



The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Change Application Consultation Document

October 2025

nationalgrid

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1. Introduction

1.1 Preamble

- 1.1.1 Welcome to this update from National Grid on Sea Link, our plan to reinforce the electricity transmission network between Suffolk and Kent.
- 1.1.2 Since submission of the development consent order application in March 2025 we have completed further surveys and stakeholder engagement and identified opportunities to reduce the environmental impact from the scheme and address comments from consultees.
- 1.1.3 As a result of this work, we are proposing to make small changes to the application and we want to share these with you before we submit our change request in November 2025. The changes we are proposing do not substantially alter the project as a whole.
- 1.1.4 If you have comments related to the proposed changes, you can find out how to submit this feedback at the end of this document.

2. About the Project

2.1 About Sea Link

- 2.1.1 National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) is proposing to reinforce the transmission network between Suffolk and Kent via a new, primarily offshore, high voltage direct current (HVDC) link. Sea Link has been designed to increase the capacity of the electricity transmission network, so it can carry more low carbon and renewable energy from where it is generated, to homes and businesses across the country. To do this, we would need to install a 2 gigawatt (GW) HVDC cable between Suffolk and Kent, approximately 138 kilometres (km) long and predominantly offshore. To bring the power from the subsea cables into and out of the electricity network in both Suffolk and Kent, we would need to build new onshore infrastructure including converter stations, substations and new underground and overhead electricity lines. Power will be able to flow along the Sea Link cables in either direction, depending on where renewable energy is being generated at that time and where in the country power is needed.

2.2 About National Grid

- 2.2.1 National Grid sits at the heart of Britain's energy system, connecting millions of people and businesses to the energy they use every day. Within the National Grid Group, there are legally separate entities, each with their individual roles and statutory responsibilities. Each of the different entities within the National Grid Group is working to build a cleaner, fairer and more affordable energy system that serves everybody – powering the future of our homes, transport and industry. NGET owns, builds and maintains the network in England and Wales, and is the part of the National Grid Group that is developing plans for Sea Link. Read more about who we are and the work we do at nationalgrid.com.

3. The need for Sea Link

- 3.1.1 Sea Link is needed because the existing electricity transmission network does not have enough capacity to securely transport all the new energy we expect to connect to the network over the next ten years and beyond. The way we generate electricity in the UK is changing rapidly, and we are transitioning to more secure, cheaper, and cleaner forms of energy such as new offshore windfarms. This is a result of the UK Government's commitment to net zero (achieving a balance between the greenhouse gases put into the atmosphere and those taken out) by 2050. The energy industry is key to this transition - from developing renewable energy generation, to upgrading the existing electricity transmission network, enabling other sectors to decarbonise, and enabling communities across the country to benefit from clean energy. As part of this, the electricity transmission network is undergoing its largest overhaul in generations. We need more than five times the amount of transmission infrastructure built in the last 30 years in the UK to be delivered in the next seven years. National Grid has a key part to play in this work, which is known as The Great Grid Upgrade. Sea Link is one of the projects being delivered to make sure the network is ready for the anticipated increase in supply and demand of electricity.

4. Our proposed changes

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 There are 5 proposed changes to the application which we are considering submitting to the Examining Authority. A description of what we are proposing to change, why it is needed and how it will affect communities and the environment are set out below.
- 4.1.2 Information on how it affects the land rights we are seeking is provided in a separate set of Land Rights Plans for Consultation, available on our website. These plans show the changes that would be made to the land rights we are seeking as part of the development consent order should the changes proceed.
- 4.1.3 The plates included in this document are also provided at a larger size in the Change Application Consultation Figures document, available on our website.

4.2 Change 1 - Change to access at the Hoverport, Kent

What is changing?

- 4.2.1 To ensure we minimise the impact on the saltmarsh habitat when carrying out works, we are proposing to extend the width of potential access from the hoverport to the intertidal area within our Order limits (the land we would need to build, operate and maintain Sea Link). This will mean there will be no significant impact on saltmarsh from driving vehicles on or close to the saltmarsh habitat when accessing the intertidal area during construction, operation and maintenance.
- 4.2.2 The proposed new boundary of our project that includes this change is shown below.



Plate 4.1 Proposed new project boundary for change 1

Why is this needed?

- 4.2.3 Our original application proposes that we use one of the existing hoverport ramps to access and leave the intertidal area. Recent checks (August 2025) showed the saltmarsh has expanded further into the intertidal area than previously recorded, and now comes close to the original access ramp.
- 4.2.4 Saltmarsh is important for wildlife and is protected by environmental rules. Saltmarsh is a dynamic coastal habitat and the extent of the habitat can change as a result of natural coastal events. The existing saltmarsh may not be present in its current location during construction, operation and maintenance of the hoverport.
- 4.2.5 To minimise impacts on the saltmarsh, the access route from the hoverport to the intertidal mudflats needs to be extended. This will allow greater flexibility to access and exit the intertidal area safely while having no significant environmental impacts on the saltmarsh.
- 4.2.6 Our project team is committed to having no significant impact on the saltmarsh by using special construction techniques and by adjusting the cable route.

Will the change affect the environment?

- 4.2.7 The new access route will allow us to minimise and avoid where possible driving vehicles on or close to the sensitive saltmarsh habitat when accessing the intertidal area. The area where the access route will be widened is predominantly existing

concrete and the change provides more flexibility over the route. It does not indicate use of a greater area.

- 4.2.8 There won't be any new or different significant environmental effects introduced from the proposed change as it provides enough flexibility for the access route to have no significant impact on the sensitive saltmarsh habitat.
- 4.2.9 It is important to note, that not all of the new area will be used for access purposes so impacts on recreational receptors using this area will be minimised. The proposed change does not bring the works significantly closer to any other environmental receptors, therefore it does not result in any new or different significant environmental effects.
- 4.2.10 The proposed change is in line with national and local planning policies to protect valuable habitats like saltmarsh, which is important for its ecological value but also how it contributes to local landscape character.
- 4.2.11 The designated sites present within the vicinity of the proposed change are shown below.



Plate 4.2 Designated sites at the location of change 1

4.3 Change 2: Change to Works Plans at Friston (Kiln Lane) substation, Suffolk

What is changing?

- 4.3.1 We plan to adjust the area for the new substation at Friston (Kiln Lane) so that it matches the area already approved for two Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) wind farm projects, East Anglia ONE (North) and East Anglia TWO. This helps keep the plans clear and consistent for everyone.
- 4.3.2 The proposed change is shown below.



Plate 4.3 Location of change 2

Why is this change needed?

- 4.3.3 The substation where the Sea Link project will connect already has approval under SPR's wind farm projects, but we also included building it ourselves as a 'fallback'.
- 4.3.4 SPR's approved area for the substation is different (larger) than ours, since they originally considered different design options for the substation. The updated Works Plan for change 2 is shown in Plate 5.4.

- ## Will the change affect the environment?

- [illegible]

Plate 4.5 Designated sites at the location of change 2

4.4 Change 3: The Henge, Suffolk

What is changing?

- 4.4.1 We are proposing to adjust the boundaries of the project so that a newly discovered heritage asset (a Neolithic Henge) is avoided by the project and protected. This means moving the planned underground cable route so it goes around the Neolithic Henge, with a 30-metre buffer zone to avoid the Neolithic Henge.
- 4.4.2 The proposed new boundary of our project that includes this change is shown below.



Plate 4.6 Proposed new project boundary for change 3

Why is this change needed?

- 4.4.3 The henge was found during archaeological checks in July 2025, after our initial plans were submitted.
- 4.4.4 Instead of building over the henge, we propose to move the cable route to avoid it.
- 4.4.5 We looked at other ways (like drilling underneath the henge), but these could still risk damaging the henge, so were rejected.
- 4.4.6 Extra land will be included in our Order limits so we have flexibility in where to route the cable to either the north or the south of the henge, depending on the outcome of future detailed design. We would only exercise Compulsory Acquisition powers over the land required for the cable route, and not the full extent of the additional land.

Will this change affect the environment?

- 4.4.7 There is considered to be sufficient flexibility in the design to avoid introducing any new or materially different significant effects from an ecological or arboricultural perspective. Whilst the proposed change could bring the works closer to certain residential receptors depending on the final cable route, with the implementation of standard best practice mitigation measures, this is not anticipated to change the findings of the various environmental assessments.
- 4.4.8 Based on an initial appraisal, it is considered unlikely that any new or different significant environmental effects would result from the proposed change for any topic other than heritage. For heritage, the proposed change would avoid a potential significant adverse effect on the Neolithic Henge. Further detail will be provided in the Change Application: Addendum to Volume 6 Environmental Statement.
- 4.4.9 The designated sites present within the vicinity of the proposed change are shown below.

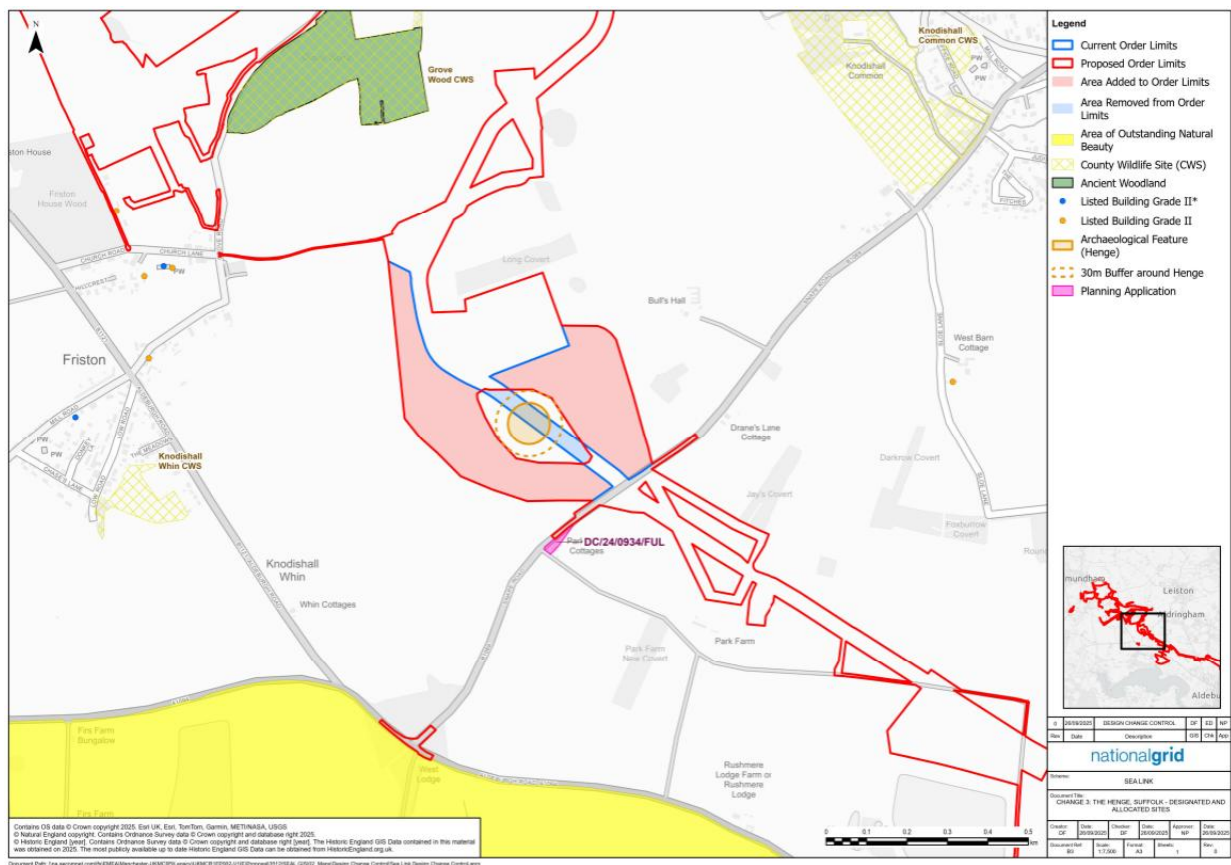


Plate 4.7 Designated sites at the location of change 3

- 4.4.10 The new route goes through farmland, just like the current proposal in the application, and won't affect valuable habitats or trees.
- 4.4.11 After construction, the land will be restored and can still be used for farming.
- 4.4.12 Heritage experts from Historic England and Suffolk County Council support avoiding the henge. Local councils also agree this is the best solution.
- 4.4.13 More archaeological surveys will be done in 2025 to check the new route.

4.4.14 We'll only use the land needed for the final cable path.

4.4.15 This change means we're following national and local planning policies to protect important heritage sites.

4.5 Change 4 – Benhall Railway Bridge, Suffolk

What is changing?

- 4.5.1 We propose adding additional land around Benhall Railway Bridge (on the B1121) into our Order limits. This includes land along the road, the bridge itself, nearby areas east of the bridge, and a small section along the railway. This change would provide additional flexibility when deciding how to transport large equipment to the new converter station.
- 4.5.2 The proposed new boundary of our project that includes this change is shown below.



Plate 4.8 Proposed new project boundary for change 4

Why is this change needed?

- 4.5.3 The bridge has a weight limit (46 tonnes), which is fine for most construction vehicles, but would mean that the bridge may need strengthening to take some of the very heavy loads (like transformers and cranes) needed for the project.
- 4.5.4 Including the additional land would allow us to consider a wider range of possible ways of strengthening the bridge, when we come to reviewing this in detail during the construction phase. These could include ways that would need equipment temporarily storing next to the road. Including the road itself makes it clearer how we would organise and agree the roadworks with the highways authority.

- 4.5.5 Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council asked us to include this area in the Order limits for the reasons above and to make it clear how works would be consented and consulted upon with the local highway authority.
- 4.5.6 Three main options for strengthening the bridge are being considered:
- Mini-bridge:
 - This would be a temporary bridge structure, installed as needed for heavy loads and then removed when not required.
 - It is easier if we have nearby land for storage and staging of this mini-bridge.
 - This was our original option.
 - Fix the bridge:
 - The current condition of the bridge would be investigated and possibly repaired to handle heavier loads.
 - This would be a permanent solution, benefiting future projects and local traffic.
 - This option would require land to the east and along the railway to implement.
 - Semi-permanent overbridge:
 - This would be a longer-lasting temporary bridge for the whole construction period.
 - This would require land to the east of the bridge for construction of the bridge, storage of materials and equipment to manoeuvre the bridge into place.
- 4.5.7 Adding extra land provides certainty that a solution can be delivered that allows large vehicles to cross safely. This is also necessary because in advance of an intrusive survey at the bridge, it is possible that the condition of the bridge may be better or worse than indicated in the initial survey by Suffolk County Council. The flexibility would provide assurance over potential solutions and provide the flexibility to deliver the best option for the project, local people and the environment.

Will the change affect the environment?

- 4.5.8 All work will be temporary, mainly using farmland and existing roads.
- 4.5.9 No trees will be removed, but some stretches of hedgerow may need to be removed for access. These stretches of hedgerow would likely be affected for construction of an access required to deliver housing proposed on the site.
- 4.5.10 No significant archaeological or long-term environmental effects are expected. It is anticipated that significant adverse effects from construction noise would be avoided with suitable mitigation in the form of best practicable means (BPM). The works would be adjacent to a road and a railway line, contributing to the noise baseline on site. Should works be required to repair the bridge then these works will be required at some point in the future with or without Sea Link, with the project providing an opportunity for works to be carried out earlier than they may be if funding is required from the local highway authority.
- 4.5.11 Depending on the option taken forward for this proposed change, a new receptor (Public Right of Way E-137/026/0) may need to be temporarily closed and diverted

during construction of the project. It is anticipated that this temporary closure and diversion will not have a significant environmental effect, with the Outline Public Right of Way Management Plan securing the required mitigation.

- 4.5.12 It is anticipated that no new significant environmental effects will arise from traffic and transport from this proposed change as suitable management and mitigation will be put in place. For any of the options taken forward, no significant increase in construction vehicle trips on the highway network and they are expected to be similar to the construction vehicle trip numbers already assessed within the Environmental Statement and, therefore, no significant effects are expected. This will be considered in the Change Application: Addendum to Volume 6 Environmental Statement that will support the change application.
- 4.5.13 There are proposals for new housing on the land east of the B1121. We are working with the council and landowners to make sure our work doesn't significantly slow down delivery of future housing. Our construction works to Benhall Railway Bridge could help future development by developing an access to the site and strengthening the bridge that vehicles would need to use to access the site from the A12.
- 4.5.14 Our temporary use of the land shouldn't affect long term housing plans.
- 4.5.15 The designated sites present within the vicinity of the proposed change are shown below.

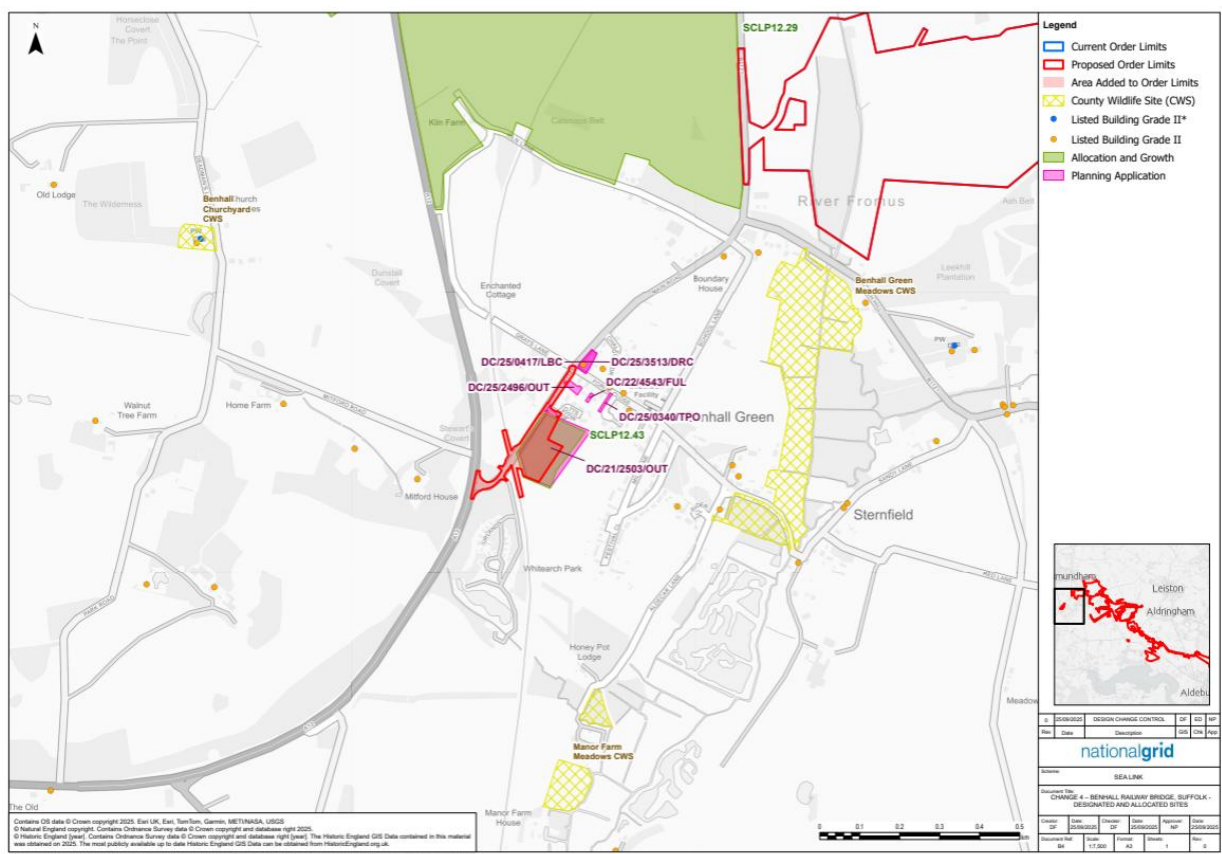


Plate 4.9 Designated sites at the location of change 4

- 4.5.16 Local councils requested the change for planning reasons.

4.5.17 We are speaking with Network Rail about the works and the interface with the railway under Benhall Railway Bridge.

4.6 Change 5 - Increase in area for maintenance of a new hedge to south of B1119, Suffolk

What is changing?

- 4.6.1 We want to widen the strip of land south of the B1119 (near Fristonmoor Lane in Suffolk) to give more space to plant the proposed new hedge and provide space to maintain the new hedge and the ditch. We also want to change the type of access rights to this strip of land to allow long term maintenance of the drain from the field.
- 4.6.2 The new hedge is an essential mitigation measure to reduce effects on the landscape and visual amenity and integrate the project into the existing landscape by screening views of the converter station from the north/north east and help to reinstate historic hedgerow planting. It will also help wildlife move between woodland and hedgerows/trees. The proposed new boundary of our project that includes this change is shown below.

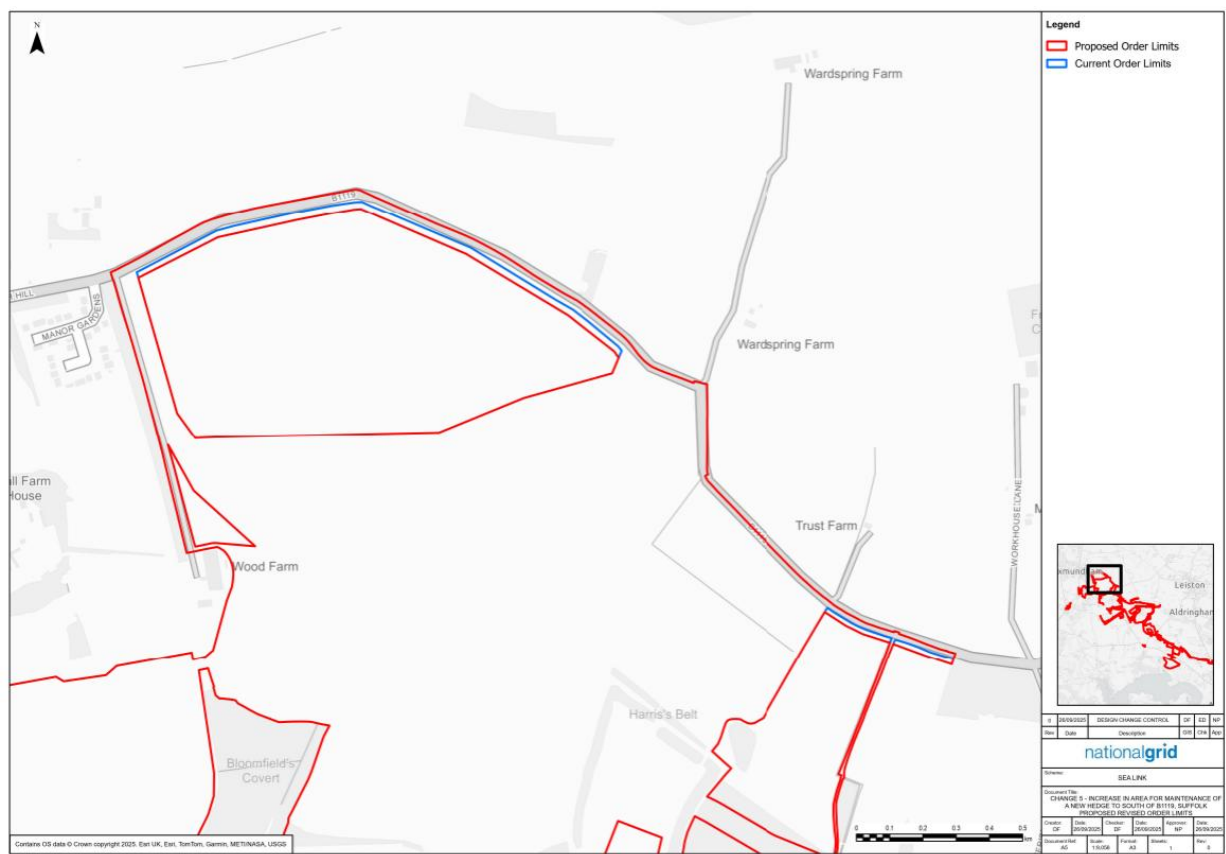


Plate 4.10 Proposed new project boundary for change 5

Why is this needed?

- 4.6.3 The slightly wider strip of land would provide more space to maintain the existing ditch and the proposed hedgerow itself.

Will the change affect the environment?

- 4.6.4 The change is considered to be minor and is unlikely to result in new or different significant environmental effects. The proposed change still includes the proposed hedgerow along the B1119, therefore retaining essential landscape mitigation for the project and making sure there is enough space to maintain this mitigation into the future. No new environmental receptors are likely to be adversely impacted as a result of the minor nature of this change. Further detail will be reported within the Change Application: Addendum to Volume 6 Environmental Statement.
- 4.6.5 The designated sites present within the vicinity of the proposed change are shown below.

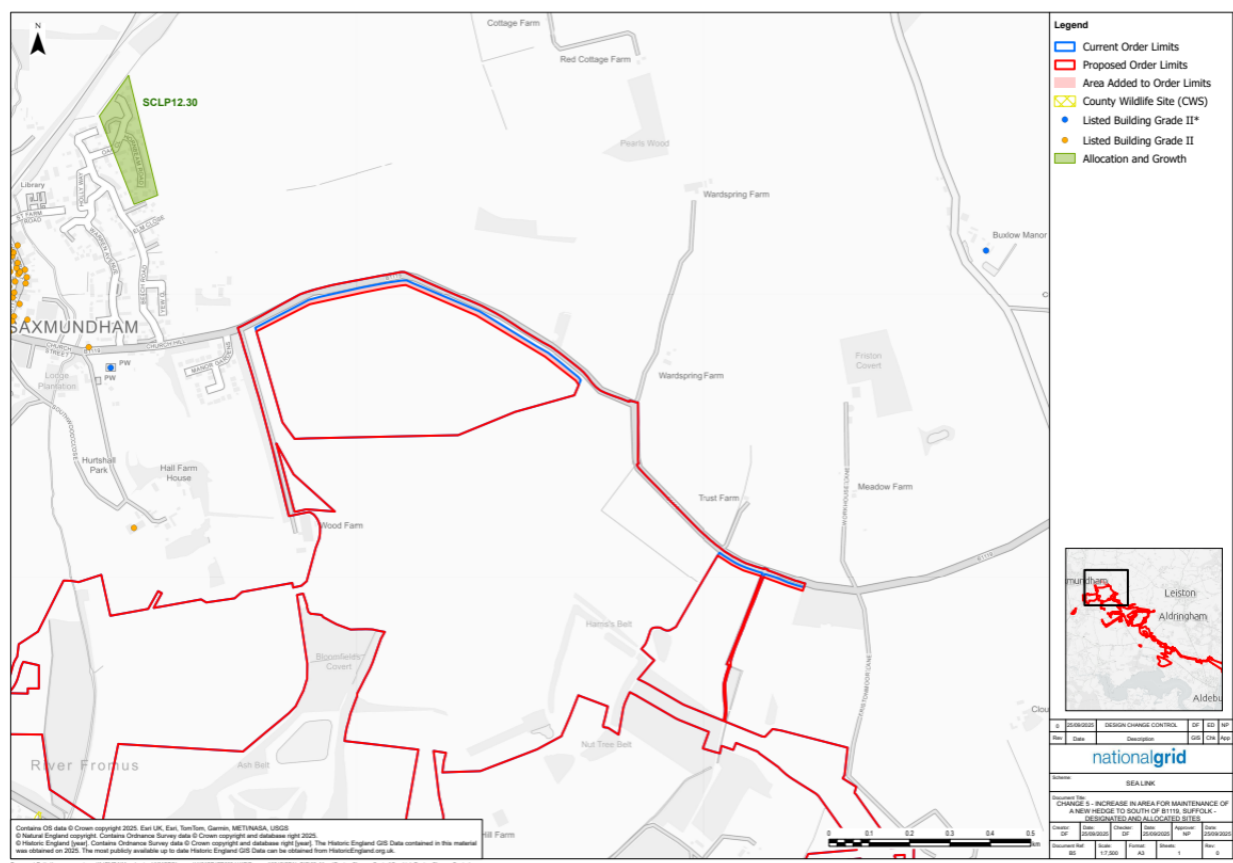


Plate 4.11 Designated sites at the location of change 5

5. Notification of change

- 5.1.1 We have submitted a notification of change letter to the Examining Authority, informing them that we intend to apply for a change to the application.
- 5.1.2 We are completing targeted consultation including this Consultation Document, informing the public of the proposed changes.
- 5.1.3 We are preparing a Change Application: Addendum to Volume 6 Environmental Statement to support the change application. Our application documents will also be updated to be applicable to the changes.
- 5.1.4 The change application will be submitted to PINS in November 2025.

6. Feedback

- 6.1.1 All feedback on our proposed changes to the Sea Link development consent order application is welcomed. If you would like to share feedback on the proposed changes you can do so in the following ways:
- Email us: contact@sealink.nationalgrid.com
 - Write to us: FREEPOST Sea Link
- 6.1.2 When sharing your comments, it would be helpful if you could include in your email or letter which change they relate to:
- Change 1 Change to access at the Hoverport, Kent
 - Change 2 Change to Works Plans at Friston (Kiln Lane) substation, Suffolk
 - Change 3 The Henge, Suffolk
 - Change 4 Benhall Railway Bridge, Suffolk
 - Change 5 Increase in area for maintenance of a new hedge to south of B1119, Suffolk
- 6.1.3 Should you choose to give further feedback, please do not include comments that you may have given previously about other aspects of our proposals or the principle of the project as a whole. These comments have already been considered as part of the Consultation Report included in our development consent order application, which you can find on the Planning Inspectorate's website at <https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN020026> or will be addressed as part of our response to the relevant representations which have been previously received.
- 6.1.4 Only comments or feedback related to the changes will be considered as part of this consultation.
- 6.1.5 Please submit any comments by 23:59 on Friday 7 November 2025.
- 6.1.6 If you have questions about our proposed changes or require information in an alternative format, you can contact the team in the following ways:
- email us: contact@sealink.nationalgrid.com
 - call us: Our information line (0808 134 9569) is available Monday to Friday between 9am-5:30pm
 - write to us: FREEPOST Sea Link
- 6.1.7 We will continue to carefully consider any feedback we receive in relation to the proposed changes, alongside the findings of ongoing environmental and engineering assessment work and surveys, as we prepare our change application.
- 6.1.8 You can read more about the development consent process on the Planning Inspectorate's website at infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk.

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