

MINSTER PARISH COUNCIL



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Consultation Response

Minster Parish Council -Sealink The Great Grid Upgrade Response 12th December 2023

Minster Parish Council (MPC) as the potential host Parish Council area in which the proposed National Grid Electricity Transmission proposals (Sea Link) are to be located – subject to the granting of a Development Consent Order (DCO) – has the following views:

The administrative area of Thanet District is facing an unprecedented level of housing growth, with significant strategic housing allocations being delivered on agricultural land. The Parish of Minster is not immune from this, with an allocation of 250 houses now under process alongside a smaller allocation of 35 units yet to commence. The effects and consequence of the housing growth are such that it places immense pressures on the communities in which it is situated and strengthens the importance of maintaining and enhancing the remaining environment.

MPC considers that Minster Marshes is one the most environmentally sensitive locations remaining in the Thanet area. Consequently, the value of this location cannot and should not be underestimated given the ecology, landscape, biodiversity and wildlife situated in the locality.

The Sea Link proposals have generated a groundswell of objection relating to environmental impact on Minster Marshes which MPC recognises. MPC therefore OBJECTS to the proposals.

In recognising the need for strategic electricity network enhancement, it is felt that a sequential analysis of all other land based options needs to be undertaken with cost benefits being balanced against environmental impacts. The site at Minster Marshes should not be progressed simply because it appears to be the most effective location through cost and operational expediency.

It is also noted that Minster Marshes are situated in an area that is subject to significant future flooding risk associated with Climate change indicators illustrating that the locality will be



under water by 2050. The recent National Audit Office Report issued in November 2023 highlighted that the government acknowledges that building new flood defences and maintaining existing ones is no longer enough and that a wider range of interventions is now needed to build resilience against increasing flood risk. MPC suggest that one such intervention is not to build in locations subject to future flood risk such as Minster Marshes; water and electricity are not good bedfellows.....

MPC understands that the DCO process, if agreed, includes a Compulsory Purchase regime which will secure the land and rights needed to implement the development. MPC is concerned that the possible loss of agricultural land will inevitably impact on the viability of the remaining agricultural holding. Consequently, MPC wish to be assured that full compensatory arrangements would be enacted for any party affected by the proposals.

In the event that Sea Link proceeds on Minster Marshes, MPC also wish to see a fully detailed scheme of operations outlining how the construction, operation and subsequent maintenance of the facility will be conducted. It is inevitable that there will be a range of disruptions to Minster and on Minster Marshes particularly. Significant assurance will be needed to mitigate the impacts of the project and to protect the locality while works are being carried out. MPC considers that, in offsetting the harm to the locality, a Community Infrastructure Fund should be provided by the applicant. This should be provided for the benefit of MPC and used for projects that provide compensatory environmental benefit in the parish. One such measure could relate to the provision and retention of a footbridge across the River Stour for walkers linking Richborough to Minster Marshes and through to Minster and Thanet generally.

In conclusion, MPC, requests that our comments are recorded as a formal response to the current consultation and are formally recorded in the Consultation Report.

Yours faithfully

Cllr Caroline Fleming – Planning, Highways and Transportation Committee

