

The response from national grid into broad themes is not helpful and specific responses to the objectives need to be provided. I am local resident directly affected and deeply impacted by the Sea Link project. In response to the Applicant's Thematic response to my Relevant Representation I have significant concerns across a range of the assessed topics, including loss of high-quality farmland, long-term construction noise, air pollution, ecological disturbance, disruption to public rights of way, increased flooding risk, traffic and road safety impacts, harm to the tourism economy, landscape damage, cumulative effects from multiple NSIPs, and insufficient mitigation. The Applicant repeatedly downplays impacts, relies on assumptions not facts or evidence, and provides no secured community benefits, or ROI, cost of the project versus alternatives. The project in its current form will permanently alter the environment, character, and wellbeing of local communities, any business or flows of funding into our communities. It does not adequately avoid, minimise, or justify the level of harm proposed. I urge the planning committee to to pause this project until the appropriate level of due diligence has been carried out. This has not happened.

A Resident's Perspective: Why the Sea Link Project Should Not Proceed

As someone who will be directly affected by the Sea Link project, I want to point out why I believe it should not go ahead.. The responses we've received from the Applicant have been disappointing—often minimising our concerns, relying on assumptions rather than solid evidence, and failing to offer any meaningful benefits to the community.

This project brings with it serious and long-lasting risks that simply aren't justified. Below, I set out the main reasons why the Sea Link project, as it stands, poses unacceptable threats to our land, health, heritage, and way of life and should not be supported.

Agriculture and Soil

- **Loss of High-Quality Farmland:** The Applicant claims the loss is "temporary," but that ignores the reality of long-term damage—compacted soil, changed drainage, and reduced yields that can last for decades. Restoration plans are no substitute for proven productivity. Farmers deserve independent monitoring and guaranteed remediation.
- **Permanent Loss in Kent:** Saying permanent loss is "balanced" by national need isn't mitigation. High-quality farmland should only be lost if there's truly no alternative, and that evidence must be clear and independently verified.

Air Quality

- **Construction Dust and Health:** Dust and particulates will be a sustained problem, not just a short-term inconvenience. Monitoring is reactive—it doesn't prevent harm. There are no binding thresholds to halt works if air quality gets too bad.
- **Sensitive Habitats:** Even small increases in dust can kill specialised coastal and marsh vegetation. Generic modelling isn't good enough; we need site-specific measurements and strict limits.

Construction Impacts

- **Permanent Landscape Change:** Compounds, haul roads, and site access will permanently alter local landscapes and hydrology. "Standard reinstatement" isn't backed by evidence that ecosystems or farm productivity recover.
- **Uncertainty in Methods:** The lack of a robust construction plan means impacts aren't truly understood. Sensitive seasons and tourism peaks need to be avoided, but there's no clear plan.
- **Workforce Management:** Promises of "best practice" training are meaningless without enforceable commitments and independent audits.
- **Weekend and Holiday Work:** Allowing work on weekends increases stress for residents and wildlife. Real cumulative disturbance matters and must be restricted.

Cultural Heritage

- **Historic Sites:** The Applicant understates the value of setting. Even if direct impact is limited, the long-term change to the experience and context of villages and heritage assets is real and often irreversible. Recent archaeological finds highlight the need for thorough assessment.
- **Pegwell Bay and Richborough Fort:** Uncertainty about historic landing sites should mean a precautionary approach. Visual intrusion, even if “negligible,” matters to communities and visitors.
- **Traffic Through Heritage Landscapes:** Routing heavy vehicles near archaeological features risks irreversible damage.

Geology & Hydrogeology

- **Local Water Supplies:** Existing reports don’t cover all sensitive private water supplies and shallow aquifers. More targeted testing and public reporting are needed.
- **Pollution Risks:** Qualitative risk assessments aren’t enough. There must be binding compensation and mitigation for pollution incidents.
- **Trenchless Drilling:** These methods have a record of failures. Robust contingency plans and independent oversight are essential.

Landfall Location

- **Pegwell Bay and Suffolk Sites:** Construction will change the character of these areas. The Applicant’s “negligible effect” conclusion doesn’t match local experience. Seasonal timing must be strictly controlled.
- **Beach Erosion:** Modelling must be conservative and open. Long-term monitoring and liability frameworks are needed for any induced erosion.
- **Marine Heritage:** Archaeological assessments are incomplete. Consent should require supervised works and stop-works protocols.

Landscape and Visual Impacts

- **AONB and Converter Stations:** The project lies partly in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Claims of “no significant adverse effects” are hard to reconcile with the scale and permanence of infrastructure. Once imposed, these structures cannot be meaningfully mitigated.
- **Landscape Character Change:** The cumulative effect is to industrialise rural landscapes—a fundamental alteration, not just a localised change.
- **Planting as Mitigation:** Planting takes years to provide screening and cannot hide tall buildings or pylons. It’s not a substitute for avoiding prominent siting.

Safety and Emergency Planning

- **Vulnerability to Attack:** There must be a public-facing summary of resilience measures and emergency response plans for community reassurance.

Traffic and Transport

- **Local Road Suitability:** Rural roads lack resilience. Routing plans must include firm restrictions, size limits, and traffic calming.
- **Impact on Services:** Local services use the same roads. Even if “statistical” impacts are low, real-world incidents and delays will happen and must be mitigated.

Noise & Vibration

- **Construction Noise:** Noise modelling underestimates transmission. There must be enforceable limits and a complaints/penalty mechanism.
- **Seven-Day Working:** This increases the burden on residents. Night and weekend restrictions should be stricter.

Health & Wellbeing

- **Chronic Stress:** The Applicant’s statements underplay chronic stress, sleep disturbance, and anxiety. Minor harms accumulate and become major for vulnerable residents.
- **Mental Health and Cohesion:** Long-term disruption undermines community cohesion and mental health. Support programmes must be funded and secured.

Socio-Economics, Tourism, Jobs, Housing

- **Tourism Impacts:** Tranquil landscapes and coastal amenity will be undermined for years. Non-comparable case studies are used to downplay impacts.
- **Loss of Jobs:** There’s no guarantee of local employment for specialist work. Binding targets and guarantees are needed.
- **Housing and Property Values:** Compensation codes don’t address general property value reductions. Many residents will be financially harmed without compensation.

Ecology & Biodiversity

- **Insufficient Surveys:** Three months of surveys are not enough. Critical wildlife sites like Pegwell Bay need greater protection.
- **Cumulative Impacts:** Protected areas have already been badly impacted by other projects.

Public Rights of Way, Walking & Cycling

- **Accessibility:** Temporary closures reduce accessibility and amenity. Alternatives must be equal in distance, safety, and experience. [REDACTED]
- **Pedestrian Safety:** Segregated routes are needed where HGVs will be present.

Water Environment & Flood Risk

- **Floodplain Risks:** Placing infrastructure in floodplains is risky. Independent validation and guarantees are required.
- **Drainage:** Increased impermeable surfaces will increase runoff. Long-term maintenance funding and compensation are needed.

Fisheries & Marine Economy

- **Disruption:** Short-term displacement can have permanent impacts. Compensation must be transparent and adequate.
- **Communication:** Real-time reporting and timely claims handling must be formalised.

Marine Ecology

- **Fish and Habitats:** The Applicant's conclusion of "no significant impact" lacks evidence. Seasonal restrictions and post-construction monitoring are needed.

Marine Archaeology

- **Surveys Incomplete:** Important heritage assets may remain undiscovered. Full archaeological assessment and on-site watch are required.

Cable Protection & Maintenance

- **Hazards:** The Applicant must clearly state protection methods and consequences for fishing. Long-term monitoring and enforceable maintenance plans are necessary.

Shipping, Port & Harbour Impacts

- **Disruption:** Port operations and local businesses may be affected. Compensation and scheduling must protect livelihoods. [REDACTED]

Recreation & Leisure

- **Visitor Deterrence:** Disruption to access, noise, and marine activity will deter visitors. Evidence from other projects isn't conclusive for local economies.

Climate & Greenhouse Gases

- **SF6 and Emissions:** Promises of SF6-free options must be guaranteed. Full lifecycle carbon estimates should be published.

Community Benefits

- **Lack of Guarantees:** Voluntary promises are not enforceable. The DCO must include a binding community benefits package.

Alternatives and Site Selection

- **Inadequate Assessment:** The Applicant hasn't convincingly demonstrated that all reasonable alternatives were properly assessed. Alternatives seem constrained by operational preferences, not environmental or community considerations.
- **Avoidance Not Prioritised:** National Policy says avoidance of harm should come first, but minimisation is often prioritised instead.
- **Lack of Comparative Analysis:** There's no structured scoring or transparent method for assessing alternatives.
- **Cumulative Burdens:** Suffolk and Kent are already handling multiple projects. Alternative locations to ease cumulative stress haven't been seriously considered.
- **Offshore Alternatives:** These appear to have been dismissed prematurely. Where offshore solutions could minimise impacts, the Applicant should justify why they were discounted.
- **Climate Resilience:** Flood-prone and eroding areas should be avoided for long-term infrastructure. Future climate scenarios haven't been fully integrated.

Whole-Life Design, Materials & Sustainability

- **Low-Carbon Materials:** Commitments to sustainability are vague. Material choices should reflect best modern standards.
- **Operational Carbon:** Full breakdowns of operational carbon are missing. Lifecycle assessments are essential.
- **End-of-Life Planning:** There's no strategy for decommissioning or recycling. Future removal or repowering must not burden communities.
- **Green Infrastructure:** Planting plans aren't enough. Genuine green infrastructure should be embedded in the design.

Monitoring, Compliance & Enforcement

- **Independent Monitoring:** Monitoring must be independent, frequent, and publicly available. Enforcement mechanisms and fines should be explicit.
- **Adaptive Management:** There must be predetermined triggers for suspending work if environmental limits are breached.

Coordination with Other Projects

- **Strategic Coordination:** Coordination is limited. Residents need a strategic programme to stagger construction and reduce cumulative impacts.
- **Cumulative Effects:** Multiple projects multiply harm, and discrete assessments fail to capture the real combined loss.

Residual Effects & Long-Term Burden

- **Understated Impacts:** The Environmental Statement downplays permanent loss and degradation. Residual impacts should be judged from the community's perspective.

- **Permanent Change:** Infrastructure creates a permanent industrial footprint that cannot be fully mitigated.
 - **Maintenance Traffic and Noise:** Ongoing maintenance is a perpetual burden on local amenity.
 - **Biodiversity Loss:** Some habitats will never fully recover. These are permanent losses.
 - **Flood & Drainage Responsibility:** Long-term risks must not be passed to councils or residents.
 - **Compounded Stress:** Overlapping projects mean the long-term burden is much greater than acknowledged.
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Conclusion

In summary, the Sea Link project, as currently proposed, will cause long-lasting and possibly irreversible harm to agriculture, ecology, heritage, landscape, tourism, local health and wellbeing, and the character of communities. The Applicant has not provided robust avoidance of sensitive areas, enforceable mitigation, independently audited monitoring, binding community benefits, or proper coordination and contingency plans. Until these are secured, consent should not be granted, specifically the need for a cost comparison of alternatives, brown field or off shore.