

I wish to submit against some of the points raised in the Rule 17 letter published by the EXA April 2026 and the DESNZ proposal submitted late at deadline 7.

I have read carefully what the applicant has said about mitigation in Rep6 - 078 and am concerned in their response that they do not have to legally do net gain 10% for biodiversity. For the local community there are no guarantees the mitigation they propose will happen. I cannot see a visual representation of the final design of the Saxmundham converter station and even after 15 years the planting proposed will not screen it adequately for people living close by/ I would also like to say the willow plantation abutting the protected horse chestnut side of the Fromus is relatively recently planted and is not a mature crop. For many years previously this was rare wild meadowland cropped for hay and could return to such if it was not blighted by attenuation ponds which the environment agency during examination suggested were not in the best location. As a householder abutting the development site this makes me very nervous as my garden already floods with drainage ditches clearly marked on maps. A theme of mental health and well being will emerge through my final responses as highlighted in section 10. It appears to me that the applicant has given some regard to statutory protection of animals and biodiversity but isn't prepared to make real attempts to mitigate against the effects on the local population well being. Cumulatively as locals we are facing the impact of other energy projects alongside Sealink and new housing and water projects in Saxmundham. This has the effect of making me constantly anxious about what is going to happen next and how it is going to impact. A small example of this is that part of our boundary was damaged during exploratory works on behalf the applicant in Jan/ Feb 2026 and despite reporting this to the site manager this was never rectified. However an ancient Oak on the site had fencing put up to protect it. Whilst of course it was right this happened for the tree, local homeowners are not given the same consideration so of course we are worried and stressed. REP 6 - 078 doesn't take into account Saxmundham Town Council's suggestion that after completion the access road could become a public highway (in the latest neighbourhood plan) If this were to happen how would the applicant manage and respond in relation to the mitigation measures around the Fromus Bridge and access road. The applicant must be aware as the Saxmundham Neighbourhood plan is in the local domain and NGET have met with the town council. As a resident of Sternfield I do not believe our parish council have had the same opportunity.

Rep 6 168 talks about local landscapes and the Sealink project having a minor adverse effect on landscape. Again I can not agree with this as despite Hurts Hall Park having much of its land sold off for agriculture in the past it is still a relevant and important part of our landscape for those living here. I have looked at other recently completed converter stations ie Viking Link to get a sense of how they sit in the landscape and see they are not near a little rural market town and associated villages. It is unfair to suggest Sealink will not have a significant adverse impact both visually and on other senses ie noise, light and vibration during construction and afterwards.

I was reassured the EXA considered the new send school in Saxmundham. As a retired Headteacher of a send school I want to make it clear that these will be rural pupils who will find it very difficult to cope and process the disturbance of a large construction site over several years. Any traffic issues related to access to the school because Benhall Bridge was closed would heighten their distress. This in turn means they cannot access their education as they are not ready to learn which is a fundamental human right enshrined on law. The same issues would apply to the children of Great Oaks school in Kent. Children with SEN in urban communities are desensitized to a small degree as they live with a noisier soundscape on a daily basis. Again I think this emphasises why the site for the Saxmundham converter station is misjudged.

In the last two days there has been quite extensive press coverage about the suitability of Benhall Bridge and the fact that the applicant hopes to explore this further when the examination has closed. This again adds to local stress and worry and gives a feeling that the applicant is not concerned on the impact they have on our wellbeing. Surely a reasonable person would think all this work should have been done earlier in the process so the community can assess the impact properly in relation to their daily journeys.

Finally I am highly alarmed by the proposal to have the project overseen by DESNZ if the DCO is granted AS-167. This seems strategically planned by the applicant to limit the input of local planning safeguards and thus doesn't ensure the local communities are protected in anyway by their working practices during construction and beyond. There are many unresolved issues in this DCO and DESNZ would not be the right way forward for the community and only suits the applicants's ambitions. The applicant has not acknowledged the need really isnt there for SEALink under the critical NSip pathway nor that there are other solutions as clearly outlined by SEAS. So many local residents both in Suffolk and Kent have devoted their time to understand the planning process to represent themselves and their communities in the examination process. The applicants wish to use a DESNZ is completely undemocratic and leaves our locally elected councils and officers as consultees only. I would hope in their final decision the EXA will reject AS-167 in full and support the knowledge of local officers and councils who know their communities and the issues they face.