

Abi Smith

I am writing to object to National Grid's proposal to use the former hoverport site for construction access to the converter station at Minster Marshes. My objection is based on three critical areas:

1. LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

National Grid (NG) has been inconsistent about their intentions for the hoverport:

- The Environmental Statement (APP-044, para 2.7.47) explicitly stated: "the former hoverport will only be used for operational monitoring and maintenance access; no civil engineering highway works are planned; rather the existing track and hardstanding areas will be used."
- The Pegwell Bay Construction Method Technical Note was not issued until AFTER the Change Request consultation closed in December 2025 - depriving consultees of crucial information.
- Early documentation (2022-2024) made no mention of construction use whatsoever, yet NG now claims they "always planned" this usage.
- NG's own documents reveal contradictions – stating both that the hoverport "will only be used for operational monitoring" whilst simultaneously planning for up to 40 vehicle movements per day during construction, including 20-tonne excavators and 150-200 one-tonne cranes.

This lack of transparency has prevented proper scrutiny and meaningful consultation.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The hoverport site has received inadequate environmental assessment:

- No ecological surveys have been conducted despite the presence of legally protected Schedule 5 species (fiery clearwing moth, Sussex emerald moth), rare orchids (man orchid, lizard orchid), and suitable reptile habitat.
- NG only conducted a "walkover" in June 2025 and proposes to do surveys AFTER consent is granted – putting protected species at risk.
- The hoverport surface is exceptionally fragile, constructed on colliery spoil. Historical documentation from Thanet District Council confirms this is not "anecdotal" as NG claims, but well-documented fact. Heavy construction machinery will inevitably crack the surface, releasing contaminants including elevated levels of arsenic and heavy metals (already detected in surveys) into the internationally important Ramsar saltmarsh below.
- The site is a unique mosaic habitat that has never been properly surveyed or valued in NG's assessments.
- Sandwich Road has weight restrictions (7.5 tonnes) which NG's proposal completely ignores, yet they plan to bring vehicles weighing up to 200 tonnes to the site.

3. IMPACT ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING

NG's assessment of impact as "insignificant" is wholly inadequate:

- The hoverport is one of the few truly accessible wild spaces in Thanet where people with limited mobility, wheelchair users, and families with young children can experience nature at the water's edge.
- Thanet is severely nature-depleted, making this accessible wild space critical for community wellbeing and mental health.
- Construction will close the King Charles III footpath and Contra Trail cycle path between 4 and 40 times daily for approximately 2-3 years (2027-2029). NG's own documentation shows incompatible sensitivity ratings for these closures.
- Construction noise has not been properly assessed for nearby residents (under 200m away) who were not even consulted about CR1. Four 20-tonne excavators each generating 99 dB(A), vibropiling at 85-95 dB, and continuous 24-hour HDD drilling for five months will cause severe disturbance.
- The impact on protected wildlife - particularly the seal colony, overwintering birds, and breeding populations - from construction noise and vibration has been inadequately assessed.

CONCLUSION

National Grid's proposal represents a fundamental breach of trust with the community. They have systematically obscured their intentions, failed to conduct proper environmental surveys, underestimated impacts, and shown disregard for a valued community amenity that serves some of our most vulnerable residents.

The hoverport should be protected as the unique, accessible wild space it has become, not destroyed for construction access that NG initially claimed would never be necessary.

I urge the Examining Authority to reject this proposal.