

East Suffolk Communities Energy Partnership (ESCEP)

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Deadline 4 Representation

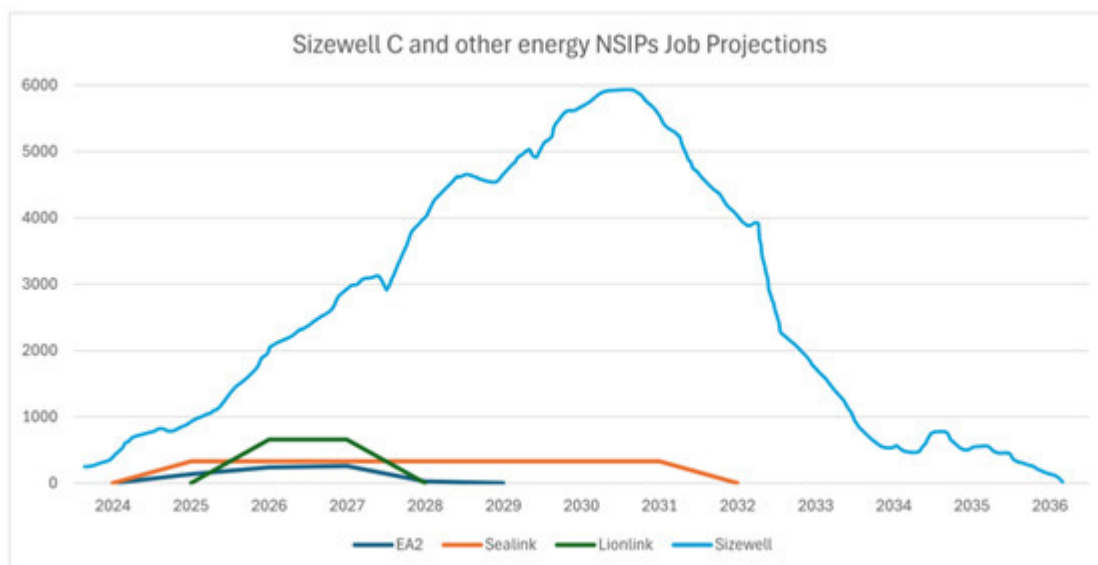
Accommodation, footfall and the tourist economy

ESCEP is a partnership of over 30 East Suffolk parish and town councils lead by a Steering Group. ESCEP seeks share knowledge and understanding to assist its members in preparing responses to NSIP applications.

Sea Link and the other East Suffolk NSIPs (consented and planned) will impact upon housing supply, the housing rental market, the holiday letting business and the tourist economy. Sea Link anticipates more than 300 workers to undertake the project. These are in addition to the 8,000 or more anticipated for the consented Sizewell C (SZC). LionLink anticipates another 650.

This projected accommodation need is so great that East Suffolk District Council (ESDC) is currently seeking comment on a *Draft Major Energy Projects Workers' Accommodation Planning Position Statement (DMEPWAPPS)*. [Draft Major Energy Projects Workers' Accommodation Planning Position Statement - East Suffolk Council, Strategic Planning Consultations](#). The paper was published in January 2026 and has been drafted to manage and minimise anticipated impacts to communities and the tourism sector which are being created by the need to house this large number of workers in East Suffolk.

Since its publication LionLink has indicated that its proposed construction period is 2028 – 2032 which is coincident with Sea Link from 2028 onwards. The graph of accommodation with time in §1.5 of the ESDC document reproduced below, on which we presume ESDC has performed its assessment, does not reflect this. It suggests, due to apparent erroneous input on project dates for both Sealink and LionLink, that there will not be a sudden rise in need for accommodation when Sealink and LionLink commence as they are shown as already at peak demand.



If the graph is corrected then the overall need for additional worker accommodation from mid 2027 to mid 2028 is a rise from 3000 to c.5600 due to both Sea link/LionLink and Sizewell C demand rather than 4000 to 5000 due wholly to Sizewell C.

We believe the document thus does not adequately consider the severe near-term issues, particularly in the local private sector market for local workers and tourists, that will develop through 2027 and 2028. It primarily looks at options possible over the 4 years to the peak need for Sizewell C in 2030 when there is time for substantial increase in caravan sites and some local private housing in terms of HMOs which it suggests may possibly fulfil demand. Notwithstanding the above however we note the DMEPWAPPS makes the following statements:

East Suffolk – and especially the area around Sizewell – is largely rural, with tourism a major part of the economy. Finding appropriate accommodation for the thousands of workers with suitable amenities to meet their needs is a major issue. Planning matters associated with provision for the increased workforce include the risk of:

- *Damage to the tourist sector, both directly (from the loss of tourism accommodation stock given over to energy sector workers) and indirectly (through increased traffic levels, reduction in tranquillity, potentially reduced availability of cafés and restaurants etc).*
- *A reduction in the availability of private rented sector (PRS) accommodation for local residents or other workers, and increased prices for such accommodation.*
- *Unauthorised accommodation, such as conversions to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) without planning permission and/or a licence (if either or both are required).*

The paper goes on to note that the SZC accommodation strategy includes: 800 workers finding accommodation within the tourist sector; 1,200 in the private rented sector; and 880 workers buying homes. It goes on to note that *if the level of skew towards the private rental sector that occurred at Bridgwater [Hinckley Point C] occurred in Leiston, it is clear extreme pressures would be placed on the existing community and housing market. There is some early evidence of pressures occurring in East Suffolk, with some locals expressing that they are being ‘priced out’ of the Leiston market and the Council’s Housing team facing increased difficulties in finding suitable accommodation for those needing social housing...The DMEPWAPPS acknowledges that ...As the majority of the accommodation is therefore considered out of the affordability range of most of the construction workforce, there is (and will be) increased pressures on the more affordable types of tourist accommodation ...and...The Council therefore recognises that there are tensions. In some cases, however, the harms caused by inadequate caravan etc. provision may be more significant than the impacts of provision of accommodation. These harms could include workers driving longer distances, adding to congestion, causing further pressure on permanent accommodation in the area, through outcompeting locals (on price) for houses/rooms and potentially more unauthorised caravan etc. sites appearing.*

One of these points is confirmed by a brief search of planning applications including the word “HMO” which has found 14 applications for Change of Use to HMO since July 2024 (excluding withdrawn applications), with around 100 units resulting. These are mainly in Leiston and Lowestoft, and do not include any caravan sites etc. This demonstrates a rise in the number of

HMOs in East Suffolk and it is of note that conversions result in the loss of residential/social use (one was a care home) and are the cause of additional pressure on inspection and regulation resources for the councils.

We make reference to these ESDC statements because they highlight that the accommodation environment into which a Sea Link and Lionlink workforce is to be introduced is already stressed. Hence

- Any Sea Link and LionLink workers using the private rental sector will place even more pressures on pricing as they reduce supply for local people.
- Accommodation for construction workers will often house multiple tenants who will usually have their own car – and so place pressure on parking spaces for local residents and cause traffic congestion.
- Any use of tourist accommodation will reduce the numbers of visitors to the East Suffolk coast whose economic viability is in large part dependent upon a thriving tourism sector.

As ESDC notes, there is already evidence of locals being “priced-out” of the area. Data on tourism accommodation being used by NSIP workers is to date hard to source, but ESDC town footfall data¹ has already tracked a decline in visitors to the two key tourist destinations on the East Suffolk Coast during the height of the summer:

- Aldeburgh August footfall figures: 2023: 135,974; 2024: 92,169; 2025: 76,880.
- Southwold August footfall figures: 2023: 174,345; 2024: 106,099; 2025: 98,776.

This corresponds to information already provided in ESCEP’s Deadline 3 submission that anecdotal feedback from a sample of High Street retailers and businesses local to the Suffolk Onshore Scheme Boundary, is that takings this year are as much as 30% down (there have been a number of shop closures) with holiday bookings also down by 24%. ESCEP also previously noted that research produced by Destination Research Ltd, using the Cambridge Model for East Suffolk’s visitor economy, showed that the tourist economy in 2024 was valued at £743m and that it supported 15,500 jobs. Even a modest decline would translate into significant economic and employment losses concentrated in frontline sectors. A 5% decline would result in £37.1m lost value and 775 job losses - and so would far outstrip any economic benefits from the Sea Link project.

The above concerns run parallel to the expectation that the attraction of East Suffolk as a tourist destination will decline because what should be a rural coastal area, which is a Heritage Coast and is one of the country’s 46 Natural Landscapes, is being industrialised by the construction of a series of NSIPs whose economic benefits will not replicate the tourism industry it will supplant. Heavy traffic, large industrial sites and reduced availability of visitor accommodation will not only jeopardise tourist sector but will impose further stresses on the well-being of residents and business-owners across the region (see section on Health and Well-being).

February 2026

¹ [REDACTED]