



Submission to Planning Inspectorate

Deadline 4

In Relation to Environmental Matters

On behalf of Marlesford Parish Council

Regarding

National Grid Electricity Transmission

DCO Application

For

The Sea Link Project (EN020026)

Chairman Marlesford Parish Council

Parish Clerk

9th February 2026

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1. Introduction

The Issue Specific Hearing 2 on 29th January was attended on behalf of Marlesford Parish Council (MPC) by Richard Cooper (Chair). MPC now wishes to comment on various environmental and infrastructure matters raised in ISH2 and other issues on which the ExA has encouraged IPs to comment in writing.

We will confine ourselves to comments that relate to Marlesford and the effects which this Council believes will impinge on our community as a result of the Sea Link project – these effects arise largely from the cumulative impact of the project alongside the other energy projects already consented and the LionLink project which is emerging.

We know that the ExA travelled through Marlesford on its Site Inspection on the afternoon of Tuesday 4th November 2025. Whilst that will have given the ExA a fleeting impression of the A12 running through Marlesford, it will not have given it the experience that residents have when they try to cross the road, or the feel of the vibration through the house when an aggregate lorry rumbles past.

Marlesford is a severed community straddling the A12 and it is the first community north of the M25 not to be bypassed. We lobbied for the village (along with Little Glemham) to be part of the Sizewell C (S2C) bypassing works which now only include Stratford St Andrew and Farnham. That campaign was unsuccessful but further NSIPs have been consented since the S2C Examination and there is the potential for not only Sea Link to be consented, but LionLink as well. This would leave us vulnerable to the further cumulative impacts associated with these projects.

We are grateful to S2C and Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) for the mitigation we are getting on the A12, but it was predicated on those two schemes - not on the increasing cumulative impact generated by this project and others in the future. What is being provided in terms of pedestrian crossings, speed limit reductions, quiet road surfacing and pedestrian footways are all welcome, but they do not go far enough. We could have over 1,000 HGVs per day coming through the village (depending on phasing of the projects) of which the Applicant's project is likely to contribute in excess of 300 per day at peak. And despite the mitigation works, we remain a severed community and our residents will continue to experience fear and intimidation and anxiety from the volume of traffic on an already inadequate road.

In this submission, we highlight various environmental, infrastructure and cumulative impact concerns for this community and we set out our requests for mitigation which we expect the ExA to secure through Requirements in the Sealink DCO. In summary, the mitigation measures are:

- a. A substantial financial contribution to a new footpath from Marlesford to Fiveways roundabout, including a commuted sum for its maintenance.
- b. Improvements to the junction of Bell Lane, Marlesford with the A12.
- c. Appropriate insulation to the 23 Marlesford properties that are within 20m of the A12 carriageway.
- d. All junctions and turning areas (including to Marlesford businesses on the A12) to be properly and clearly road-marked including a commuted sum for future maintenance.

Further details of the required mitigation are contained in the sections below.

2. Marlesford to Wickham Market Footway

We are pleased to see that Suffolk County Council (SCC) recognises the dangerous state of the footway running between Marlesford Road, Marlesford and the Fiveways roundabout (junction of B1116 and B1078). The footway for part of its length is approximately 1.1m in width and frequently gets overgrown, requiring users to step into the A12 carriageway to avoid overhanging vegetation. At §11.125 of REP2-026 SCC refers to “A narrow footway between Marlesford to Wickham Market bypass, causing pedestrian anxiety.”

MPC already has grave concerns about the adequacy of this footway and with the Applicant’s additional 300 plus HGV movements per day we believe that its project and other future projects will contribute to a fall in use of this footway and a reduction in sustainable travel by our residents.

MPC is progressing discussions with various stakeholders to create a new footpath that will take pedestrians away from the existing highly dangerous footway which runs adjacent to the A12 for part of its length. When trying to walk to Wickham Market, our residents are literally taking their life in their hands. Those that have done it with a buggy report the buggy being sucked towards the carriageway as an HGV passes. With increasing HGV movements, Marlesford residents are experiencing increased levels of fear and intimidation not only on the part of the A12 that passes through the village, but also on this dangerous footway leading out of the village to Wickham Market.

The Parish Council’s proposal is to divert the existing Marlesford Footpath 8 (FP8) which currently crosses a field and is not suitable for those wishing to walk into Wickham Market to use the facilities. The replacement for FP8 would run parallel with the A12 but importantly, it would be separated from the carriageway by an existing hedgeline.

This new footpath will more easily connect with the footways through the village that will be delivered as part of the SZC/SPR A12 mitigation works. MPC believes that such an improvement to the footpath infrastructure between Marlesford and Wickham Market will support the policies of both SCC and East Suffolk Council (ESC) which are designed to encourage active and sustainable travel.

Mitigation

We are asking that the Applicant makes a substantive financial contribution to the proposed new footpath.

We justify this on the basis of the comments set out above and particularly the fact that it would reduce fear and intimidation for pedestrians walking from Marlesford to Wickham Market and it would leave a lasting legacy from the energy project developments in this part of Suffolk.

3. Bell Lane Junction with A12 in Marlesford

MPC has grave concerns that the Bell Lane junction with the A12 in Marlesford has not been properly assessed by the Applicant and we agree with SCC when they say at §11.171 in the SCC LIR that “The Applicant’s cumulative effects assessment only refers to a select number of locations and not the cumulative impact on the A12 between Seven Hills and Lowestoft. The LHA has concerns regarding the additional construction traffic in combination with other NSIPs creating delay and safety issues specifically at junctions such as Bell Lane, Marlesford and Bredfield Road, Bredfield where frustrated drivers may take chances joining the A12 in smaller gaps in the traffic.”

SCC goes on to say at §11.202 “The impacts on junction capacity and delay on the A12 in particular, have not been considered in Table 7.6 of 6.2.2.7 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport. By placing emphasis on delays on 2 or more arms of a junction this automatically dismisses impact on through junctions where [there are] only one or two arms that give way to free-flowing major roads.”

This is exactly the situation that applies to the Bell Lane/A12 junction, and we believe that further modelling should take place in order to understand the capacity of the junction; Steve Merry of SCC Highways referred to this general issue in his comments at ISH2 on 29th January and it is referred to in REP3-101 (SCC’s Responses to ExQ1). Anecdotally, there has been a steadily increasing volume of traffic (both cars and HGVs) using the Bell Lane junction in recent years.

In their response to SCC’s points, the Applicant, in Volume 9: Examination Submissions Document 9.35.1 Applicant’s Comments on Local Impact Report from Suffolk County Council (REP2-026), concludes that “the peak construction phases for each scheme are planned to be staggered (between 2026 and 2030) and are therefore highly unlikely to all fully overlap. The duration of any potential effects of overlapping peak construction activity (third party scheme and the Proposed Project) will be limited to a few consecutive months and due to short-term temporary duration of any potential adverse impacts, the residual effect cannot therefore be considered as significant.”

This is a “catch-all” response from the Applicant and effectively tries to minimise cumulative impacts on the basis that the peaks of the projects will not coincide and by inference, it downplays the already dangerous nature of junctions like the Bell Lane/ A12 junction in Marlesford. We agree with SCC that frustrated drivers may take chances in joining the traffic flow, particularly when turning right (i.e. crossing north bound traffic to join the southbound carriageway). Visibility is limited to the north for vehicles on Bell Lane approaching the A12. We believe that a serious accident is only a moment of frustration away.

Mitigation

The Applicant should be under an obligation to (as far as is possible within the highways constraints) rebuild the Bell Lane junction with the A12 in Marlesford in order to deliver improved visibility.

There should also be a requirement to improve the road signage and road markings at the other Marlesford junctions with the A12 (including accesses to businesses) as well as other junctions along the A12 that will be affected by the Applicant's proposals.

4. The Impact on Health and Wellbeing of Successive Energy Projects

Marlesford has 23 dwellings that are within 20m of the A12 carriageway (some are less than 10m away). The lived experience of the Marlesford residents that occupy these properties is that they already experience noise and vibration when HGVs pass. This Council is very concerned that the volume of traffic currently being experienced is already causing anxiety and depression and that is before SZC reaches peak construction and before the commencement of any additional projects such as Sea Link and LionLink. This is all likely to severely impact the quiet enjoyment of their properties that our residents have a right to expect.

At §11.202 of the SCC LIR, SCC recognises Successive Interproject Cumulative Impact as being a consideration. MPC agrees and argues that a smoothing of peaks between the various projects is as bad for local residents as the convergence of peaks. SCC states, "Whilst at least some of the east coast NSIPs will be delivered at the same time with overlapping cumulative transport impacts, there will also be a cumulative impact through repeated successive projects impacting on specific geographical areas." And SCC cites as an example, the prolonged environmental impacts from construction traffic noise and vibration from successive 7-day week worked projects. We believe that residents of Marlesford who live adjacent to the A12 will experience just such prolonged impacts. It is not impossible (depending on phasing of the projects) for there to be an HGV passing the A12 properties at the rate of roughly one per minute.

SCC refers to impacts on mental health in its SCC Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statement (PADSS) (REP3-081). At §7.1 SCC states that it is "deeply concerned regarding the apparent lack of meaningful discussion between Sea Link and other NSIP projects in the same locality, to find opportunities to coordinate activities to reduce the impact of construction (e.g. on the highway network) of multiple projects on host communities on the East Suffolk Coast". They go on to say, "the mental health and wellbeing impacts are cumulatively increasing with each new project. Promoters must consider the impacts of their scheme in association with the timelines of the construction of other NSIP projects in geographic proximity and have meaningful discussions to develop strategies to minimise the impacts of multiple, successive NSIPs not known at this stage".

The Applicant seeks to minimise the situation and as stated in 3. Above, they have said that "the peak construction phases for each scheme are planned to be staggered (between 2026 and 2030) and are therefore highly unlikely to all fully overlap. The duration of any potential effects of overlapping peak construction activity (third party scheme and the Proposed Project) will be limited to a few consecutive months and due to short-term, temporary duration of any potential adverse impacts, the residual effect cannot therefore be considered as significant".

This Council can assure the ExA that this is not how our residents will experience "Successive Interproject Cumulative Impact".

The Applicant states that the projects are "highly unlikely to all fully overlap". This suggests that there is a degree of uncertainty around this matter and we would therefore advocate that in

looking at matters to do with mitigation of cumulative impacts, the precautionary principle should apply.

MPC calls on the ExA to demand more and better sensitivity testing of the effects of the Applicant's proposals on Marlesford and Little Glemham residents.

We also call on the ExA to make recommendations to government that where NSIPs are planned in close proximity to existing NSIPs or other large-scale developments, the planned and consented projects should be under a positive obligation to properly coordinate their activities in order to limit the impact on surrounding communities.

Mitigation

For properties within 20m of the A12 carriageway in Marlesford and Little Glemham, the Applicant should be required to fund the necessary insulation to the properties to ensure that noise (and the effects of vibration) are reduced to acceptable levels.

5. Construction Negative Impacts - Successive Interproject Cumulative Impact

MPC is concerned that the Applicant has not properly modelled the true cumulative impact of the Sea Link project on the main roads north of Woodbridge (primarily the A12) and the feeder roads connecting it to the Applicant's site. In addition to the Applicant's own project, other projects include S2C, SPR (EA1N and EA2), with LionLink emerging as a project through consultation. In addition, there are various solar farm projects up and down the East Suffolk stretch of the A12 and significant residential development planned for Saxmundham. This will all contribute to the cumulative impact of the Sea Link project.

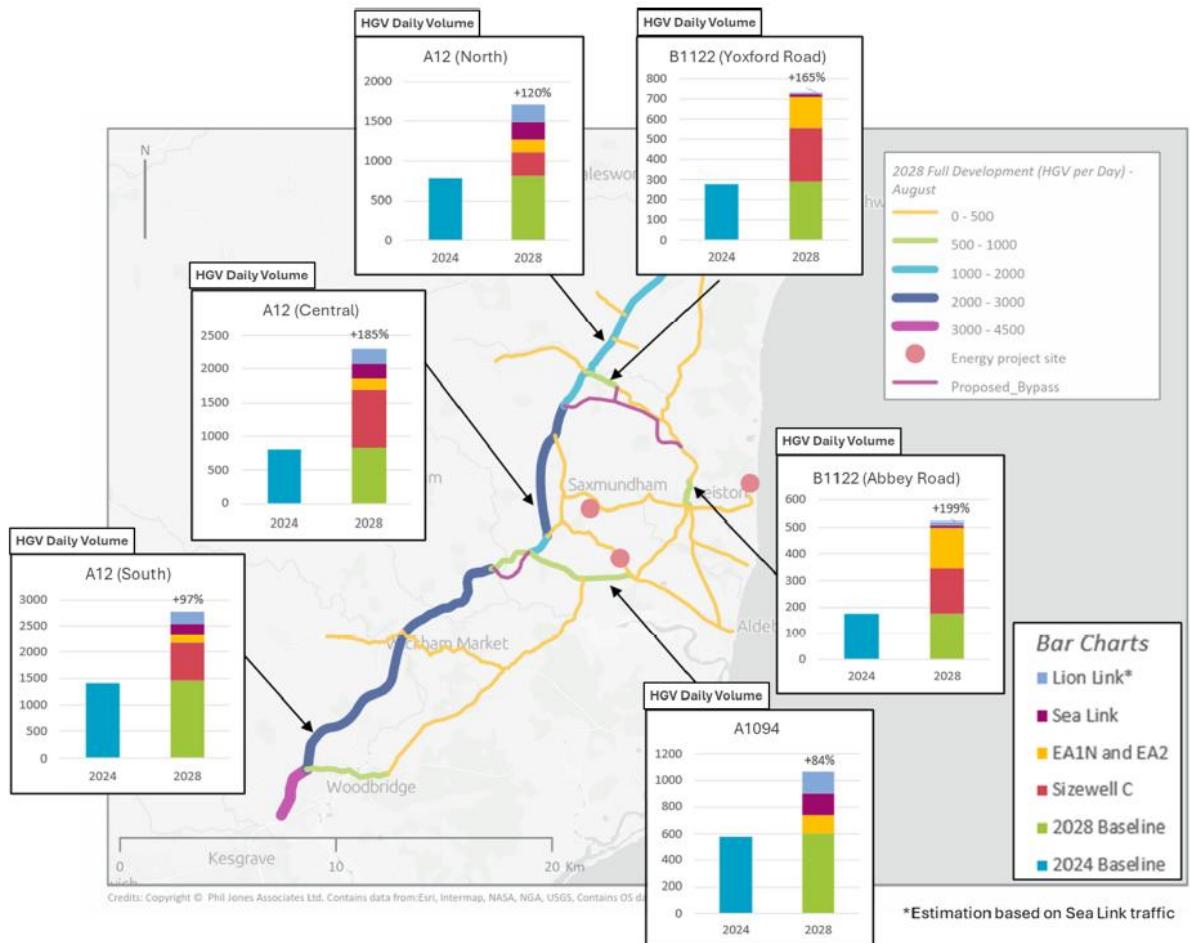
At §11.200 in Volume 9: Examination Submissions Document 9.35.1 Applicant's Comments on Local Impact Report from Suffolk County Council (REP2-026), SCC states, "The proposed project, in combination with Sizewell C, EA1N and EA2, will:

- i. result in a significant increase in HGV movements on the A12, potentially both to the north and south of Saxmundham.
- ii. exacerbate pre-existing issues along the A12 route.
- iii. result in SPR traffic from the south travelling through the four villages (Marlesford, Little Glemham, Stratford St Andrew and Farnham, with negative impacts on air quality, noise, severance, road safety, and congestion.....".

The Applicant gives a broad and non-specific response to this and suggests that they have already addressed it – we believe that they have not addressed the matter in a sufficiently detailed way.

The ExA will be aware that Stratford St Andrew and Farnham will be bypassed as part of the S2C mitigation works. Not so Marlesford and Little Glemham, whose communities will be exposed to all the negative impacts of the Applicant's project (plus all the other existing projects and those that follow) that SCC refers to above.

Figure 1. HGV Daily Volumes by Project on Selected Road Network Points



In Figure 1 above, for the area labelled as A12 (South) the indication is that there will be at least 1,000 daily HGV movements through Marlesford if all projects (including an estimate for LionLink) are taken together. This represents a near doubling of the number of HGVs currently passing through the village. The Applicant's project is likely to contribute at least 300 of these additional movements. It is inconceivable that this level of increase will not adversely impact the 23 dwellings in Marlesford that are within 20m of the A12 carriageway. We contend that the Applicant's project will increase levels of anxiety and will add to the feelings of fear and intimidation already experienced by our residents – particularly when walking beside the A12 or when crossing it. We argue that the Applicant has failed to properly carry out its surveys by not using data from non-neutral months. It appears that the Applicant's surveys were carried out in January and February of 2024. It is estimated that total traffic volumes in these months are between 5-10% lower than in typical neutral months. In addition, the Applicant appears not to have allowed for the considerable increase in summer months' traffic which can be up to 25% greater than a typical neutral month, nor does it appear to take into account the considerable and slow-moving agricultural traffic at certain times of the year.

We would urge the ExA to require the Applicant to re-do their traffic surveys in neutral months, or re-base their data for neutral months using currently available SCC data.

In addition to the comments above At §11.181 in the SCC LIR the County Council correctly identifies that “significant pressure is being put on the capacity of laybys and rest areas for HGVs

leading to complaints from both local residents and hauliers. There is a shortage of welfare facilities for HGV drivers, and the Applicant is strongly recommended to provide such facilities and parking for legal breaks at all large site compounds". MPC agrees with this view and cites its own experience with the abuse of access to residential properties around Hill House in Marlesford by HGVs parking inappropriately.

Mitigation

In view of the significant seasonal peaks in traffic on the A12 and its feeder roads, we ask that the ExA put the Applicant under an obligation to contribute to the existing biannual traffic monitoring being carried out by SJC and, in addition, to fund traffic monitoring in the peak summer holiday period around August Bank Holiday.

Residents in East Suffolk are currently experiencing high levels of HGV traffic serving the already consented energy NSIPs and other solar farm projects. It is difficult to report the bad behaviour of some HGV drivers unless the vehicle can be positively linked to a project. MPC asks the ExA to require the Applicant's HGVs to carry a notice on the rear of the vehicle and in the windscreen to identify the project on which the vehicle is working.

On roads identified as being most susceptible to rat-running, the Applicant should (subject to agreement by the relevant communities) be required to fund signage and/or other measures to discourage use of unsuitable lanes by rat-running traffic, including funding for the introduction of "Quiet Lanes" and 20mph zones.

The Applicant should be under an obligation to limit the number of workers travelling to its construction sites. Appropriate use should be made of existing park and ride facilities and where possible access should be given to SJC facilities for the Applicant's workers.

Further and better mitigation should be dependent on outcome of revised traffic surveys.

6. Conclusion

We face a huge imbalance of power between the corporations and their highly paid consultancy teams who are pressing for development and the small communities trying to make their voices heard through unpaid volunteers with very limited resources. Villages and towns in this part of Suffolk are being heavily impacted by all the current and proposed energy projects, and we feel that we are bearing a disproportionate burden in order to benefit the rest of the country.

There must therefore be tangible benefits and positive legacies arising from the totality of the energy projects, in order to convince our residents that the price they are paying in terms of the disruption to their lives is actually worth it – disruption that is likely to go on for the next 10-12 years. The timescale involved means that some elderly residents of Marlesford are likely to see no end to the East Suffolk upheaval in their lifetimes, and they are very likely to die before relative calm can be restored.

We, as a parish council, owe it to all our residents to push as hard as we can for any measures that will lessen the impact of works whilst they are happening and ensure that legacy benefits are put in place in recognition of the negative impacts on our lives over so many years.

We are relying on the ExA to plead our case, and we look to you to require the Applicant to provide the reasonable mitigation that we are asking for and we ask that the ExA urges government to require projects to coordinate in a better way than we have seen in East Suffolk up to now.

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Chair
Marlesford Parish Council

9th February 2026