

Leiston-cum-Sizevell Town Council (LTC) Written Representation

Issue Specific Hearing 4 – Socio-economics

Overview

Leiston, is without question, the location where the socio-economic impact of the SZC development will be felt most of all, with 80% of the workforce based within our parish. It is important to note that many Leiston residents still have the memory of the SZB build and it is undoubtedly the socio-economic effects that are front and centre of those memories. The Council understands that it has been many decades since the completion of SZB but the reputation of the town has begun to emerge from these effects in the last decade. Leiston has become a popular place to choose for a permanent home, as well as a target area for second homes, given that its location is so close to the coast and many other desirable places to visit, including RSPB Minsmere. Property prices have only recently begun to creep towards the national average following 'the SZB effect'.

We are led to believe that SZC will bring wealth and its associated benefits to our town but this was not the case following the SZB build and the community is yet to be convinced that it will be any different this time. We do understand that mitigation for many of these impacts will be addressed by the S106 agreement conditions but there is no detail within the draft document to reassure members of the council that they will be adequate. No mitigation efforts can compensate for damaged reputation.

We would therefore like to highlight the following points and ask members of the examination team to take particular note of the following comments.

1. Employment impacts

Leiston businesses will need to compete with well-paid employment on the construction site - particularly affecting our retail, social care, tourism and hospitality industry. Leiston would expect the applicant to adequately support these sectors through employment training wider than for the skills needed on site. High wages on the project will not necessarily lead to higher wages in a sector such as care.

2. Education and skills

The effort by the applicant to support education and skills within the Leiston catchment area 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 the area with their families.

3. Tourism

LTC supports the DMO following the results of their survey, which raises concerns about the impact on tourism. Mitigation funding must be available to the sector before construction begins and not be dependent on monitoring and reacting afterwards. It should continue post-construction. LTC strongly challenges the suggestion that tourism in the HPC area is 'more important' in Somerset and would like the inspectorate team to examine this claim at a further ISH. LTC will themselves be requesting the developer to provide evidence for this claim. LTC expects the applicant to support efforts to ensure there is still a desire to visit Leiston as a

destination throughout construction. E.g. our museum, theatre and leisure centre and Pro Corda Music School at Leiston Abbey (an EH monument). Likewise, LTC expects the applicant to make every effort to ensure our beach facilities are as desirable as possible for residents and visitors, providing clear indication at Sizewell Gap of any 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 and visitors for walking, exercising, swimming, enjoyment of the peace and quiet and appreciation of flora and fauna. With SPR windfarm developments towards Thorpeness and the SZC development to the north, the amount of beach available will be significantly reduced and the disruption will undoubtedly inhibit enjoyment, therefore consideration must be given to the displacement of these leisure activities elsewhere in the local vicinity.

4. Monitoring and mitigation

LTC requests an elected presence on all panels tasked to monitor the far-reaching socio-economic effects of the construction on our community. We cannot solely rely on representation by the local authorities. Leiston people must have a voice through their locally elected representatives.

Community Issues

1. Demographic Modelling, Housing and Accommodation, Influx of NHBWs:

At ISH4 (9/7/21) Leiston-cum-Sizewell Town Council representatives were alerted to increased contractor influx issues and revised numbers following the most recent modelling. There now appears to be 28,000 person months prior to Y1 and Y2, known as Y0, which equates to 1100 extra contractors in the early years. According to the applicant, this will apparently not affect the proposed socio-economic mitigation and will not expedite the construction of the campus. We also understand the caravan park will not be ready until the end of Y1. Studies by the developer suggest these extra workers can be absorbed within Leiston as they are similar to SZB outage numbers. LTC challenges this study and suggests it will lead to a race to provide HMOs, which were an issue during the SZB build, bringing down the standards in the housing sector and leading to Leiston becoming a 'no go' area for house buyers, which further led to a slump in house prices. We would also like to ask how contractor numbers will be absorbed within the town in the early years when an outage is taking place at SZB.

LTC shares the concerns of the local authorities regarding the modelling for the number of non-home-based workers residing in Leiston. We agree that this should be addressed through the deed of obligation, with a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach.

Members of LTC understand that there will be a robust Code of Conduct for construction workers regarding behaviour off-site, but due to an increased population there is likely to be extra undue pressure on our rural emergency services, which currently struggle to maintain standards and targets. We are seeking further assurance that this will be adequately addressed by the applicant.

LTC previously understood the campus to be 'primary mitigation', although at ISH4 the applicant stated that it was for 'facilitation of the project'. This stance is of concern to the council, who understood that good quality, comfortable accommodation would be a draw for contractors rather than cheap private accommodation, which is disappointing. LTC is appealing to the applicant to

ensure campus facilities are available in a timely fashion, as contractors will be loath to move once settled and might find HMOs even cheaper than campus accommodation. East Suffolk is a year-round destination for tourists and the likelihood of using tourist accommodation in the quiet months is low. The campus would also help to mitigate anti-social behaviour within Leiston, as contractors would largely be housed within the red line of the construction site where a few facilities will be available.

LTC requests that proposed town centre road improvements are completed prior to contractor influx in the early years. We believe this is imperative.

2. Emergency services, health and well-being negative effects

LTC believes that funding for health and wellbeing must be secured before problems emerge and should not be managed in a reactionary fashion. As yet, a satisfactory solution has clearly not been reached. We fear an increase in county lines, domestic and sexual abuse and criminal exploitation within a small, rural community. The number of bored contractors and the lack of night-time economy in Leiston could be perceived as a perfect opportunity for such activity. Again, we would point the inspectorate team to the past experience of SZB, while recognising that we have moved on almost 40 years and that many behaviours experienced then would not be acceptable now and would be dealt with accordingly.

Leiston and the surrounding market towns have a rural, on-call fire and rescue service. While we recognise there will be facilities on site, there is likely to be extra pressure on the community provision due to increased activity around the area. Our nearest police hubs are 52 and 42 minutes away (at HPC, Bridgwater is 11 minutes away). Our nearest hospital is almost an hour from Leiston and extra road traffic will make ambulance journeys even longer. It is therefore essential that Leiston has a continuing voice on the Community Safety Panel throughout construction and that emergency services (police, fire and rescue, ambulance) have swift and direct access to funding when the need arises. We are grateful that Leiston Town Council has had a presence on the Panel to date.

3. Sport and recreation facilities

Workforce access to sport and leisure amenities will put pressure on local provision and adequate extra facilities must be provided as mitigation. A sports pitch with main use for the Sizewell workers will not be enough. Sport is not the only recreational activity that Leiston residents engage in and should not be considered the only recreational activity for Sizewell contractors. LTC questions the apparent low take up of sports facilities at HPC and would like to challenge the applicant to explain how contractors spend their leisure time.

4. Monitoring and mitigation

Once again, LTC requests an elected presence on all panels tasked to monitor the far-reaching effects of the construction on our community. We cannot solely rely on representation by the local authorities. Leiston people must have a voice through their locally elected representatives.

Finally

We respectfully point out once again to the inspectorate team that Leiston is not Bridgwater but a rural community with a healthy mix of families and retirees who have moved here for its tranquillity and beauty. It also has above average employment. We would ask the team to remember this at every issue specific hearing, both socio-economic and otherwise. The constant comparison by the applicant between SZC and HPC is in our view irrelevant, due to the entirely different location.