

Leiston Town Council (LTC) Oral Representation for the SZC Open Floor Hearing

The team appointed to examine the Sizewell C DCO is fully aware that Leiston-cum-Sizewell will bear the biggest impact of this proposed development - an infrastructure project equal to Hinkley Point C, the biggest this country has ever seen. The development site, a large part of the construction area, the campus, a mobile caravan site, an extension to the rail facility and a temporary rail route, will all fall within the Leiston-cum-Sizewell parish boundary. The only road to Sizewell until the new road is built, will also all be within the parish. At the height of the build the number of temporary workers based in or near Leiston, will more than double the size of the working-age population.

Members of LTC visited the HPC site in 2019 and commented on the scale of the project, finding it hard to visualise a project of that scale at Sizewell, within the AONB and on our Heritage Coast. The town will also be affected by SPR developments should they go ahead, as the main access to their site is via Sizewell Gap and Lovers Lane. There are also plans for the Nautilus interconnector project, which will reach landfall at Sizewell. LTC, whilst extensively engaging with EDFE to mitigate some of the worst impacts, remains concerned about the far-reaching effect of such a range of infrastructure projects running concurrently within the parish.

We understand the benefits that SZC will bring to our community, but we cannot ignore the negative issues that would have a cumulative impact on the quality of life for the community. Many of these are identified by the applicant in the Community Impact report and there must be adequate mitigation. We believe that currently, mitigation is not satisfactorily met within the DCO.

TRAFFIC CONCERNS

LTC has been in extensive discussion with EDFE and SCC Highways on a plan to prevent traffic travelling through the town centre to Leiston Halt, the laydown area and the caravan park east of Eastlands Industrial Estate. A great deal of work has gone into this but the following concerns remain:

- The increased traffic in the town centre, the residential roads and main roads into and around Leiston
- The use of Lovers Lane and Sizewell Gap to access the site in the early years of construction and to access to the LEEIE could result in an intolerable increase in traffic at Crown Point junction and the easterly end of King George's Avenue
- Buses: Frequent journeys to and from the construction site for very local workers and shuttle buses to leisure facilities within Leiston could become a hazard, particularly close to schools
- Lovers Lane: a single-carriageway, rural road is the only access to Sizewell A/B, the beach, residential properties and holiday accommodation and is the location

of the household waste site, a much-needed local amenity which must remain in Leiston and is already a traffic hazard at peak times. LTC expects improvements to the road layout, enhancements at the household waste site entrance and speed restrictions

Socio-economic impacts of concern:

- 80% of the workforce will be based within our parish, including a significant number in mobile caravans with few amenities, close to residential properties
- Workforce access to sport/leisure amenities will put pressure on local provision and adequate extra facilities must be provided. A sports pitch with main use for contractors will not be enough; a range of activities should be considered, over and above regular team sports
- Leiston businesses will compete with well-paid employment on the construction site - particularly affecting our retail, social care and hospitality industry. LTC would expect the applicant to adequately support these sectors through employment training wider than the skills needed on site, to back-fill roles when local businesses find it hard to recruit
- LTC expects the applicant to support efforts to ensure there is still a desire to visit Leiston as a destination. For example, our shops, museum, film theatre, leisure centre and Pro Corda Music School
- LTC expects the applicant to ensure our beach facilities are as desirable as possible for residents and visitors, providing clear indication at Sizewell Gap of beach closures or disruption - equally, indicating when it is open and accessible, both by electronic signage on the highway and updates online. The beach is well-used by local people for walking, exercising, swimming, enjoyment of the peace and quiet and appreciation of flora and fauna. With SPR developments towards Thorpeness and the Sizewell development to the north, the amount of beach will be significantly reduced and the disruption will inhibit enjoyment for many but must remain an option for those who still wish to visit for recreation, as well as those who will wish to follow the progress of the project at the Sizewell Visitors' Centre
- LTC understands that there will be a robust Code of Conduct for contractors regarding behaviour off-site, as evidenced at HPC, but due to a vastly increased population there will undoubtedly be pressure on the emergency services. We are seeking further assurance that this will be adequately addressed by the applicant.

Education and skills, health and emergency planning

- Effort by the applicant to support education and skills within Leiston is welcomed but there is still further evidence needed that Alde Valley Academy and Suffolk New College on the Coast will be supported financially to become primary establishments for the education and skills required for the project. Consideration also needs to be

given to an increase in school numbers given that some workers might choose to live in Leiston with their families

- LTC has concerns that provision of health care will be negatively impacted by the increase in population. At the time of submitting our written representation, Leiston had only one dental surgery which is now closed permanently, meaning Leiston residents need to travel outside Leiston for dental treatment
- LTC needs evidence that the SZB emergency plan would not be hindered during the construction of SZC, in the unlikely event of an emergency. The proximity of the population of Leiston to SZB and the challenging road network, is already a factor and there would be the added requirement to evacuate contractors

Associated development infrastructure

- Leiston is essentially a 'cul-de-sac' accessed by three junctions on the A12, all of which are already heavily impacted by Sizewell A & B and tourism. LTC seeks reassurance that associated development to alleviate pressure on these pinch points is completed before the start of construction. E.g. Park and ride, temporary rail route, link road and junction/road improvements
- The need to access the LEEIE before the temporary rail route and link road are completed is of concern. The applicant needs to ensure the town centre and residential roads are not adversely impacted in the early years
- We would like to respectfully remind the examining authority that the equivalent transport infrastructure for HPC is serviced by the M5, which cannot be compared with the rural A12
- Early disruption caused by construction of the link road, railhead, temporary rail route and all the associated road and junction improvements, is a cause for concern, even before construction begins on the main development

Monitoring/accountability

LTC is seeking to ensure there is clear, transparent and INDEPENDENT monitoring on the far-reaching effects on Leiston, throughout the build. LTC expects elected representation on the Development Site Forum and other bodies tasked to monitor these effects. We support the local authorities and EA in establishing robust standards to maintain good air and water quality, and acceptable noise and vibration levels – particularly on the rail route, which would pass within close proximity to new housing and Victorian buildings, especially in the early years. These need to be rigorously monitored and enforced. There must always be clear and transparent routes for people living in the area to raise any issues that arise during construction, and ways for recurring problems to be identified and addressed.

Visual Impact

LTC concurs fully with the views of Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Partnership, who will adequately state the case for the visual impact of SZC on our Heritage Coast.

Environment

LTC concurs with the agencies tasked with ensuring our environment is protected from any adverse effects on air quality and light pollution, as well as the effects on wildlife habitat and coastal processes (for example, the EA, ESC, SCC, RSPB and SWT).

To conclude

This project will have a far-reaching impact on our town, never before witnessed - not even throughout the build of SZB. The DCO identifies many of the adverse impacts and some of the potential benefits to the local economy and employment, as well as the potential for new sports facilities and town centre improvements. But quality of life for ALL our residents, whatever their age or ability, remains our priority. We are seeking to ensure Leiston remains a desirable place to live, work and visit. LTC believes the damaging effects of this project will need further, substantial mitigation to ensure the negative impacts do not outweigh the benefits.