

I made a submission at the OFH in March and in summary would like to say the following:

I am very concerned about the cumulative impacts of this project and do not feel the applicant understands or is concerned about the impact this will have on our local community. I was concerned when the applicant described sealink as having an insignificant impact on the community in comparison to Sizewell and that Sizewell is background noise in relation to sealink. As a resident living in Sternfield I wish the Examiners to know that Sizewell is having a massive impact on the local community and this needs to be acknowledged. Sealink on top of the impact of Sizewell will have an unacceptable impact on our health and wellbeing in so many measurable ways when considering our stress levels. The applicant does not seem to understand how rural communities function and the importance of good reliable road links to Ipswich and beyond. Sizewell has meant that a 40 minute journey is often disrupted and extended. A reasonable person can except this in the short term but not for the extended period the building of Sealink would mean for Saxmundham and surrounding routes. Having followed the agenda items between March 25th to March 27th the applicant seemed unaware of the impact of using Benhall Bridge as access as opposed to the favoured route put forward by Suffolk County Council. The Council have an understanding and acknowledgement of the frequent road disruption we are currently experiencing and their proposed northern route using Sizewell infrastructure would prevent the disruption closing Benhall Bridge would bring. As a local resident it is clear that in the applicants view we can have extra time and inconvenience put onto our journeys but the applicant is not prepared to in relation to Suffolk CC route. Suffolk CC know the area and the traffic issues well and the reiteration of the applicant doing their modelling in the low season just illustrates this. No thought was given by the applicant to the extra impact the tourist season brings for road travel. Local country roads can not take tourist traffic and heavy plant and construction traffic. some of the junctions are extremely dangerous and the road through Sternfield and Friston is unsuitable.

I can tell you that over Jan, Feb and March Siemens have been doing investigation works on the proposed access route on behalf of the applicant. Access to these works were off Church Hill Sternfield and gave me an opportunity to engage with the workers. Many commented on how tricky the site was to access and how difficult the local country roads were to navigate for the plant needed for the further exploratory works. It concerned me that at the same time heavy plant was on the fields opposite Hurts Hall the applicant had also instructed orthologists and other environmental assessors to conduct surveys of the local wildlife. The wildlife we normally see completely disappeared whilst the heavy plant was on the field and did not return until they left. It seemed that any results would be skewed and suggest there was not the birdlife and wildlife that we know exists. Interestingly wildlife returned on Siemens departure. When I explained about the proposed northern route the workforce could see the absolute sense in using existing infrastructure rather than the river Fromus crossing as proposed. It was also concerning to hear from the environmental specialists during the specific issue hearing that the saluation ponds to take excess water are not in the best locations as flooding continues to be an issue for local residents. Properties alongside the Fromus have flooded this winter (gardens) and I was not reassured in relation to excess water on the highways during construction. The applicant suggested that a taxi service could be provided for the residents of Whitearch park if Benhall bridge was closed but seemed unaware that there are simply not enough taxis locally as it is and this has been made worse since Sizewell has come on stream. Taxis have to be booked in advance and cannot respond to immediate need .

There seems to be no provision made for pedestrians or cyclists using the B1221 from Benhall and the route would become extremely hazardous if used for construction traffic over several years during the build of Sealink and then possibly Lionlink. Suffolk Councils proposed route would protect access to local services for residents of Benhall and Sternfield and does not involve closing our access onto the A12 which is especially vital in an emergency situation. Our local SEAS campaign group has clearly illustrated that the need is not there and the power could be taken to Kent by upgrading existing power lines or using a brownfield site. During the Specific issue hearings we were not given an opportunity to examine this in detail and I really hope the examiners take on this issue. Sealink will forever change our local landscape and Heritage and this is unforgivable if this is not absolutely necessary as I believe it isnt. The evidence suggests there are better more environmentally sustainable ways of achieving net zero. I was concerned that on the last agenda item under ecology and biodiversity that the applicant gave no clear commitment to restoring the landscape other than the bear minimum and could not say what these would look like or where they might be. This is especially distressing as a local resident who cherishes the landscape to hear in relation to representatives of East Suffolk outlining the high failure rate of recent tree planting in the local area. I am also very concerned about the protected horse chestnut by the proposed Fromus crossing as the applicant has not specified how that will be safeguarded and protected. Our landscape, biodiversity and ecology will be harmed by this project but can be somewhat protected by using the northern access route so the Fromus valley and vista of Hurts Hall is protected, In my role as a community volunteer for a local food project I hear many local people who are distressed and anxious about what is happening to their local environment but feel powerless to engage with this process. They have lived in Saxmundham and the local villages for many years and feel rural communities have no voice and can be sacrificed for big corporations like NG who are working for shareholder profit and using tax payers money to further their aims. The applicant has been disingenuous in describing Sternfield as an industrial setting when in fact we have a vegetable processing unit and duck farm that no way reflects the scale of the Sealink project. This simply unfair and not justifiable given the alternative options to get energy to the south east.

I now dread any correspondence from the applicant. They have not engaged with the local community in a meaningful way and suggesting they appoint a liaison person once the project is granted does not answer our concerns in relation to cumulative effects, noise , vibration, traffic, loss of heritage and landscape. The applicant constantly moves their red lines on paperwork and this project gets bigger and if permission is granted I envisage them carrying out works without proper authorization. I am deeply concerned and want to repeat again the stress and anxiety this is bringing to residents directly affected. There is no meaningful mitigation put forward.

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