

The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Summary of design ammendment following Targeted Consultation

Version A

November 2024

nationalgrid

Contents

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Suffolk	1
1.3	Kent	3

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Sea Link

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1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 We undertook statutory consultation between 24 October and 18 December 2023. Following review of the feedback received, a series of refinements were made to the Project proposals. Further feedback was sought on these design changes during a period of targeted consultation, which took place between 08 July and 11 August 2024.
- 1.1.2 We are intending to submit our application for development consent in early 2025. In advance of this, we have made a number of further amendments to the design, reflecting feedback received during both rounds of consultation as well as from ongoing assessment work.
- 1.1.3 These further amendments to the proposed development are not material or substantial changes to the proposed application. They do not materially change the effects or fundamentally change the project as a whole. We would like to take this opportunity to update you on our plans..

1.2 Suffolk

Fromus crossing

- 1.2.1 We have realigned and rotated the proposed crossing of the River Fromus, to avoid valuable trees on the eastern bank. This moves the bridge approximately 40m further north along the river.
- 1.2.2 As before, we are proposing a bridge that is approximately 6m high from riverbank to parapet level, with approach ramps of approximately 80m, as well as an alternative smaller version that is approximately 4m high (which would be our preferred option, subject to the outcome of discussions with key environmental stakeholders). The final design of the bridge would be confirmed at later stages, but we are working with architects, the local planning authorities, and the local design review panel to agree designs for a bridge crossing that adopts an architectural approach that is sensitive to its setting. The onward access road towards the converter station has been slightly realigned.
- 1.2.3 Realigning the proposed bridge brings it closer to the southern part of Saxmundham, meaning that the bridge and associated access track would become more prominent in key views of the Conservation Area and the Grade II* Church of St John the Baptist Church from the south. They also get closer to the Grade II listed Hurts Hall, potentially impacting on views from the hall.
- 1.2.4 Impacts on these heritage assets may be reduced through mitigation, such as the final design and appearance of the bridge or screening provided by planting, although the proposed bridge is likely to result in significant adverse effects on the setting of the Church of St John the Baptist and Hurts Hall. However, the proposed changes will not result in substantial harm – the level of harm would be less than substantial in policy terms. This is because the proposed changes would not seriously affect any key elements of the special architectural or historic interest of Hurts Hall or the Church of St John the Baptist.
- 1.2.5 Ongoing assessment work and design of the bridge itself will confirm any impacts and inform any mitigation.

Construction & maintenance compounds

- 1.2.6 We have reintroduced areas adjacent to the proposed converter station to provide more flexibility on where we can locate the necessary construction compound.
- 1.2.7 This reflects ongoing discussions around how we are coordinating with National Grid Ventures regarding their proposed interconnector projects. By including flexibility in where we can put our construction compound, we are allowing National Grid Ventures more time to consider where to locate their own converter station within the wider site. By giving Sea Link flexibility, we are giving NGV more flexibility and greater opportunity to effectively site their own converter station and construction area, as part a coordinated wider site. Views have already been sought on this wider more flexible area for construction compound locations during our statutory consultation in late 2023.
- 1.2.8 The design of the construction & maintenance compounds is not expected to result in materially different environmental effects to those already reported and consulted on during previous consultations and in preliminary environmental information provided previously.

Mitigation and enhancement land

- 1.2.9 We have moved, introduced, or refined areas of land proposed for ecological mitigation and/or enhancement, following feedback from key stakeholders.
- 1.2.10 We have moved an area of proposed temporary mitigation from where it was shown at targeted consultation (off the A1094, within the National Landscape area) to a nearby site on the other side of the road (including proposed access improvements, if necessary). This is because the baseline ecological condition of the new site is considered to provide a better opportunity for delivering this temporary mitigation, which involves managing it as acid grassland for ten years. We have also introduced an additional area of arable farmland close to Saxmundham, where it is proposed to adapt existing farming practice to include 'skylark plots'. These are unsown areas within arable crops which provide skylarks with access to nesting habitats throughout their breeding season. Finally, we have refined areas of land along the River Fromus to better reflect the opportunities for the delivery of ecological enhancement, removing certain areas which are not required for mitigation, and where managing and maintaining habitats may be difficult and deliver fewer public benefits
- 1.2.11 The approach to mitigation land is not expected to result in materially different environmental effects to those already reported and consulted on during previous consultations and in the preliminary environmental information provided previously

Other changes

- 1.2.12 Various other adjustments are proposed to the design, including access routes and underground cable alignments.
- 1.2.13 Other adjustments include introducing more flexibility for routing the Friston substation access road, and new and relocated monitoring accesses off the B1119 to potential joint bay locations. Other changes include introducing more flexibility for routing the underground cables into Friston substation, to allow us to better coordinate final routing with future projects so as to retain the effectiveness of the proposed landscape planting. We are introducing more flexibility for routing the underground cables within an area east of Friston to allow us to avoid buried archaeology, should that be necessary.

- 1.2.14 These other changes are not expected to result in materially different environmental effects to those already reported and consulted on during previous consultations and in preliminary environmental information provided previously

1.3 Kent

Construction & maintenance compounds & methodologies

- 1.3.1 We have removed or moved various construction compound areas.
- 1.3.2 A construction compound is no longer proposed on the former hoverport. The hoverport shall remain as part of the proposals only as part of the construction & maintenance phase access route from Sandwich Road to the mudflats. Flexibility on where the access may be routed across the hoverport is included, to allow sensitive flora to be avoided more easily (if necessary). Furthermore, we have removed the maintenance compound immediately adjacent to Sandwich Road and moved this to a nearby location on the north side of the road, closer to the A299 (this compound will now also be used during the construction phase).
- 1.3.3 We have removed the larger construction compound area west of the A256 to reduce archaeological impacts. We have instead reintroduced smaller compound areas elsewhere. This includes reintroducing a construction compound north of the converter station site, and introducing a compound to the east of the converter station. Both areas were shown as being within the project for construction works during our statutory consultation in late 2023.
- 1.3.4 Finally, we are also including the possibility of taking our marine cable further inland, west of the A256, and have enlarged the compound area in this location to accommodate this. If feasible, this would avoid the need for a construction compound in the field to the east of the A256.
- 1.3.5 Any new construction traffic caused by the use of the Sandwich Road compound during the construction phase would be managed through management plans and a travel plan. The changes to construction and maintenance compounds are not expected to result in materially different environmental effects to those already reported and consulted on during previous consultations and in preliminary environmental information provided previously.

Mitigation and enhancement land

- 1.3.6 We have moved an area of land proposed for ecological mitigation.
- 1.3.7 We have removed an area of land previously shown to the south of the existing overhead line, which was included to provide additional foraging habitat for birds moving inland from Pegwell Bay. This has been replaced with another area of land immediately to the west of the A256 further south, but rather than create habitat in the way previously proposed, the strategy will now be to adapt existing farming practices on these arable fields in a way that is beneficial to important bird species. This change follows ongoing discussion with and advice from key stakeholders including Natural England.

- 1.3.8 The approach to mitigation land is not expected to result in materially different environmental effects to those already reported and consulted on during previous consultations and in preliminary environmental information provided previously.

Other changes

- 1.3.9 Various other adjustments are proposed to the design, including access routes and underground cable alignments.
- 1.3.10 Other adjustments include introducing adjustments to access and drainage routes in the field off Ebbsfleet lane, to avoid other utilities and to reduce impacts on sensitive archaeology, and adjustments to the underground cable route west of the A256, again to reduce impacts on sensitive archaeology.
- 1.3.11 These other changes are not expected to result in materially different environmental effects to those already reported and consulted on during previous consultations and in preliminary environmental information provided previously

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