

BENHALL & STERNFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

NATIONAL GRID SEA LINK – RESPONSE TO ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION, NOVEMBER 2024

Agreed by Parish Council, 6th January 2025

1. Introduction

This submission should be read in conjunction with those submitted by Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council in response to the Statutory Consultation, December 2023, and Further Consultation, July 2024.

2. Repositioning of bridge crossing River Fromus

In December 2023, the Parish Council said that the western access, as was then proposed, was damaging to the Fromus valley and the setting of Hurts Hall. By moving the crossing 40 metres north towards Hurts Hall, the damage to the setting of the Grade II listed building is further compromised. The fact that the valley is no longer a patchwork of small fields is irrelevant, and, indeed, it might well be argued that that opening up of the valley into larger fields will make the impact of the access road and bridge far more significant. Your words ‘the parkland is considered to be of local importance and therefore of Low Value’ is highly insulting to the host community. Surely the whole point of consultation is to meld the overall aims of the project with what is valued and cherished by the community.

We must repeat our summary from July 2024 regarding the proposed access. What is now shown is not a suitable access, but if this is the only access available, the Wood Farm site for the converter station is clearly inappropriate.

3. Mitigation for highway safety

We have previously itemised our concerns for the safety of vulnerable road users resulting from your proposal to access from the A12, through Benhall to the western access, and have stated that land to accommodate such measures should be included within the Order limits to ensure that they can be delivered. We have discussed this with you, and you have said that you prefer to not include the land within the Order limits, but to negotiate with landowners. This does not ensure that the appropriate safety measures can be delivered, and it is all too easy for you to simply say that the mitigation cannot be provided. We have also discussed this matter with Suffolk County Council, the highway authority, who agree with our view.

Your latest plans continue to omit provision for mitigation within the Order limits. The design of your access route from the A12 must not be just to accommodate your lorries, but to accommodate them safely with regard to vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists, mobility scooters and equestrians) using the same highway between Benhall and Saxmundham.

You are happy to extend the Order limits for skylarks, why not for humans?