

I wish to submit my objections and concerns to this amendment to NG's plan to takeover parts of the old hoverport. Please note the following points are not in order of importance - they are all very important and have equal validity and impact.

Point 1:

The old hoverport is precious and should be protected at all costs.

It offers a unique habitat and its re-wilding is a great triumph including habitats for rare orchids and reptiles as well as many birds. It is widely celebrated and ensures many visitors come from far and wide. It offers a valuable amenity to locals and visitors alike. It is rare that those who are less physically able can interact at such close proximity with wildlife, flora and fauna as they can here [even wheelchair access is possible]. Young and old alike enjoy this wonderful environment. To lose this resource would be tragic and have a far reaching negative impact on so many.

The old hoverport is located by the renowned Viking Ship which draws visitors and school children from far and wide. It is both educational and a tourist attraction, drawing many visitors to Thanet, which benefits local businesses. The noise, dust and pollution caused by the nearby construction and then, we now learn, ongoing maintenance from the hoverport would seriously affect this site, reducing its appeal. There also would inevitably be a loss of income for local businesses as a result of NG's plans.

I haven't seen any plans which mitigate and compensate for the losses detailed above that will occur due to this proposal and yet had understood it was the responsibility of the developer to include such mitigation in any planning proposals. This omission needs to be addressed before their latest application can be considered.

I find the proposed loss of a such a rare and unique habitat to be profoundly sad. Already many environmental organisations have detailed the loss and impact this will have on the flora, fauna and salt marsh better than I can, therefore I mention it only briefly but it is of major concern to me. It makes me very sad.

Point 2:

At a personal level, my husband and I live opposite the [REDACTED] and the impact these proposed changes would have on our lives is enormous. We moved to this area only recently, specifically looking for a quieter environment with less air pollution. I have a [REDACTED] which means I need clean air, flat walking surfaces and a peaceful environment.

There will be a big increase in air pollution. The heavy plant and lorries will create traffic jams causing pollution as traffic is forced to be stationary along [REDACTED]. Also slow moving industrial and construction vehicles will belch toxic fumes.

There will inevitably be dust particles in the air caused by the construction work, tipping of aggregates etc. and also as the unsuitable surface of the hoverport breaks up under the stress of these works [please see point 3 below]

This area is [was?] perfect for us. The plans have caused us a great deal of distress. Already we were dismayed at the thought of a 4 year construction period with traffic going past our house but now the construction machinery and traffic will be far worse as it is proposed to be sited far closer [on the hoverport] and it will be ongoing permanently, because it is now proposed to form part of an ongoing maintenance area. So there is no end in sight. This was not made clear at any point in NG's plans until the very last moment - [please also see my final point 4 below].

Selling our house and moving elsewhere is not feasible due to the loss in value and cost of moving to another property. Will NG be offering compensation for those who are having to pay the price for their last minute change in plans? I am not aware any such offers. It is not only us, there are many elderly people and young families in the area who will be badly affected by the resulting pollution.

Point 3 :

I am deeply concerned that no proper environmental surveys have been carried out to ensure the hoverport is even a suitable site for the proposed works. My belief is that this is an environmental disaster waiting to happen if these plans are approved.

I understand that the site was constructed by the National Coal Board and Cementation with 300,000 tons of 'NCB colliery spoil heap shale' being used as a base which was then covered by concrete slabs.

The surface construction was never designed to withstand the extreme loads of heavy plant such as piling rigs, excavators and frequent passages of heavily laden aggregate lorries.

Collier spoil typically contains pollutants such heavy metals including arsenic, lead and copper. If the surface breaks up these will leach into the salt marsh and Pegwell Bay causing devastating and irreparable damage.

Why have NG not yet conducted a full survey of the area and then presented plans to mitigate any such outcomes? This must be done before their plans can even be considered. Yet again their application is incomplete.

Point 4:

Finally, this amended requirement raises a major concern.

It has frequently been stated by NG that they have carried out extensive research and surveys to prepare their plans before submission, although there is not a lot of evidence of this. And yet at the last moment a major change [the take over of a large portion of the hoverport] is required due to an unforeseen factor which surely could and should have easily been envisaged at the outset when this site was being considered.

At best, this suggests that NG are incompetent and not able to look ahead, plan and allow for variable factors. This incompetence is very worrying indeed and suggests that all their assertions for protecting the environment, handling the construction efficiently and meeting industry standards will not be met. Certainly such a large project should not be handled by an organisation who are unable to plan ahead and allow for such basic contingencies as changes in an incredibly unstable environment such as a salt marsh!

At worst, this last minute amendment suggests that NG had always planned to increase the area they are encroaching upon by deception, hoping it would be passed through quickly and quietly as many lay people are simply not able to register objections.

Please bear in mind that those of us who wish to object or contribute to this hugely complex planning process do not have the training and expertise of the applicants and we are overwhelmed by vast amounts of technical documents which we have to sift through and then try our best to prepare reasoned responses, meeting complex timelines and deadlines.

We know this is a living and ever changing environment. NG's reason for now wanting to take over the hoverport they say is due to changes in the salt marsh periphery and conditions. These should surely have been foreseen and allowed for.

It is vital to remember that the Saltmarsh is not static ground. It is a living, evolving system that responds continuously to tidal movement, sediment supply, erosion and accretion. Its boundaries naturally migrate over time, particularly in areas already under pressure from coastal squeeze and sea level rise. This behaviour is well understood and entirely foreseeable, which makes it even more concerning that such significant changes to construction access are only now being proposed at this late stage.

Building heavy infrastructure and relying on flexible access arrangements in an environment that is inherently unstable is not the safeguard that NG are trying to present it as! In reality, it greatly increases the risk of future disturbance, further land take, and repeated intervention, rather than providing a clear and contained solution from the outset.

Therefore it is entirely possible that NG will yet again need to change plans, possibly mid way through the construction process and forcibly takeover yet more land. Furthermore it is almost a certainty that at some point in the relatively near future the buildings will need to be repaired and further stabilised or underpinned. Will this necessitate yet more protected land being forcibly taken away from us?

As has been continually pointed out, the site is unstable, it is a marsh land. It is not fit for purpose.

I appreciate this has been previously rejected but I do feel that NG should be asked to resubmit a whole new application with all their amended plans clearly outlined and appropriate detailed surveys attached. Further, this resubmission should include a legally binding undertaking that their plans will not change at any point during the construction process or within a reasonable time period once construction is complete.

Although realistically due to the unsuitable and unstable nature of the terrain of this proposed site, it is impossible for such an undertaking to be given. It is almost a certainty that plans and the building works will have to change when carrying out such a major construction on unstable marshland. I suspect this latest last minute change in their plans is a prelude to further amendments that will be required as the project is built and the maintained. It is abundantly clear that this is a living dynamic area with a changing 'footprint' and therefore completely unsuitable for a construction such as this.

My request and hope is that not only should the proposal to include the old hoverport be refused but in fact the whole project should be refused and NG instructed to find more suitable, stable and less eco sensitive site.