

Sizewell C Proposals: Comments from Interested Parties following responses to the letters from the Secretary of State to the developer and others dated 18 and 31 March 2022

Leiston-cum-Sizewell Town Council (LTC) - Unique Reference 20026219

As the elected representatives for the residents within our community, we have taken note of the responses to the questions posed to the developer (SZC Co) and to the statutory consultees such as the Environment Agency and Natural England. Broadly speaking, most of the questions and the resulting responses, cover areas of the proposed development which are of concern for this Council.

While we appreciate the depth of detail in the responses from the developer, we also note there has been a request by the licensing agencies and others to be given the opportunity to study these responses. We therefore request that you allow time for this to take place and for the agencies to be able to judge whether they believe the questions have been satisfactorily addressed.

Below is a summary of elements that stood out within the responses as being particularly noteworthy for this Council.

The Proposed Desalination Plant

The outstanding issues in respect of the proposed desalination plant come as no surprise to this council and remain of huge concern. We note also, that the applicant has yet to apply for the necessary licences from the Environment Agency. The provision of adequate potable water has been a concern for Leiston since the proposals were first mooted, and EDF Energy has always waved them away as unfounded. As you are aware, the application for a desalination plant was added to the DCO after the examination process had already begun - which was some 10 years on from voicing our first concerns. Once operational, the desalination plant will cause light and sound disturbance for the residents living in the immediate vicinity (of which there are several), as well as the village of Eastbridge. To a lesser degree, it will also affect Leiston and beyond - and there is still a question mark over whether it will need to remain throughout the operational life of the power station. The responses from the licensing agencies give further cause for concern as there seems to have been little consultation with them since the need for the plant was identified. For this Council, added to the discharge concerns, there are the issues surrounding the delivery of potable water to the site by road in the years prior to the completion of the desalination plant. This will add further burden to the road infrastructure to the north and east of our town in the early years while access to the site is via the entrance to SZB. LTC would also ask that should the desalination plant be the source of potable water throughout the operational life of the power station, that consideration must be given at this early stage to contingency arrangements for when the plant is closed down for repair (should a fault occur) and for routine maintenance. We will entrust the officers within the licensing authorities to judge whether the issues raised by this Council have been satisfactorily addressed by the developer.

Sea Defences

LTC will follow the ongoing discussion around the hard sea defences and hope a satisfactory conclusion is reached. Clearly the effect on the Minsmere to Walberswick protected site is of great concern should coastal processes be altered by the offshore works and this does not seem to have

been adequately addressed by the developer. We note there has still been no design submitted to the agencies for the hard sea defence, which even with our limited knowledge seems to be unsatisfactory.

The coastline on the edge of our parish and beyond with its flora and fauna, is precious to this community and must be treated with the respect it deserves.

Ecological Impact and Endangered Species

'Toolbox Talk': The exercise of briefing contractors on how to treat any endangered species they might come across is frankly pointless when considering the number and scale of the plant vehicles that will be used to clear the site. This only scratches the surface of the concerns we have for the devastation of the habitat on the development site and wider construction site.

We note with dismay the concerns raised by the RSPB in respect of the likely shingle habitat changes, which would result in habitat destruction for many species of flora and fauna - not least for the little tern population. Other species singled out as a concern include the marsh harrier population, a relatively recent success story for RSPB Minsmere.

Light Pollution

Local residents have highlighted the futile attempt to keep light levels low at Hinkley Point in Somerset. Villages and hamlets where previously torches were required after dark, are now bathed in light. There are a number of isolated dwellings very close to the SZC construction site and the levels of light pollution will undoubtedly make their situation untenable. Surely, no endangered animal species relying on (amongst other things) light conditions to survive, could exist under the devastation imposed by the construction of a nuclear power station of this scale.

Link Road

The link road does not fall within our parish but we can observe the effect its construction will have on the environment. Despite mitigation efforts, the destruction of the habitat to clear the land required for the road is deeply regrettable. Attempts to divert the bat population along the Norwich Northern Distributor Road have been fruitless and recent reports have shown that rare bat populations close to the new road have disappeared, never to return. Planting to mitigate the loss of trees and habitat will not come to fruition for many years and not within the lifetime of many residents.

In Conclusion

The responses from Natural England, the Environment Agency and other bodies indicate a large number of unresolved issues and areas of uncertainty in relation to the proposed desalination plant, the link road and the negative environmental impact. This is not at all reassuring for a rural community such as Leiston which values the AONB for its tranquillity, leisure amenity, richness of wildlife and its ever-increasing attraction as a tourist destination for those seeking the unspoilt landscape in this corner of the Suffolk coast. LTC is working hard towards creating wildlife corridors through our urban spaces to link with the AONB - this will no longer be achievable should SZC gain consent.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the responses to the questions posed by the Secretary of State. It has given us another opportunity to highlight some of the many concerns still outstanding for Leiston-cum-Sizewell Town Council.