2 Comments Table

Table 5.1 Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.5 Traffic and Transport

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant’s Comments
5.5.10	Relevant representations, PADSS and SoCG	Whilst TDC defers to Kent County Council as the Highway Authority, a number of issues have been raised in TDCs Relevant Representation [RR-5372], Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statements (PADSS) [AS-079] and Statement of Common Ground [APP-326] and these remain relevant.	The Applicant notes this comment.
5.5.11	Construction access via Minster and Marsh Farm Road and Ebbsfleet Lane North	Direct access to the primary road network during construction and operation is welcomed. However, significant concern remains with any construction access via Minster and Marsh Farm Road and Ebbsfleet Lane North, even as a secondary means of access, as these roads are not suitable for construction access. There is an opportunity to route construction vehicles through the Order limits from the A256.	A response to this comment has previously been provided within Table 2.11 Traffic and Transportation of the Applicant’s response to the Thanet District Council RR in **Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115]**.
5.5.12	Effect on Sundays and bank holidays	As stated in section 5.4, the effect on traffic during Sundays and Bank Holidays has not been fully assessed and remains a key concern particularly as Thanet is reliant on tourism with a significant uplift in visitors throughout the summer months. This also causes inconvenience, congestion and time-delay for local residents and businesses within the District with construction proposed for 7 days a week across a five year period. This is a significant disruption to the local highway network which already experiences significant traffic congestion during the school holidays and weekends. It is noted that the traffic data (automatic traffic counts and manual classified counts) were obtained in January 2024 which is the month with the lowest number of visits to Thanet. This is demonstrated in the ‘Economic Impact of Tourism Thanet-2023 Results’ which shows only 69% occupancy of serviced accommodation rooms in the southeast which is 10% below the yearly average of 79%. This excludes any self-catering units or day trips. This confirms that January is generally the quietest period for tourism and therefore the traffic data collected in January 2025 skews the assessment so it appears more favourable towards the proposed development.	Responses to this comment (with respect to Sunday and Bank Holiday working) have previously been provided within Table 2.10 Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism and Table 2.11 Traffic and Transportation of the Applicant’s response to the Thanet District Council RR in **Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115]**. In terms of the traffic data, whilst it is acknowledged that the traffic surveys within Kent were carried out in January 2024, the Baseline traffic flows which have informed **Application Document 6.2.3.7 Part 3 Kent Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-067]** are based on an agreed survey methodology with KCC Highways and are considered to be appropriate for the purposes of the assessment work. Had higher Baseline traffic flows been adopted to consider seasonal fluctuations during the summer for example, then the percentage increases as a result of forecast construction traffic associated with the Proposed Project would have been lower than what was reported and assessed for the majority of the assessment criteria in **Application Document 6.2.3.7 Part 3 Kent Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-067]**, resulting in fewer potential impacts being identified. The assessment within **Application Document 6.2.3.7 Part 3 Kent Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-067]** adopts worst-case assumptions for construction traffic volumes, which provides a robust basis for impact evaluation by considering the busiest day of the construction programme. Therefore, whilst seasonal fluctuations in Baseline traffic levels are

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			acknowledged, the methodology adopted for the assessment work is considered to be sound by adopting peak construction traffic levels, rather than average or seasonal construction traffic levels which would be lower. As summarised by KCC within their Relevant Representation, as the Local Highway Authority for Kent, KCC has collaborated with the Applicant on Highways and Transportation matters and following positive engagement, all of the issues raised by KCC during the Pre-Examination stage of the DCO have been addressed by the Applicant.
5.5.13 and 5.5.14	PRoW	It is acknowledged that the proposed development will require the temporary closure and diversion of a number of short sections of the PRoWs that cross the Order limits and the management of the PRoW is set out in the Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan – Kent [APP-353] secured via Requirement 6 of the draft DCO. However, there are numerous PRoWs which will be disrupted during the five-year construction period both within the Order Limits and within proximity which will negatively impact the users of the PRoW discouraging use of these routes. Furthermore, once operational the experience of the users of the PRoW and other routes will be significantly altered by the presence of the converter, substation and additional pylons.	A response to this comment can be found in Table 6.2 (Reference 6.2.26) of **Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115]**. The visual amenity of recreational receptors, including along the public right of way network and other recreational routes, are assessed within **Application Document 6.3.3.1.D ES Appendix 3.1.D Visual Amenity Baseline and Assessment [APP-146]**. This assessment is summarised within Section 1.7.25 **Application Document 6.2.3.1 Part 3 Kent Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual [APP-061]** and sets out a summary of visual receptor groups including those considered to be recreational. The significantly affected recreational receptors would include users of the local PRoW network within the study area, including public footpaths and public bridleways, users of the Saxon Shore Way and Viking Coastal Trail. A summary of the effects are set out within Section 1.11 within the Landscape and Visual chapter which includes reference to the highly localised receptors, context of the existing energy infrastructure in views and the proposals typically set against mature vegetation.
5.5.16	Negative impact on traffic and transport	Given the number and type of vehicle movements and hours of use, traffic associated with construction is likely to have a significant impact on the local highway network. The proposed development would have an overall negative local impact on traffic and transport, the PRoW network and the attractiveness and perception of Thanet as a visitor and tourist destination.	The Applicant recognises that the potential for impacts associated with the Proposed Project during construction, operation and decommissioning are a source of concern for local tourism. Section 10.9 of **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-economics Recreation and Tourism (Clean) [REP1a-007]** assesses potential effects of the Proposed Project on private and community assets, recreation and tourism, which identified no likely significant residual effects. The assessment concludes that there are no visitor attractions within the Study Area which would be affected by the land take required for the Kent Onshore Scheme or to which access would be required. Additionally, **Application Document 6.2.3.7 Part 3 Kent Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-067]** concludes there are no roads assessed that would experience significant severance effects during construction. Section 7 of **Application Document 7.5.1.2 Outline Construction Traffic Management and Travel Plan - Kent [APP- 338]** includes construction traffic management measures that will be implemented to facilitate the Proposed Project, to avoid and reduce adverse impacts on the surrounding networks during the construction phase. Therefore, there are no significant severance effects identified between residents, visitors and local assets.

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			Additionally, the Applicant notes concerns about the potential impact of the Proposed Project on visitor perceptions of the local area. The Applicant has undertaken a review of other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and their potential effects on tourism and visitor activity since the DCO submission. Sizewell C, Bramford to Twinstead, and East Anglia ONE North, each adopted methodologies comparable to those used for the Proposed Project, and all concluded that the developments will not result in significant effects on tourism or visitor numbers. A review of published monitoring reports of actual impacts observed from Sizewell B and Hinkley Point C found that initial concerns observed in surveys have not translated into measurable reductions in visitor numbers or tourism-related employment. On the contrary, the local tourism sector remained confident and continued to grow during the construction period. On that basis there is limited robust evidence to suggest that negative visitor perception identified / observed in surveys prior to construction will result in material adverse effects on tourism. Therefore, the evidence suggests that there will be no significant adverse effects on visitors or tourism as a result of the Kent Onshore Scheme, as concluded within **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-economics Recreation and Tourism (Clean) [REP1a-007]**.

6. Applicant's Comments on Section 5.6 Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Table 6.1 below provides the Applicant's comments on Section 5.6 Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain.

6.2 Comments Table

Table 6.1 Applicant's Comments on Section 5.6 Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
5.6.6	Pegwell Bay	Pegwell Bay is a significantly important site for ecology that requires protection. Specifically, it is an important site for Wintering Birds recognised in its international and national designations. The land around the ecological designations can also form functionally linked land which can support wintering bird populations providing additional habitat. Pegwell Bay supports Kent's largest grey seal population, which is protected under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Seals are highly sensitive to visual and acoustic disturbance. The additional overhead power lines increase the potential risk of bird strike already present in the area due to the existing overhead power lines.	The Applicant notes this comment.
5.6.7	Hoverport	The land within the Order limits is known to support a range of breeding birds including Skylarks and is known to support reptiles. Riparian mammals are also known to be present within the Minster Marshes including water voles, minks, otters and potentially beavers. Bats are also present in the area using it for roosting and foraging and commuting. The former hoverport closed to passengers in 1982 and following various other uses has been disused since 1995. It has since been reclaimed by nature and forms a key habitat within Pegwell Bay supporting a number of species including rare species of invertebrates.	The Applicant notes this comment, although no evidence of beaver has been recorded in Minster Marshes during the Applicant's surveys (all evidence was on the River Stour or in Ash Level).
5.6.8	Lighting	As one of the darkest areas within Thanet the proposed development has the potential to increase significant levels of artificial lighting which could have the potential to disturb a number of protected species, primarily bats.	The Applicant notes this comment. Lighting impacts on wildlife, particularly bats, have been assessed in the Kent Ecology and Biodiversity ES Chapter **Application Document 6.2.3.2 (D) Part 3 Kent Chapter 2 Ecology and Biodiversity (Clean) [REP1-048].** Furthermore, commitment B58 of A**pplication Document 7.5.3.2 (B) CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC)** seeks to minimise disturbance to bats by designing operational lighting to be the minimum required for the safe working in line with best practice guidance from the Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP). The REAC states this is to be secured through the Onshore Construction Environmental Management Plan required under Requirement 6 of the draft DCO.
5.6.9	Cabling through Pegwell Bay	It is acknowledged that the preferred method of cable installation would be via a trenchless solution such as Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) beneath Pegwell Bay to minimise impacts on the ecological designations. The cabling through Pegwell Bay is a key concern given the potential significant impact on	The Sea Link project has committed to trenchless installation of the landfall beneath the saltmarsh and lagoon. The commitment is provided in Measure

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
		the ecological designation. Previous experience from Nemo Link has highlighted this particularly given that a trenchless solution was proposed for the interconnector but it was found not to be possible at the detailed design stage. Nemo Link 'scar' remains readily visible in the landscape and the ecological effects of its installation have still not yet recovered. In addition, the land within the Order limits around the ecological designations also form vital areas of habitat and refuge for the protected species and other fauna and flora.	W22 of **Application Document 7.5.3.2 (B) CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) (Clean) [REP1-102].** The DCO Application does not include an option for the Applicant to install the cables using open cut trench technique to cross the saltmarsh and lagoon even as a fall-back option. Detailed responses to specific questions from the Examining Authority about the Nemo Project are provided in **Application Document 9.37 Applicant's Responses to Supplementary Agenda Additional Questions [REP1A-033].** **Application document 9.72.2 Applicant's Response to Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) Action Points [REP1A-037]** provides an explanation in relation to horizontal directional drilling (HDD) and why it was not possible for Nemo Link.
5.6.11	Riparian mammals	In terms of the riparian mammal surveys, there is insufficient coverage of the surveys to confirm the full impact of the proposed development on riparian mammals with surveys largely confined to the Order limits with some ditches and riparian features not surveyed for mammals because no direct works were proposed there. However, disturbance of the riparian mammals can still occur and may enter the Order limits without being recorded. In addition, American Mink has been recorded within the site which is an invasive non-native species. American Mink are a threat to native species such as water voles and breeding waders however the proposed water vole mitigation does not appear to consider this. Currently, there is no proposed active management or control of American Mink as part of the mitigation measure and this may undermine long-term mitigation measures for other species such as water voles.	Ditches and other watercourses were extensively surveyed, and this was not confined to the Order Limits. Surveys were not limited to the Order Limits where land beyond the Order Limits could be accessed. For example, water vole evidence outside the Order Limits is shown in the vicinity of the golf course and in Ash Level on the maps in **Application Document 6.4.3.2.H ES Figures Kent Riparian Mammal Report [APP-252].** However, but the primary impact of the Proposed Development will be within or adjacent to the Order Limits. With regard to American mink, it is primarily the responsibility of landowners to control invasive species on their land. Regarding whether it is appropriate to deliver water vole mitigation where there is mink, the Water Vole Conservation Handbook indicates that: *'in cases where some coexistence between mink and water vole has been observed, this has been because the habitat was extremely extensive and not optimal for mink'*. This would apply to Minster Marshes and Ash Levels where the habitat available for riparian mammals is very extensive consisting of many kilometres of ditch. Moreover, since the water voles and mink already co-exist, and only one record of mink was made during surveys, it is not considered inappropriate to deliver the mitigation habitat in this location, particularly since a considerable increase in the amount of habitat will result, compared to the amount to be lost.
5.6.12	Wintering birds surveys	The Order limits contain land which is important for wintering and breeding birds. In addition, the farmland outside of the RAMSAR and SPA ecological designations, such as the location of the converter station and substation, may form functionally linked land which supports wintering and breeding bird populations. However, the results of the wintering bird surveys have not been submitted particularly for the compensation land within Dover District.	All results of wintering bird surveys have been submitted into the Examination. The results of the wintering bird survey of the golden plover mitigation area will be submitted at Deadline 2 and indicate that golden plovers are present in the area but are not currently making significant use of the mitigation land as currently farmed.
5.6.13	Skylarks	With regard to skylarks (red-listed bird) and the proposed mitigation, there is concern that the skylarks may not colonise new habitat if absent currently. There is also concern that there is no contingency plan should the skylarks fail to occupy new plots. The effectiveness of arable habitat management (e.g. reduced pesticides, stubble retention) depends on consistent delivery but mechanisms to secure and monitor this over 40–80 years remain unclear.	The mitigation land in question is primarily being delivered for golden plover. Skylarks are known to be in the broad area (e.g. at Minster Marshes less than 3 km to the north) which in ornithological terms is a short distance. However, only one skylark territory was recorded in the field to be permanently lost to the Converter Station, and the land will be enhanced to be beneficial for a wide range of breeding farmland birds. In addition to skylark plots in winter

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			cereals, management practices for the 10 ha arable mitigation land as set out in paragraph 6.10 of **Application Document 7.5.7.2 (B) Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan- Kent (Clean) [PDA-035]** include sowing spring crops by preference (particularly spring cereals), retaining stubble until the end of November when spring cereals are sown, and controls on pesticide and fertiliser use. These would all be secured for 40 to 80 years on a plot of land that is not currently managed this way and would benefit a wide range of farmland breeding birds.
5.6.14	Disruption and potential displacement of recreational users	Currently Pegwell Bay Hoverport and the Pegwell Bay Country Park, provide key dog-walking areas that help reduce recreational pressure and disturbance across the rest of the ecologically designated areas but it is unclear whether any mitigation measures are proposed to accommodate the disruption and potential displacement of recreational users to other areas within the ecological designations.	The Applicant notes the local concerns regarding the impact of the construction period on the local PRoW network and recreational routes, with particular concern regarding impacts located near Pegwell Bay and the Old Hoverport. Section 10.9 of **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-Economics Recreation and Tourism (Clean) [REP1A-007]** assesses the potential effects of the Proposed Project on disruption to the use of PRoW and recreational routes, including TR15 and TR33 used for recreational purposes and accessibility between the Viking Ship Hugin and local community in Cliffsend. Appropriate route diversions, closures and management measures are proposed as embedded mitigation and outlined in Section 10.8. The criteria for determining the sensitivity of users of PRoW and recreational trails and the magnitude of impact of disruption is outlined in Section 10.4. For example, recreational routes' sensitivity criteria considered several factors, including: • the quality of user experience; • quality of the route; • purpose of usage; and • potential for substitution. Overall, it is concluded that no significant socio-economic, recreation and tourism effects are anticipated, and therefore no mitigation is required. Paragraph 10.9.74 notes that there is potential for noise, air quality, visual and traffic effects arising from construction of the Kent Onshore Scheme to impact on the amenity of private, community, recreational and tourism assets within 500 m of the Order Limits. Amenity impacts on these receptors are assessed in **Application Document 6.2.3.11 Part 3 Kent Chapter 11 Health and Wellbeing [AS-003**]. For PRoW, amenity impacts are assessed under the determinant 'Social Cohesion and Community Identity'. As defined in in **Application Document 6.2.3.11 Part 3 Kent Chapter 11 Health and Wellbeing [AS-003]**, this considers the "*potential adverse impacts on health and wellbeing resulting from disruption to community connectivity and potential changes to landscape and visual amenity, which could impact mental health*". This assessment draws on evidence across multiple environmental disciplines to provide a comprehensive assessment, including the landscape and visual, socio-economics, and traffic and transport effects. Drawing on this evidence, and applying professional judgement, the assessment concludes that there would be no significant effects on social cohesion and community identity, including amenity impacts on PRoW and other recreational receptors.

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
5.6.15	Long-term disturbance	As a result of the 5 year construction period and the operational period of the project, the long-term disturbance could lead to species permanently abandoning the site. Without an adequate alternative location that matches the habitat quality and capacity of the existing area, the displacement pressure could result in reduced survival rates and a long-term decline in site usage, causing a significant ecological impact.	This is incorrect, construction activities within Pegwell Bay will not span 5 years. Details of the construction activities and durations within Pegwell Bay are set out in **Application Document 9.13 Pegwell Bay Construction Method Technical Note [REP1-108].** Further there will be no or very limited operational activities within Pegwell Bay.
5.6.16	Impact on birds	The scale of the proposed development poses a serious risk to a vital migratory route used by birds that either depend on these sites or migrate through the Stour Estuary corridor. The introduction of large pylons and associated infrastructure could make the site less frequently used, forcing many species to travel greater distances to find suitable alternative routes or habitats. There is also a heightened risk of bird strikes, particularly given historical evidence of such incidents occurring with the smaller and fewer pylons already crossing the River Stour. The proposed larger structures are therefore likely to exacerbate this existing risk.	These issues have been thoroughly explored in the submitted Application Documents, particularly **Application Document 6.2.3.2 (D) Part 3 Kent Chapter 2 Ecology and Biodiversity (Clean) [REP1-049]** and **Application Document 6.6 (C) Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (Clean) [REP1-071].**
5.6.17	Impact on reptiles	With regard to reptiles, whilst the proposed methods of mitigation are acceptable, the commitment to exclusion timing, receptor habitat, or monitoring, particularly post-construction, remains unclear.	**Application Document 7.4.7 Draft Statement of Common Ground Kent County Council [REP1-079]** discusses these matters relating to reptiles.
5.6.18	Impact on seals	Both seal species (grey and harbour seals) found in Pegwell Bay are protected under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 and are listed as Priority Species under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. With Grey Seals breeding between October and March and Harbour Seals breeding between June and August it is unclear how the proposed development will avoid disturbance during the breeding season of both seal species particularly as a result of drilling and piling. It also remains unclear as to how the project will mitigate the combined disturbance to seal and bird breeding seasons and overwintering birds which overlaps through the course of the year.	A response to this comment can be found in **Application Document 9.34.5 Applicant's Responses to Selected Relevant Representation Responses [REP1-115]**.
5.6.19	BNG information	The proposed development intends to deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) however the Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Report [AS-055] states a net loss across all three habitat types. Therefore, insufficient information has been submitted to understand how this has been calculated and whether a minimum 10% BNG can be achieved either onsite or offsite. There is no habitat condition assessment of BNG metric submitted and it is unclear how the BNG will be secured through the DCO. The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy is due to be published before the end of 2025 and any BNG should seek to align with the strategy.	The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool(s) used to undertake the **Application Document 6.12 (C) Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Report (Clean**) **[REP1A-025].** The Applicant is committed to delivering a minimum 10% BNG with wider environmental and societal benefits. The Proposed Project will seek to provide BNG in three broad ways: 1. on land in The Applicant 's ownership; 2. through purchase of biodiversity units from commercial registered providers; and 3. through collaborative delivery off-site with trusted partners. With respect to land within the Applicant's ownership, at the converter station, the following habitat creation is proposed re-instatement and enhancement of hedgerows, riparian zone enhancements on ditches and the creation of other neutral grassland and woodland habitats which will be complimentary to woodland habitat located to the south of the proposed converter station location (As showing in Appendix C of **Application Document 6.12 (C) Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Report [REP1A-025]**). Taking account of

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			the provision of these on-site enhancements, there is still a predicted loss of –6.90% (29.67 BU's) This remaining biodiversity unit requirement is anticipated to be delivered through: • partnership delivery to provide registered off-site biodiversity units with wider environmental and societal benefits; • The Applicant's Nature and Climate Framework suppliers to provide registered off-site biodiversity units with wider environmental and societal benefits; and • working with other registered off-site biodiversity unit providers. There are ongoing discussions with relevant stakeholders and established and experienced conservation organisations which champion public access and engagement with the aims of delivering the required units, in such a way to deliver a more meaningful and targeted provision of BNG (i.e. to benefit protected and notable species within local biodiversity action plans) that may work towards any targets within the incoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). It is noted that the Kent and Medway LNRS has now been published as of December 2025, this will be reviewed with aims of delivering the Proposed Project's BNG requirement in linee with the LNRS.
5.6.20 - 5.6.22	Commitment to HDD	It is acknowledged that the applicant has committed to a trenchless solution such as HDD (Horizontal Directional Drilling) under saltmarsh confirmed with no open trenching planned and has reiterated that an amendment to the DCO would be required should open trenching be needed. Given the significant impacts from the previous open trenching and other methods used for the installation of Nemo Link, TDC fundamentally opposes any open trenching within Pegwell Bay and surrounding areas as this will cause significant damage and disturbance to the saltmarsh and ecological designations. Whilst the applicant is adamant that HDD will be used, this was the same approach put forward by the developers of Nemo Link who encountered issues at the detailed design stage when attempting to use HDD. TDC are concerned that the same issues will arise as part of this proposed development and therefore full assurance is required that HDD in this area is feasible. If HDD cannot be implemented, then the project cannot be delivered. It is acknowledged that Schedule 16, Part 2, Article 10(1) does set out that landfall installation must only use trenchless landfall techniques and (2) No exit to trenchless landfall techniques must occur within 50m of saltmarsh habitat within Pegwell Bay. However, TDC questions whether this fully secures the protection of the ecological designations where they do not fall within the Marine Management Organisations jurisdiction thus allowing non-trenchless techniques within the ecological designations. It is also unclear as to the extent of the saltmarsh and what areas are included within this. The saltmarsh or appropriate area needs to be defined and justification of a 50m offset is required.	The Sea Link project has committed to trenchless installation of the landfall beneath the saltmarsh and lagoon. The commitment is provided in Measure W22 of **Application Document 7.5.3.2 (B) CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) (Clean) [REP1-102].** **Application document 9.72.2 Applicant's Response to Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) Action Points [REP1A-037]** provides an explanation horizontal directional drilling (HDD) and why it was not possible for Nemo Link. The DCO Application does not include an option for the Applicant to install the cables using open cut trench technique to cross the saltmarsh and lagoon even as a fall-back option. As set out in **Application Document 7.5.3.2 (B) CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) (Clean) [REP1-102]**– Commitment B6, Trenchless crossing exit pits in Pegwell Bay will be at least 105 m seaward from the edge of the saltmarsh. The temporary working area will be located at a minimum distance of 50 m from the edge of the saltmarsh. The Applicant has also included a separate commitment (Commitment B67) to complete a pre-construction saltmarsh habitat survey which will be used to define the locations and widths of temporary construction access route to ensure that there is no access or egress of vehicles onto the saltmarsh. The conceptual HDD design drawings provided in Application Document **7.3 Design Development Report – Appendix A Landfall HDD Feasibility**

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
		Details of the trenchless techniques are still to be confirmed with the preferred method being HDD. Further details are required regarding HDD exit points, compound activities, and accidental fluid release risks (e.g. drilling mud). Concerns are raised regarding impacts and contingency for fluid releases from HDD which could smother mudflat fauna and no detailed plume monitoring plan is provided.	**Technical Note [APP-321]** show the exits to be 105m or further from the edge of the saltmarsh as defined by the eastern limit of vegetation on the 2024 aerial photographs. This is significantly greater than the minimum offset of 50m and allows ample room for enabling plant and equipment to install approximately 30m length coffer dams around the HDD exits. Further detail on working methods at the HDD exits in the intertidal area are provided in **Application Document 9.13 Pegwell Bay Construction Method Technical Note [REP1-108]**. The document includes additional detail on mitigating drilling fluid losses and frac out in Section 3.4 Management of Drilling Fluids. The document also outlines how temporary coffer dams will be installed at the HDD exits to ensure drilling fluid is captured and recycled.
5.6.23	Lighting	TDC acknowledges that appropriate lighting of the proposed development is proposed to minimise the impact on ecological receptors as set out in the CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments [APP-342]. However, the potential impacts on sensitive nocturnal or wetland species particularly given lux levels are provided at averages and not maximum levels.	Lighting of the Proposed Project would be constant and would not fluctuate. Therefore, the lux levels used for the ecological assessment represent the maximum lighting expected to be experienced.
5.6.24	Noise disturbance to birds	As highlighted above, a range of species are likely to experience noise disturbance particularly during the construction period. The Natural England Commissioned Report NECR570 (September 2024) - Noise Disturbance – Baseline Level Monitoring in the Solent found that birds will be disturbed where there are changes in 20dB compared to the background noise levels. A maximum threshold of 60dB has been set following discussions with Natural England but given the background noise in the area is 35 dB during the day and 29 dB at night as set out in ES Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [AS-011] a change in noise to 60dB would be a significant change particularly when the ES chapter 2 Ecology and Biodiversity [PDA-021] confirms that change above 3 dB is required for the difference to be perceptible. It is also clear that the 60dB is exceeded multiple times during construction through the use of different plant and construction activities.	The 35dB figure quoted is assumed to be taken from table 9.17 and represents LA90. It therefore cannot be compared to LAmax. The typical daytime LAmax figure for the referenced location (K_L1) is in Table 9.16 and is 60 dB LAmax (range 41-97). The quietest LAmax (41) is therefore 19 decibels below our LAmax disturbance threshold, while the loudest LAmax currently experienced (97 decibels) is 37 decibels higher than our chosen disturbance threshold; the typical LAmax currently experienced is our disturbance threshold. This therefore indicates we are being precautionary by using a 60dB threshold and applying it to LAmax. Night-time is taken in the noise chapter (**Application Document 6.2.3.9 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration (Clean) [AS-011])** to be 11:00pm to 7:00am. No construction works will occur during that time except at the HDD location during drilling.
5.6.27	Negative impact on ecology	The proposed development would have an overall negative local impact on ecology.	The Applicant does not agree with this conclusion as demonstrated through its suite of ecological assessments and the implementation of **Application Document 7.5.7.2 (B) Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan- Kent (Clean) [PDA-035]**.

7. Applicant's Comments on Section 5.7 Agricultural Land and Soils

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 Table 7.1 below provides the Applicant's comments on Section 5.7 Agricultural Land and Soils.

7.2 Comments Table

Table 7.1 Applicant's Comments on Section 5.7 Agricultural Land and Soils

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
5.7.2	Loss of BMV land	The majority of land within the Order limits comprises Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (BMV land) and specifically Grade 2. This reflects the fact that the site lies within the former Wantsum Channel which eventually silted up to provide fertile agricultural land and marshes.	Table 6.14 of **Application Document 6.2.3.6 Part 3 Kent Chapter 6 Agriculture and Soils [PDA-023]** confirms that the Order Limits are predicted to comprise 50.1% BMV land (Grades 2 and 3a), with Grade 2 predicted to account for 18.7% of the land within the Order Limits. Site-specific soil surveys are being undertaken to confirm land grade distribution.
5.7.4	Loss of BMV land	In summary, there are concerns with regard to the scale of loss of BMV land in this sensitive area and within the District and it is considered that the cumulative impact of buildings (Converter Station and Substation), areas for parking and access roads, would result in large scale BMV losses. The Applicant accepts there is the permanent loss of BMV land which is a significant adverse residual effect with no further mitigation available	Table 6.14 of **Application Document 6.2.3.6 Part 3 Kent Chapter 6 Agriculture and Soils [PDA-023]** confirms that 12.27 ha of land within the Order Limits will be utilised for permanent infrastructure; this is all predicted to be BMV land. This grade distribution will be confirmed upon completion of site-specific ALC surveys which are currently being undertaken.
5.7.5	Sampling	It is acknowledged that no physical sampling has been conducted to confirm the extent and type of BMV throughout the Order limits. Therefore, it is unclear the extent of the impacts and whether the proposed mitigation is appropriate.	The Applicant notes that the initial assessment has been based on Predictive ALC mapping due to a heightened UXO risk across the development site. Site-specific ALC surveys are currently being undertaken and will form an update to **Application Document 6.3.3.6.A ES Appendix 3.6.A Predictive Agricultural Land Classification Report – Kent [APP-174]** upon completion.
5.7.6	Temporary loss	It is also acknowledged that the proposed development could be extended beyond the 40 year life span and therefore the temporary loss of BMV land should be considered as permanent.	The temporary areas considered during the assessment account for the areas of land utilised during the construction phase; once the development is operational the land required temporarily will be reinstated to its pre-construction condition through implementation of good practice soil handling measures as set out in the outline Soil Management Plan (**Application Document 7.5.10.2 Outline Soil Management Plan – Kent [APP-355]**), the remaining permanent land take is noted as 12.27 ha (Table 6.14 of **Application Document 6.2.3.6 Part 3 Kent Chapter 6 Agriculture and Soils [PDA-023])**.
5.7.8	Negative impact on soils	The proposed development would have a negative local impact due to the conflict with the TLP and result in significant loss and impact on agricultural BMV land and soils	**Application Document 7.1 (C) Planning Statement [AS-057]** sets out how, in line with paragraph 5.11.12 of NPS EN-1 (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2024), the Applicant has sought to minimise impacts on BMV agricultural land from the outset through sensitive routeing and siting of infrastructure and temporary works and rationalisation of the design to minimise permanent land take

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			requirements. The permanent loss of BMV land is considered necessary on the basis that there is urgent need for Critical National Priority Infrastructure such as the Proposed Project. Land required temporarily will be reinstated to its pre-construction condition through implementation of good practice soil handling measures as set out in the outline Soil Management Plan (**Application Document 7.5.10.2 Outline Soil Management Plan – Kent [APP-355]**). Overall, it is considered that the Proposed Project is in accordance with national and local policy relating to the protection of agricultural land as the use of agricultural land and the permanent loss of BMV land is justified.

8. Applicant's Comments on Section 5.8 Noise and Vibration and Section 5.9 Air Quality

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Table 8.1 below provides the Applicant's comments on Section 5.8 Noise and Vibration and Section 5.9 Air Quality.

8.2 Comments Table

Table 8.1 Applicant's Comments on Section 5.8 Noise and Vibration and Section 5.9 Air Quality

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
5.8 Noise and Vibration			
5.8.2 and 5.8.3	Sensitive receptors	The site is located in the countryside and is relatively tranquil with lower ambient noise levels. There are a number of sensitive receptors in close proximity to the Order limits that may be adversely affected by the proposed development particularly during construction, including residential properties around Ebbsfleet Cliffsend and Minster. In addition, there are a number of non-residential receptors also in close proximity including the Great Oaks Small School which is of high sensitivity.	All of these receptors have been considered in the assessment of construction noise and vibration, and operational noise, as detailed in **Application Document 6.2.3.9 Part 3 Kent Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [AS-111]**. No significant adverse effects are expected at any receptors. The Great Oaks Small School has been identified as a particularly high sensitivity receptor, and additional consideration of this has been applied to the assessment through consultation with the Environmental Protection Department of Thanet District Council. Although significant adverse effects are not expected at the school during the construction phase, mitigation measures will be put in place to reduce adverse effects as far as possible. The Applicant has also liaised with the school directly.
5.8.7	Noise mitigation	However, Requirement 2 of Schedule 3 of the draft DCO should include provisions within this Requirement that ensure embedded noise mitigation is included as part of the design of the proposed development. It is unclear how operational noise mitigation has or will be secured. It is requested that an operational noise management plan is prepared to ensure the noise rating level (LA,T) emitted from the plant at the site shall not exceed a level that is 5dB below the background noise level (LA90,T) at the nearest [residential facade]. All measurements shall be defined and derived in accordance with BS4142: 2014 + A1:2019 'Method for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound'	The assessment of operational noise from the proposed Minster Converter Station and Minster Substation is provided in **Application Document 6.3.3.9 Part 3 Kent Chapter 9 Appendix 3.9.D Kent Operational Noise Assessment [AS-123]**. Although the assessment is indicative, based on currently available Front End Engineering Design (FEED) stage information, it indicates that the aims of the local authority can be achieved. Further detailed assessments would be undertaken by the developer, at which stage specific noise mitigation measures would be specified to avoid adverse effects. This is secured through commitment NV09 of **Application Document 7.5.3.2: CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) [REP1-103]**. The Applicant will seek to achieve the aims of the local authority (i.e. a noise rating level that does not exceed 5dB below the representative background sound level), and the assessment indicates that this is achievable, in principle. However, it should be noted that this aim is above and beyond the requirements of national planning policy and guidance for noise. The commitment is therefore to avoid significant adverse effects, and seek to achieve the aims of the local authority, or otherwise as low as reasonably possible.

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
5.9 Air Quality			
5.9.3	Sensitive receptors	There are a number of sensitive receptors in close proximity to the Order limits that may be adversely affected by the proposed development particularly during construction, including residential properties.	The Applicant notes that TDC considers suitable mitigation with regard to air quality is proposed.
5.9.5	Mitigation	TDC is content that the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [AS127] and Air Quality Management Plan [APP-347] provides suitable mitigation with regard to air quality.	

9. Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.10 Historic Environment

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 Table 9.1 below provides the Applicant’s comments on Section 5.10 Historic Environment.

9.2 Comments Table

Table 9.1 Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.10 Historic Environment

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant’s Comments
5.10.6	Impact on the Ebbsfleet Peninsula Complex	It is acknowledged that the proposed development has assessed the impact on the Ebbsfleet Peninsula Complex and sought to avoid impacts where possible but there remains some potential loss to a non-designated heritage of national significance and key part of Thanet’s history therefore additional options are required to minimise the harm further.	The Applicant will continue to seek to minimise the potential for physical impacts on the Ebbsfleet Peninsula Complex as the design is developed. This includes limiting the size of compounds and the working width of the cable corridor and permanent access where practicable. This is being undertaken in consultation with the Kent County Council Archaeological Advisor.
5.10.7	Adversely affect historic landscape	TDC are of the view that the introduction of significant infrastructure will adversely affect the historic landscape which is detrimental to its appreciation as a key historic landing point for numerous historical periods.	Historic landscape character types are detailed in Paragraph 4.2.4 of the **Application Document 6.3.3.3.A ES Appendix 3.3.A Cultural Heritage Baseline Report [APP-161].** The Historic Landscape Character of the Study Area, based on data supplied by Kent County Council consists of: “*The elevated area of the Ebbsfleet Peninsula consist of ‘Field Patterns Type 1.14: Fields Predominantly Bounded by Tracks, Roads, and Other Rights of Way’. To the south and west the Ebbsfleet Peninsula drops away to land defined as ‘Reclaimed Marshland Type 5.4: Rectilinear Enclosures’, while to the east the land is defined as ‘Reclaimed Marshland Type 5.3: Small Rectilinear Enclosures’. The eastern end of the Order Limits, near the coastline, are categorised as ‘Coastal Type 8.9: Dunes’ and ‘Coastal Type 8.7: Mud Flats’, with other types within the Study Area limited to small pockets of ‘Extractive and Other Industry Type 12.5: Reservoirs and Water Treatment’ and ‘Recreation Type 11.2: Golf Courses’.*” This highlights that while the Study Area was once a coastal environment, land reclamation since at least the medieval period has greatly altered the landscape of the former Wantsum Channel, and the Minster Converter Station and Substation are located within HLC area ‘Type 5.4: Rectilinear Enclosures’. Section 6 of **Application Document 6.3.3.3.A ES Appendix 3.3.A Cultural Heritage Baseline Report [APP-161]** provides an overview of the assets taken forwards to assessment. Only assets where there was the potential for a significant effect were progressed to full assessment, with the detailed assessment provided in Section 3.9 of the **Application Document 6.2.3.3 Part 3 Kent Chapter 3 Cultural Heritage [APP-063].** Residual effects (i.e. effects after mitigation) are also provided in Section 3.11, which concludes that, after mitigation, ‘Significant Effects’ are not expected. Pre application consultation with stakeholders did not highlight the need for a separate assessment of potential impacts on the historic landscape, and as such a specific assessment has not been undertaken. Assets possibly associated with

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			historic landings, including the Ebbsfleet Peninsula Complex and Richborough Fort were assessed. The ability to understand the Kent Onshore Scheme, and specifically the area of the Minster Converter Station and Substation which represent the main permanent aboveground infrastructure, as an '*historic landing point for numerous historical periods*' has been greatly diminished. This is largely a result of historic land reclamation from at least the medieval period which has resulted in a landlocked landscape some distance from the coastline. Furthermore, the area has been truncated by modern infrastructure such as the 19th century railway line as well as 20th century road and power infrastructure. The Historic Landscape Character is largely defined as agricultural rather than coastal or a landing point, and the Kent Onshore Scheme will not alter this. This is largely a result of the Minster Converter Station and Substation being located to the east of the railway line thereby limiting impacts on the more open landscape of the Minster Marshes to the west of the railway line. The Kent Onshore Scheme will result in minor loss of historic landscape features associated with the 'reclaimed landscape' such as hedgerows and drainage ditches. Furthermore, landscape and ecological mitigation outlined in the **Application Document 7.5.7.2 (B) Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan- Kent (Clean)** [**PDA-035**] will further limit impacts through the reinstatement of boundaries where appropriate. As such, impacts on the historic landscape character of the Kent Onshore Scheme are not considered to be significant.
5.10.9	Negative impact on heritage	The proposed development would have an overall negative local impact on cultural heritage.	Impacts on cultural heritage are detailed in **Application Document 6.2.3.3 Part 3 Kent Chapter 3 Cultural Heritage [APP-063]** with residual effects (i.e. effects after mitigation) provided in Section 3.11. This concludes that, after mitigation, 'Significant Effects' are not expected. Provision for additional mitigation, which may be informed by further evaluation, will be secured through an updated Overarching Written Scheme of Investigation submitted prior to the end of examination.

10. Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.12 Flood Risk and Drainage and Section 5.13 Climate Change

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 Table 10.1 below provides the Applicant’s comments on Section 5.12 Flood Risk and Drainage and Section 5.13 Climate Change

10.2 Comments Table

Table 10.1 Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.12 Flood Risk and Drainage and Section 5.13 Climate Change

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant’s Comments
5.11 Flood Risk and Drainage			
5.11.8	Refers to statutory bodies	TDC defers to Kent County Council, Environment Agency and other relevant statutory bodies and supports their assessment of the application. It is acknowledged that the converter and substation are sited within Flood Zone 1 with other essential infrastructure located in Flood Zones 2 and 3.	The Applicant notes this comment.
5.12 Climate Change			
5.12.2	Embodied carbon assessment	TDC has significant concerns regarding the levels of embodied carbon associated with the construction of the Project. The Council has committed to work towards carbon neutrality by 2030 within the published Net Zero Strategy, with the aim of net-zero on Thanet wide emissions by 2050. The Proposed Project would have the potential to affect the Council’s ability to meet this target and the implications of the construction project on district-wide targets should be fully appraised.	Thanet District Council’s net zero target covers carbon emissions from projects and operations owned or controlled by the Council. As this project is not owned or controlled by the Council, the emissions associated with this project are not attributable to the Council and have no impact on the Council meeting their net zero target. The Sea Link project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and emissions associated with such projects are generally aggregated on a national level, and not attributed to the local districts they pass through, because carbon impacts are not geographically limited to a local area. Emissions from NSIPs are therefore managed within the government’s overall strategy for meeting carbon budgets and the net zero target for 2050, as part of an economy-wide transition. The Sea Link project is one of the key infrastructure projects of the Applicant’s “The Great Grid Upgrade", which will increase the capacity to deliver renewable and low-carbon energy efficiently to homes and businesses, thereby supporting Thanet District Council’s overall Net Zero Strategy. As part of the DCO submission assessment of effects on climate change the project GHG baseline was developed in line with Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 2080:2023 Carbon Management in Buildings and Infrastructure, estimating carbon emissions over all relevant lifecycle stages, including emissions associated with land use change and a breakdown of product stage embodied GHG emissions. This is presented in **Application Document 6.2.5.1 Part 5 Combined Chapter 1 Climate Change [APP-085]**.
5.12.4	Impact of the proposed development on the saltmarsh	Recent research (collaboration between UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, World Wildlife Federation and RSPB) published in May 2025 has identified saltmarshes as being key habitats and carbon sinks for capturing and storing carbon. Similarly it is known that mudflats perform similarly to a carbon sink. It is unclear from the application whether the impact of the proposed development on the saltmarsh (and potentially other marshland) and the potential carbon emissions and impact on carbon storage has been fully considered in the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas submission.	
5.12.6	Negative impact on climate change	The proposed development would have an overall negative local impact on climate change and the ability for Thanet to achieve net zero.	

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			To put the construction emissions in context, the majority of emissions associated with the construction of the Project is attributed to the embodied carbon in the materials, which accounts for approximately 73% of construction stage emissions. This refers to the carbon emissions associated with the manufacturing of the materials, which generally occurs outside of the boundaries of the Council. Any emissions from construction activities occurring within the Council's geographic boundaries (e.g. plant and machinery, vehicle movements, and land use change) make up only a relatively small portion of the remaining construction stage emissions. Therefore, the GHG emissions actually occurring in the Council's geographic boundaries are a minor proportion of the scheme's construction stage emissions, and these emissions are not attributed to the Council as they are aggregated on a national level. Accompanying this Application is **Application Document 7.5.13 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy [APP-358]** which outlines how GHG emissions associated with the Proposed Project should be managed and reduced. The GHG Reduction Strategy contains more detail on identified decarbonisation opportunities for the Sea Link project. The Outline Onshore Construction Environmental Management Plan is aligned with the Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments and the GHG Reduction Strategy. The Applicant has wider commitments in place in terms of low carbon concrete and steel for new energy transmission projects. The Applicant has a commitment for all concrete used in the construction of temporary works as well as the permanent design to be made from materials with at least a B-rating for reinforced concrete and an A-rating for unreinforced concrete using the ICE Low Carbon Concrete Group (LCGG) benchmarking system. The Applicant also has a commitment for a minimum of 50% of the steel. procured to be low emission steel as defined by the SteelZero specification.

11. Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.13 Other Matters and Chapter 6 Summary

11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 Table 11.1 below provides the Applicant’s comments on Section 5.13 Other Matters and Chapter 6 Summary.

11.2 Comments Table

Table 11.1 Applicant’s Comments on Section 5.13 Other Matters and Chapter 6 Summary

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant’s Comments
5.13 Other Matters			
5.13.1	Unexploded ordnance	Thanet was heavily bombed during World War II given the proximity to occupied Europe with RAF Manston Airport being a key target. Therefore, the risk of unexploded ordnance is a significant prospect for the site. It is understood that unexploded ordnance surveys are in the process of being carried out.	The Applicant can confirm that UXO surveys will be carried out onshore, within the intertidal area and offshore, within the route corridor. The Applicant is currently in the process of procuring the marine UXO-specific survey for 2026.
5.13.2	Terrorism / sabotage	Given the coalescence of infrastructure in this area which includes the landfall of Nemo Link, Richborough substation, wastewater treatment works, battery energy storage systems and a solar park, there is a real prospect of the site and surrounding area being target for acts of terrorism and other forms of sabotage. There appears to be no consideration of this within the application.	While the Applicant is unable to comment in significant detail regarding security measures, as an operator of national infrastructure, The Applicant commits significant resources and investment into maintaining the security of their sites and assets. The Applicant liaises with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, other government departments and agencies, and law enforcement on security matters including the threat from hostile nation states, terrorism, and other security threats. Through these partnerships, appropriate protective security controls are identified and put in place to mitigate threats across their network. They follow government advice, industry standards and best practice. Furthermore, the network is designed to allow for potential equipment failure or disruption and be able to continue to deliver safe, secure and reliable electricity.
5.13.3 and 5.13.4	Cumulative Impacts	There are a number of other major developments within Thanet District that need to be considered as part of the cumulative assessment as set out in the Statement of Common Ground [APP-326], TDC has concerns regarding the methodology for including cumulative sites as well as a need to update the list of cumulative sites. Given the five year construction period of the proposed development the construction activities are likely to coincide with numerous other developments including the Manston Airport DCO. There are also concerns that in allowing the proposed development, it further adds to the existing energy and infrastructure development that is	The assessment of inter-project cumulative effects, i.e. the effects of the Proposed Project in addition to any other contemporaneous development within the same zone of influence, is presented in **Application Document 6.2.3.13 Part 2 Kent Chapter 13 Kent Onshore Scheme Inter-Project Cumulative Effects [APP-073]**. The methodology used for the assessment of inter-project cumulative effects is detailed in **Application Document 6.3.1.5.A Part 1 Introduction Appendix 1.5.A Cumulative Effects Assessment Methodologies [APP-091]** and follows the Planning Inspectorate’s Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Cumulative Effects Assessment (Planning Inspectorate, 2024).

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
		encroaching northwards from Richborough and significantly adversely affecting the landscape.	This assessment includes an assessment of cumulative landscape and visual impacts.
5.13.6	Distinction between Construction Environmental Management Plans and Operational Environmental Management Plans	TDC are of the view that there should be a distinction between the Construction Environmental Management Plans and Operational Environmental Management Plans. Currently, the operational mitigation is to be included in the construction management plans under Requirement 6 but this makes it difficult to separate the construction commitments and mitigation from the ongoing operational commitments and mitigation. For example, the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) is an operational management plan and the operational elements of the Soil Management Plan (SMP) will differ from the construction elements but the SMP is listed as a construction management plan only.	It is not considered necessary to produce a separate operational management plan as this would likely lead to unnecessary duplication of information already contained within relevant control documents (i.e. REAC, LEMP) and potentially lead to contradictory securing mechanisms. If a construction stage management plan includes commitments that will endure through operation they are as binding as if separated out into a separate plan.
5.13.8	Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan	In addition, it is requested that an Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan is submitted as part of the application and Requirement 13 should be amended to ensure compliance with this. It is noted there is no timescale for decommissioning indicating that the proposed development is a permanent installation. However, the general lifespan is given as 40 years. Requirement 13 should require notification to be given to the relevant planning authority that proposed development is not to be decommissioned at the point it reaches 39.5 years from the date of completion.	As stated in **Application Document 6.2.1.4 Part 1 Introduction Chapter 4 Description of the Proposed Project [REP1A-003]**, there are no plans to decommission the Proposed Project. In the event it is to be decommissioned, Requirement 13 requires that a written scheme of decommissioning would be submitted to the relevant planning authority at least six months prior to any decommissioning works. It is not possible to include an Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan at this stage as the decommissioning works would followThe Applicant 's processes at that future point in time, for assessing and mitigating any environmental impacts.
5.13.9	Construction hours	It is requested that Requirement 7 is amended so that construction hours for Saturdays should be reduced to 0800 to 1700 and no construction activities should occur on Sundays and Bank Holidays. TDC is concerned that Requirement 7 also provides a wide range of activities that can occur outside of the core hours. This list of activities is extensive and provides significant flexibility for construction activities to occur during unsocial hours.	The Applicant requires the necessary flexibility to allow contractors to programme and phase their works, and to accommodate unforeseen construction phase issues without elements of the project being pushed onto the critical path. It is also important that construction activities that are less likely to affect communities, for example works within the superstructure of a converter station building, are not onerously restricted. The Applicant is therefore not proposing to amend the working hours as per TDC's request. The proposed working hours are in part driven by the importance of the timely delivery of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project is identified in the National Electricity System Operator (NESO) Clean Power 2030 report as being critical for the achievement of the Clean Power 2030 target. The report considers that important projects, including the Proposed Project, must be accelerated to delivery by 2030 if the clean power goal is to be achieved. The report further identifies that without the Proposed Project consumers could face an extra £1.4b in constraints costs in 2030. Construction work, including that undertaken if and where needed on Sundays and bank holidays, would be suitably controlled by (for example) **Application Document 7.5.3 Outline Onshore Construction Environmental Management Plan [AS-127], Application Document 7.5.3.2 CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) [REP1-103],** and **Application Document 7.5.3.1 CEMP Appendix A Outline Code of Construction Practice [APP-341].**

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
			Notwithstanding this, it is not anticipated that all types of construction activity will take place on every Sunday or Bank Holiday. There will be restrictions on the type of activity that can occur on these days. The restrictions include limiting HGV and percussive piling activities. Details relating to the proposed construction working hours and any associated restrictions are secured by Requirement 7 of Schedule 3 of **Application Document 3.1 draft Development Consent Order [REP1-036]** and further set out in **Application Document 6.2.1.4 Part 1 Chapter 4 Description of the Proposed Project [AS-093].** Also of note is that the principle of working on Sundays and bank holidays has been deemed acceptable by the Secretary of State on previous National Grid DCOs, including the National Grid (Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement) Order 2024 and the National Grid (Yorkshire Green Energy Enablement Project) Development Consent Order 2024.
5.13.10 and 5.13.11	Determination timeframes	With regard to discharge the Requirements, the draft DCO will place a significant burden on TDC to manage a range of detailed information. Schedule 4 article 1.(1) requires TDC to discharge Requirements within 35 days but this is unachievable and should be amended to state 'within eight weeks'. TDC would be amenable to entering a PPA to reduce the time period for issuing a decision where possible. TDC does not agree to part 1.(2) that provides deemed consent should TDC not determine the application to discharge a Requirement within the set period. It is expected that detailed information will be submitted that will require appropriate scrutiny and assessment from TDC and the current wording disadvantages TDC in being able to undertake their statutory duty. In addition, Article 2.(2) requires the relevant authority to provide notification within 7 days, this should be ten business days and 2.(3) requires the relevant authority to issue a consultation and notify the undertaker of any further requests as a result of a consultation within 5 days. This should state within five business days.	The Applicant noted these comments regarding the timescales in Schedule 4 of the draft DCO. However, the Applicant considers that the time limits and approach to deemed consent are necessary and proportionate and are precedented in other made Orders including the Applicant (Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement) Development Consent Order 2024. The Applicant will negotiate Planning Performance Agreements as necessary and at the appropriate time, to ensure the LPA is able to respond on programme
5.13.12	Community benefits	TDC has been engaging with the Applicant to understand if any community benefits can be gained from the proposed development given the local community will need to accommodate the burden of this nationally significant infrastructure project. However, it remains unclear as to the potential community benefits being offered by the Applicant. Currently, no community benefits have been identified by the Applicant.	The Applicant is working to understand local and regional aspirations and priorities in relation to community benefits. The Applicant will work with stakeholders and local communities as the Proposed Project progresses to further inform this The Applicant supports the delivery of community benefits associated with transmission infrastructure, and already has a number of established programmes which deliver this. For example, it operates a community grant programme which is available to nearby charities and not for profit organisations, when projects are in construction.
5.13.13	Compliance with Department for Energy Security and Net Zero community finds guidance	The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero published guidance in relation to community funds for transmission infrastructure in April 2025. TDC would like to understand how National Grid intends to comply with the guidance and how this will be secured for the lifetime of the proposed	In line with Government guidance, published in March 2025, the Applicant will work with communities and deliver meaningful, long-term, social, and economic benefits through local and strategic investment. The Applicant welcomes all suggestions for the potential use of community benefit

Reference	Matter	Point Raised	Applicant's Comments
		development either through the DCO or by way of a legal agreement. We look forward to working with National Grid to highlight local needs and priorities within the Thanet District.	funding. Ahead of construction and separately to the planning process, the Applicant will look to engage local stakeholders to understand local ambitions for community benefit, to help shape the delivery of community benefits.
5.13.14	Educational benefits	The proposed development creates an opportunity to provide educational benefits were it to be approved. TDC would welcome a program involving local schools and colleges during survey works and the construction phase (as appropriate) similar to those that have been employed for other energy projects in the District. In terms of tourism, information boards (sensitively designed and located) providing detail on the project would be welcomed.	At this stage the Applicant has not committed to preparing and implementing a specific Education Strategy at a project level. However as stated in response to 5.13.2 above is committed to working to understand local and regional aspirations and priorities including the potential for educational benefits. The Applicant will continue to work with all Host Authorities including TDC over securing benefits for local residents.
5.13.15	Assistance in selling properties	TDC would also welcome assistance from the Applicant in circumstances where property needs to be sold quickly due to particular circumstances. During the construction period it may prove difficult to sell property due to the ongoing disruption but there are circumstances where this is needed due to the welfare of the local community.	All affected landowners will be compensated on a fair and reasonable basis for any rights acquired, and any impacts on retained property will be considered in line with the Compulsory Purchase Compensation Code. There is no intention to create a fund to assist with properties being sold quickly. Compensation claims for other disturbance are considered on a case-by-case basis if there is evidence of negative impacts as a result of the Proposed Project.
6 Summary			
6.1.1	Negative or neutral impacts	TDC has reviewed the application and proposed DCO and has concluded whilst there is a benefit at a national level, at a local level the proposed development would only have negative or neutral impacts.	The Applicant agrees that there is a benefit at national level given the Proposed Project is a critical national priority for the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure. The Applicant does not accept that all the impacts of the Proposed Project will be negative or neutral at the local level as set out in Section 7 of **Application Document 7.1 Planning Statement [AS-057]** where the local positive impacts of the Proposed Project for Kent include ecological enhancements and employment generation during the construction period.

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