

## **Deadline 6 Written Submission**

### **Paul Atkinson, Saxmundham Resident**

*Hello. I'm a Saxmundham resident.*

*Before I begin, I want to ask the Applicant one simple question: Does anyone on the Sea Link team actually live here? Because reading their submissions, it often feels as though they believe they understand our communities, our landscape, and our daily experience better than the people who live here — and even better than the Councils who work with these conditions every day.*

*Nowhere is this disconnect clearer than the impacts on access and Benhall Railway Bridge. The Applicant's own feasibility study confirms the bridge is restricted to 46 tonnes and anticipates 15 closures just for AIL movements. And if full strengthening is required, they allow for a worst-case 28-day closure of the B1121, tied to Network Rail possessions and weekend blockades of the East Suffolk Line. For Saxmundham and the surrounding villages, losing this access even once is disruptive. Losing it repeatedly — or for weeks — is devastating. None of this has been properly assessed. What may be "deliverable" for the Applicant is simply not liveable for us.*

*There is also a serious contradiction in their own evidence. In the Benhall Bridge Feasibility Study, each transformer weighs 315 tonnes. But in their Suffolk Design Approach for the new Fromus Bridge, they state the combined weight could be up to 500 tonnes. These figures cannot both be correct. If the Applicant cannot provide a consistent AIL weight, how can the Examination have confidence in their engineering, their traffic modelling, or their appraisal of alternatives? This inconsistency goes to the heart of whether their preferred access route is credible.*

*All of these problems stem from a deeper issue: the wrong site was chosen. The Saxmundham converter station site is fundamentally inaccessible. Every potential access route requires major engineering interventions, environmental harm, or community disruption. The Applicant is now trying to retrofit access solutions to a site that was never suitable. This is why I support the alternative northern route proposed by Suffolk County Council. The Applicant's preferred route requires a completely new bridge over the Fromus — a permanent structure in an untouched valley, with irreversible landscape harm. Their claim that mitigation will reduce this to "minor" after 15 years is speculative at best. Why damage an unspoilt valley when a viable alternative exists?*

*The Councils' northern route avoids the Fromus valley entirely, avoids months of disruption at Benhall Bridge, avoids pushing construction traffic through Saxmundham, and uses an existing strategic corridor already suited to heavy loads. Those of us who live here will carry the consequences of Sea Link long after the Applicant has left — and even more so if LionLink is added on top. We are already living with the cumulative burden of multiple NSIPs in this small area. We should not be expected to absorb further avoidable harm simply because the Applicant chose the wrong site and is now trying to engineer its way out of that mistake. These are the wrong plans in the wrong place — and it is the people who live here who will pay the price.*

I submit this written representation for Deadline 6 to formally record and expand upon the evidence I provided at both Open Floor Hearing 3 and Issue Specific Hearing 3. In addition to the access and engineering concerns above, I raised a specific ecological issue regarding a veteran tree and an active [REDACTED]

located immediately [REDACTED]. This matter has now been captured by the Examining Authority as **Action Point 74**, and I provide further detail here to assist the Authority in securing a full and transparent response from the Applicant.

Two weeks before ISH3, I spoke directly with an ecologist undertaking surveys on behalf of Siemens. She confirmed that the veteran tree contains a [REDACTED], that barn owls are highly sensitive to disturbance, and that **a minimum 30-metre offset** from any works would normally be advised. However, based on the Applicant's own plans, the tree is only **10–15 metres** from the proposed access road and bridge footprint. It also lies **within the Order Limits**, meaning construction activity will surround it. The Applicant's response at ISH3 did not address this specific point. They referred to generic mitigation (owl boxes, timing restrictions) and suggested the Siemens ecologist's advice related only to ground investigation works. This does not resolve the underlying issue: if 30 metres is considered appropriate for temporary survey works, the Examination requires clear justification for any smaller buffer during major construction.

The Applicant's Tree Protection Plan ([REP5-113](#)) shows a nominal 30- 40 metre radius around the veteran tree. However, the surrounding construction features make it impossible to maintain a functional 30-metre ecological buffer. To the north, the bridge embankments and approach road sit directly against the buffer line. To the south, the attenuation pond and its feeding ditch occupy the space immediately below the tree. To the west, the access road corridor runs close to the canopy edge. The tree is therefore **hemmed in on three sides**, with the fourth side still within the working area. Even if a 40 or 50-metre circle is drawn, the **actual separation between the tree and construction works is only 10–15 metres**. A drawn buffer is not a delivered buffer. For a Schedule 1 species such as barn owls, a meaningful buffer must be continuous, undisturbed, and free from noise, vibration, lighting, and heavy machinery. The Applicant's design fails all of these requirements.

This ecological conflict is compounded by the heritage implications of the Applicant's decision to move the bridge **approximately 40 metres closer to** [REDACTED] (**Grade II**). To support my concerns, I am attaching the **Suffolk Historic Gardens & Parks Inventory entry for** [REDACTED], and I also provide the publicly accessible link here: [REDACTED]

The Inventory provides detailed, independent evidence about the historic and landscape significance of [REDACTED] and its parkland. It records that the Hall "stands in its own park... on rising ground in the valley of the River Fromus," emphasising that the valley is integral to the Hall's historic setting. The river was deliberately widened in the 18th century to create a designed water feature, forming part of the Regency landscape. The Inventory also notes that the Hall and its parkland form "a pretty object as seen from the main road," and that views from the B1121 and across the surviving parkland remain important to the Hall's setting. The proposed access road and bridge would sit directly within these views, fundamentally altering the character of the approach and the relationship between the Hall, its parkland, and the Fromus valley.

The Inventory describes the historic drives that once approached [REDACTED], including the main drive that "bridged the river and swept through the parkland to the western entrance front." This demonstrates that the river crossing has always been a

sensitive, designed element of the landscape. The Applicant's proposed new bridge is not a restoration of a historic route; it is an industrial-scale intervention in a location never intended for such infrastructure. Crucially, the Inventory explicitly warns that the landscape setting of [REDACTED] is "threatened by the cumulative effects of... energy and infrastructure projects such as Sizewell C, Sealink, Lionlink and Nautilus," and that planting schemes "will in no way mitigate the severe visual impact." This is a direct, independent confirmation that the type of development proposed by the Applicant is incompatible with the historic landscape.

The relocation of the bridge intensifies this harm by bringing the structure further into the surviving parkland and closer to the historic views described in the Inventory. It also compounds the ecological conflict around the veteran tree. The design now forces a choice between protecting the veteran tree and [REDACTED], or protecting [REDACTED]. A well-designed scheme should not force harm in one direction or the other.

Action Point 74 asks the Applicant to confirm that an appropriate offset — "for example 30 m" — has been applied to avoid disturbance to barn owls. Based on the evidence, the Applicant **cannot** apply a 30-metre buffer, and their own plans demonstrate this. Their oral response did not address the physical impossibility of achieving the buffer, and the bridge relocation has created a new heritage impact that has not been assessed. Independent heritage evidence confirms that the landscape cannot absorb further infrastructure without severe harm.

The Applicant's design for the River Fromus crossing is therefore constrained to the point that it cannot protect a veteran tree, a Schedule 1 barn owl roost, or the setting of [REDACTED]. The drawn buffers in CR1-064 are not deliverable on the ground, and the bridge relocation has introduced new impacts that have not been properly assessed. Given the availability of the Councils' northern route — which avoids the Fromus valley entirely — there is no justification for imposing these avoidable harms on the environment, heritage assets, or the community.

# Suffolk's Historic Gardens & Parks Inventory

## SAXMUNDHAM

Town: SAXMUNDHAM

District Council: EAST SUFFOLK (previously Suffolk Coastal)

TM 389 625

Not open to the public

Taking its name from the manor of [REDACTED] (Grade II) stands in its own park south of the town of Saxmundham. It is on rising ground in the valley of the River Fromus, which flows south to join the River Alde near Snape. The town's Church of St John the Baptist (Grade II\*) dating back to the fourteenth century is on the edge of the park c. 450m (1,475ft) north of the house. In 1841 the rector was the Revd Lancelot Brown, grandson of the famous landscape designer Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, who was also rector of the parishes of Carlton and of Kelsale where he made his home. The southern part of the park was in the neighbouring parish of Sternfield.

### OWNERS

The manor of Hurts is believed to have been in the ownership of Thomas de Verley during the thirteenth century who possibly built the first house on the site. It was later transferred to the nunnery at Marham in Norfolk and after the dissolution of the monasteries was granted to Sir Nichols Hare c. 1535. It passed through numerous hands before acquired by the Long family in the eighteenth century. They made their fortune from their Jamaican plantations at Longville, the largest plantation in Jamaica. Charles Long (1679–1723), the son of Samuel Long of Longville, succeeded his father as an infant. Charles came to England and bought the extensive [REDACTED] in the early part of the eighteenth century. He became an MP for Dunwich, one of the 'rotten boroughs' that were so named because it had two MPs even though it had lost most of its population due to coastal erosion. His son, also Charles (1705–78), inherited the property on his father's death in 1723, later marrying Mary, daughter and heir of Dudley North Esq. of nearby Glemham Hall (Grade II).

In 1778 their son, also Charles (1748–1812), inherited the estate and married his cousin Jane, daughter of Beeston Long Esq. of Carshalton Park in Surrey. They had two sons who died in infancy so on Charles' death in 1812 the [REDACTED] was inherited by his younger brother Dudley (b. 1749), although in his will he stipulated it be held in trust to support an annuity for his wife Jane. In 1789 Dudley is said to have changed his name to North to become Dudley Long North so he could inherit neighbouring Little Glemham from his aunt, basing himself at Glemham Hall. He died childless in 1829 and under the terms of Charles Long's will it eventually passed to William Long (1802–75), son of Beeston Long. William made [REDACTED] his

home and became a Justice of the Peace and High Sheriff of Suffolk. He stayed at [REDACTED] until his death in 1875 and it passed down the Long family line who continued to make it their home for the next sixty five years. During World War II the Hall and park were requisitioned by the Army and used by Major-General Sir Percy Hobart as his headquarters while he tested, developed and trained his units in the use of his 'Funnies'. These were a number of unusually modified tanks that operated during the war with an important role in the D-Day landings. It has been said that Churchill, Eisenhower and Montgomery met at [REDACTED] to discuss preparations for the landings.

After the war the Long family sold the estate and many family portraits from the house were donated to Christchurch Mansion in Ipswich with the family papers given to Suffolk Record Office. There followed various owners and a period during which the Hall slowly fell into disrepair with much of the parkland sold off. In 2012 the new owners of [REDACTED] began the process of restoration of the house and remaining parkland, while the various early-nineteenth century outbuildings, such as the stables, walled garden and granary, were converted for residential use and are now in separate ownership



The Regency [REDACTED]

designed by Samuel Wyatt and built in 1803. The mansion overlooks the River Fromus, which is shown having been dammed to form a recreational pond. This 1857 lithograph is by Henry Davy (1793–1865). ([REDACTED])

[REDACTED] No: RIBA84128, Library Reference: SC188/50)



in 1908 showing the west front (left) and south elevation with loggia of the house by architect Thomas Cotman. (In Barker, H. R., *East Suffolk Illustrated*, 1908).

#### THE HALL

A previous building, which is believed to have been built c. 1650, was replaced in 1803 by a Regency mansion to designs by Samuel Wyatt (1737–1807) for Charles Long, Esq. (1748–1812). This house is depicted in a lithograph by Henry Davy dated 1857, which shows a house that was described in 1874 as ‘a large and handsome white brick mansion’. Its principal elevation faced west to overlook the parkland with an entrance front to the north. It was badly damaged by fire in 1890 and the present red brick country house in the Jacobean style to designs by the architect

Thomas Cotman, who was also known for a number of notable buildings in Felixstowe and Ipswich, replaced it in 1893.



*the west in January 2016 during the restoration period. To the right are the various early-nineteenth century outbuildings before they were converted to residential properties and behind is the shelterbelt of trees that defines part of the oval enclosure set out to surround the 1803 house and its outbuildings. ( by Geographer Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license)*

#### PARK

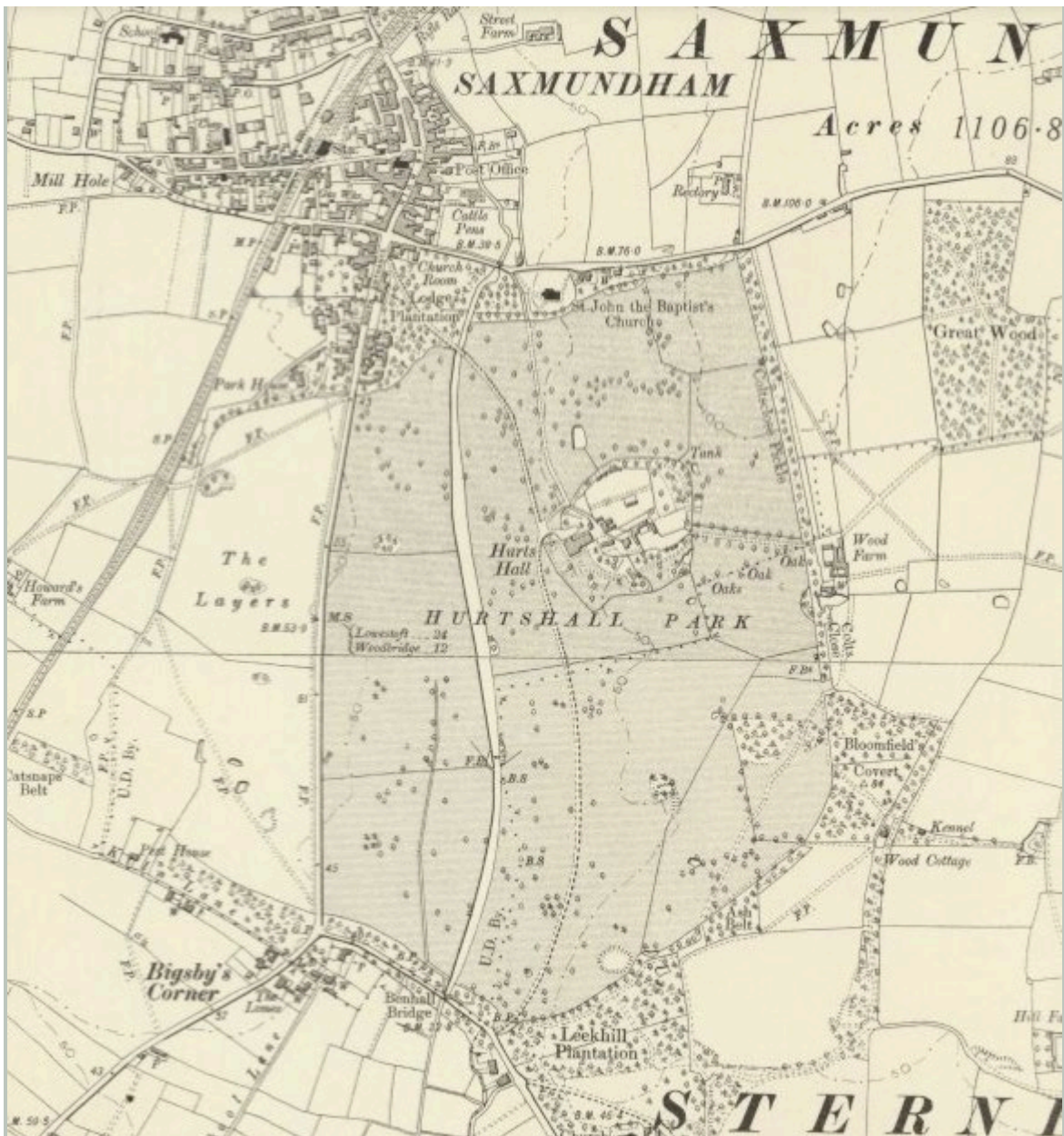
sits in the remains of a park developed by the Long family from the eighteenth century. Having inherited the estate in 1778, Charles Long (1748–1812) was responsible for laying out and planting the grounds, including expanding the River Fromas into a sheet of water, which is shown on the 1857 lithograph to have been used for boating and providing a suitable setting for his Regency mansion. In his directory of 1855, William White described the house as ‘pleasantly situated, and has a cheerful aspect’ with the grounds having ‘some fine timber about the park’, ‘with their gentle undulations, form a pretty object as seen from the main road,

which passes through them'. Its extensive park extended northward to the church, southward to the village of Sternfield and westward to the main road into Saxmundham, today the B1121 and known as South Entrance. The parkland setting was extended westward by an area known as The Layers which, although in agricultural use by 1840, gave rural views beyond the park from the house. Shelterbelts of trees formed the north, east and south park boundaries with clumps and freestanding trees within the formal parkland landscape, said to have extended to c. 81ha (200a).

By the time the tithe map to accompany the 1841 apportionment was surveyed in 1840 three drives served the Hall site: one from Sternfield village from the south; another from the Saxmundham to Leiston road to the north that passed the church to arrive at the stables east of the house and the third and main drive from the northwest near the southern end of Saxmundham High Street before bridging the river and sweeping through the parkland to the western entrance front. Both northern drives passed through a shelterbelt of trees, on the 1885 OS map named 'Lodge Plantation'. A tree-lined access drive was created sometime between 1841 and 1885 linking the [REDACTED] granary and stables to nineteenth century Wood Farm, which was built at the edge of the eastern shelterbelt. There were no lodges shown on the tithe map at the entrances into the park, although by 1885 a lodge had been built at the north-west entrance and a further lodge at the Sternfield entrance appeared sometime between 1905 and 1928. A boat house in full view of the house on the widened River Fromus is marked on the 1885 OS map, although it is likely to have been a feature at a much earlier date.



The 1885 OS map showing [redacted] and its outbuildings within an oval enclosure surrounded by parkland. (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland [redacted])



The 1905 OS map showing the extent of the parkland which is shown shaded grey. (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)

In 1911 outer parts of estate were put up for sale by William E. Long Esq., although the formal parkland stayed intact until the second half of the twentieth century when the southern park was lost to agriculture resulting in the loss of the drive from Sternfield. Since then a housing development has been built in the north-east corner of the parkland, the eastern parkland and the area between the B1121 and the River Fromus are now also in agricultural use leaving just the north-west section of the original formal park surviving. The house is now accessed through new entrance gates further south along the B1121 and the drive, lined with lime trees, now curves in a wide sweep from the original bridge over the river to the new entrance. Although still visible from the road, the old entrance gates only give access to a narrow trackway that was once part of the original drive.

Throughout the surviving parkland there are now fewer freestanding trees that allow longer views from the Hall, especially in the area to the south.



*viewed from the B1121 to the west of the house in 2021 with agricultural land in the foreground and boundary hedge along the course of the River Fromus. Beyond is parkland separated from the formal gardens by a brick terrace or ha-ha that traces the outline of the original oval enclosure around the Hall site. (© N. Chadwick Reproduced under Creative Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0)*

#### PLEASURE GARDENS

The 1840 tithe map shows that woodland almost completely surrounded the Hall site, creating an oval enclosure inside which were the house, a large five-sided walled garden, stables, granary and other farm buildings. A circular path ran through the belt of trees and into an open area of garden on the western side of the enclosure giving views across the parkland over a lawn from both southern and western elevations of the house. In this

area the oval enclosure was continued by a ha-ha. Access into the enclosure were on the east side from the parkland, a northern drive from the church and the main drive to the west, with a footpath leading out into the southern parkland.

There was little change to the layout of the pleasure gardens over the following forty-five years with the 1885 map showing a lawn dotted with occasional specimen trees as shown on the earlier tithe map. By 1905 the shape of the ha-ha had been changed slightly with a 'bulge' added to the south and a more formalised layout of paths flanked by two trees had been added in front of the house.



The 1885 OS map showing the Regency [redacted] and its outbuildings within an oval enclosure surrounded by parkland very much as it was in 1840. (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland [redacted])



The 1905 OS

map showing the rebuilt Jacobean-style [redacted] and its outbuildings within an oval enclosure that now has a 'bulge' on its southern corner. (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland [redacted])

The decline of the house during the second half of the twentieth century saw a corresponding decline in the upkeep of the gardens. Since 2012 and the start of the major restoration and development of the site the pleasure gardens have expanded substantially with numerous additional features added.

#### WALLED GARDEN

The walls of the large pentagonal walled gardens have been described as having an eighteenth century appearance by the architectural historian, Leigh Alston, and thus would pre-date the building of the Regency house in 1803, perhaps built for Charles Long (1705–78) after his marriage to Mary, the Dudley North heiress. Alternatively they may have been built for his son, also Charles (1748–1812), who inherited the estate in 1778. If the walls are of a slightly later date they are more likely to be contemporary with the building of the Regency house and would have been part of the improvements undertaken by son Charles.

In 1840 the walled garden had cross- and perimeter paths creating eight planting sections with a building, possibly an orangery, at the junction of the two more northern walls. By the end of the nineteenth century further glasshouses had been added on either side of the original glasshouse which survived into the latter part of the twentieth century.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century a number of additional residential properties have been built on the site of the Hall Farm, the original farm complex immediately east of the house and within the oval enclosure. Some are conversions of the original stables and farm buildings

and others new, such as a house within the northern section of the walled garden where some walls have survived in a degraded form.



set in its much-reduced parkland in 2023. (© Google Earth 2025)  
In 2025 the landscape setting of [redacted] and Park is threatened by the cumulative effects of housing development proposed for The Layers and energy and infrastructure projects such as Sizewell C, Sealink, Lionlink and Nautilus pipelines. Within an agricultural setting, the present views from the house and from the B1121 over the parkland towards the house will be impacted by the siting of an access road bridging the River Fromus south of the house leading through woodland to potentially three large convertor stations to the east at Wood Farm and in Friston. The scale of the projects

means suggested planting schemes will in no way mitigate the severe visual impact on the setting of [REDACTED]

End.