



Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Norwich to Tilbury
Hearing:	Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) - Session 1 - Part 2
Date:	10 February 2026

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The video recording published on the Planning Inspectorate project page is the primary record of the hearing.

00:00:05:04 - 00:00:28:09

Okay. Thank you very much. The time is now 1725, and we'll resume the meeting and restart the live stream. Um, so our first group of five, uh, for this section are Richard Davis, Clive Drury, Cindy Eaves, Caroline Holmwood, and David was. If you would like to come up to the table, please. Thank you.

00:00:41:03 - 00:00:52:09

Thank you. So our first speaker is Richard Davis. I believe Miss Elliott will be speaking for you. Okay. Thank you very much. And thank you for attending. And a three minute starts now. Thank you. Thank you.

00:00:52:23 - 00:01:22:26

Um, my husband, Richard Davies. So I'm speaking on his behalf. The proposed pile on an HB overhead line passes right next to our home and around 20m from our summer house and garden seating area. The high voltage lines emit electromagnetic fields. Richard expressed his feelings. It's generally in single words. The first word was alarmed and then annoyed. And then electricity. Underground question mark.

00:01:23:00 - 00:01:25:23

Why not ignored

00:01:27:11 - 00:01:58:08

East Anglia? Question mark and pointing to the map of projects all over East Anglia, he's concerned of the concentration and that East Anglia is overburdened with energy projects and then future. Our future where? I don't think you'll be surprised to hear that this, together with the concerns outlined in my own representation, have been deeply worrying. Even more uncertainty about over our already fragile future.

00:01:58:27 - 00:02:27:05

National Grid boast in their newsletters about community benefits. They ignore the devastating impact on the individuals and businesses directly in the path of this scheme and their losses, both financial and in quality of life. We did not think for one minute that we would be fighting for the right to peacefully enjoy our own home against such a badly conceived plan and such unnecessary destruction.

00:02:28:23 - 00:02:40:17

Thank you very much for your contribution. Okay. Our next speaker is, um, Clive Drury. Mr. Drury, you have three minutes. Hello. I'd just like to give a personal.

00:02:40:19 - 00:03:10:28

Account of my dealing. Or lack of with National Grid. I own a small piece of land accessed by a quintessential five barred gate, surrounded by ancient hedgerows and mature trees, where I've planted an orchard and Natalie and various other things. And where being a beekeeper like keep my bees. The Norwich to Tilbury route goes diagonally across my land from northeast to southwest, then travels further west as it leaves my field to circumvent the local town.

00:03:12:15 - 00:03:48:05

Excuse me. The land immediately to the west is a vast expanse of monoculture with no hedges, no small gates, and therefore perfect for easily accessed by large machinery. I had a meeting with two agents from Fisher German, which who represent National Grid, to ask whether it was possible to move the route to the neighbouring field, as this seemed both more practical and less environmentally damaging. The agents seemed to agree that this was a possibility and told me to write, stating my proposals to them and to National Grid.

00:03:48:17 - 00:04:25:08

Before doing so, I can't contact them initially to confirm the relevant pylon numbers. I had no reply. About a week later I contacted them again and again had no reply. I managed to find the pylon numbers myself and wrote to both Fischer German and National Grid as advised with my proposals. Neither of them replied or even acknowledged receipt of my email. Eventually Fischer German supplied some pylon numbers, but they were somewhere down in the deepest Suffolk and were no relevance to me.

00:04:26:06 - 00:05:00:27

After this I felt I needed some proper help, so I contacted a land agent who seemed interested at first, but later said he couldn't represent me as he had a conflict of interest. I assumed because he was representing a more significant landowner who had already had the pile en route changed to go over my field. So I approached a second land agent who gave his opinion that there was no chance, or next to no chance of getting the route changed. It seems clear to me that from my experiences, National grid are not interested in having dialogue.

00:05:01:06 - 00:05:12:11

Well, at least with a small independent owner like myself, and that maybe they're not interested in finding the best route, but just the route of least resistance from major interests.

00:05:14:00 - 00:05:45:17

Much has been written about the effects of electromagnetic magnetic fields on human health, so I will no longer feel comfortable bringing my family or anybody else to the field. Some studies have suggested that EMF from high voltage power lines disrupts the ability of honeybees to function properly, so I'll most probably lose my hives as well. This could also have a negative impact on biodiversity in the local area. As it stands now, I feel that the small piece of land that I bought as a long term project, because.

00:05:45:19 - 00:05:47:20

It asks you to bring it to a close to Mr. Drury.

00:05:47:22 - 00:06:05:18

Okay. It seems that it was a long term project to share with my granddaughters, and as an escape from the madness has now been rendered worthless. This seems especially frustrating when there is a viable offshore option, which would have a less impact on both the environment and people's lives. Thank you.

00:06:06:00 - 00:06:07:02

Thank you very much.

00:06:09:09 - 00:06:12:06

Our next speaker. I'm not sure if she's here. Cindy Eaves.

00:06:15:06 - 00:06:24:05

Okay. Thank you. So our next speaker, then, please, is Caroline Homewood. Thank you. You have three minutes. Thank you.

00:06:24:21 - 00:07:01:27

I strongly object to the pylons, particularly around Colchester, Britain's oldest city, and the tbo 47 to tbo 52 section affecting the villages of Ford Street, Oldham and Fordham. National grid is removing pylons under its visual impact provisions. Why waste money erecting pylons only to remove them? Get it right first time this scheme fails to meet the statutory duties placed upon National grid. The route through our historic villages maximizes harm. 50m still lattice pylons across ridgelines directly behind homes, breaks skylines and encircles us with industrial infrastructure.

00:07:01:29 - 00:07:35:27

This is not a minor visual impact. It permanently transforms a high amenity rural landscape, contrary to National Planning Policy Framework requirement to protect and enhance valued landscapes. It causes serious heritage harm. Fordham's grade one listed building. Oldham's grade two star, grade two Star Church and Ford Street Conservation Area, with around 20 listed buildings, rely on open countryside settings. Pylons on elevated ground will dominate views and undermine centuries of historic character.

00:07:36:09 - 00:08:10:22

Even more concerning is Pylon Turbo four seven, situated on Roman archaeological remains. This is not the precautionary approach required in the national policy. The Cone Valley is a place of regional conservation significance, closely linked to the nearby Dedham Vale National Landscape. Ecology and public amenity will suffer. Woodland trust land at the Fordham Hall estate has regional conservation value and will be fragmented by construction, corridors and tree loss. The Essex Way long distance path runs through this landscape.

00:08:10:27 - 00:08:44:04

Walkers, riders and cyclists come here because of its openness and tranquillity. Overhead lines introduce collision risks for birds along the river cone and disrupt long established wildlife corridors. The consultation process is flawed. Communities were presented with one overhead line option and asked to choose between pylon designs. No alternatives such as HVDC undergrounding, rerouting along lower ground, offshore integration or reinforcement of existing corridors were transparently assessed.

00:08:44:06 - 00:09:19:03

Despite national policy requiring this where visual impact is significant, please do three things. Reject the overhead alignment around Colchester and through the villages of Ford Street. Alderman. Fordham. Require a full and transparent assessment of alternatives, including HVDC cabling and an alternative route that avoids our historic villages and sensitive landscapes and ensure National Grid

properly fulfils its duties under the Electricity Act. The Holford rules and national policy to minimise harm to landscape, heritage and communities.

00:09:19:06 - 00:09:31:15

This is not just a local objection, it is a plea for a better solution, one that delivers energy infrastructure without sacrificing irreplaceable countryside and heritage. Thank you.

00:09:31:18 - 00:09:38:18

Thank you very much. And our final speaker in this small section is David West, please.

00:09:39:15 - 00:10:11:22

I'm a resident of Ford Street. I object to the pylon proposal, specifically the overhead line alignment between pylons TB 047 and TB 052 affecting Ford Street. Alderman Fordham I recognise the national need for new transmission infrastructure to help deliver net zero. However, national policy is clear that infrastructure must be delivered in a manner that minimises harm to landscape, heritage, ecology and communities. In my submission, the current proposal fails to comply with those requirements. Firstly, the proposal conflicts with established routing principles and national planning policy.

00:10:11:24 - 00:10:50:07

The Holford rules require overhead lines to avoid areas of highest amenity value and to follow natural landform while avoiding skylines. It has been pointed out in previous submissions, but being ignored that the proposed alignment places 50 metre pylons along elevated ridge lines behind historic settlements, creating extensive skyline intrusion across the cone valley. This approach is inconsistent with the National Planning Policy Framework requirement to protect valued landscapes. Secondly, there is significant heritage harm. The current route will adversely affect the setting of designated assets, including Fordham's Grade one listed church, Oldham's Grade two star listed church, and the Ford Street Conservation Area.

00:10:50:10 - 00:11:24:06

National Policy and Historic England guidance requires decision makers to seek the least harmful means of accommodating infrastructure where heritage assets are affected. Thirdly, the proposal raises serious concerns under schedule nine of the Electricity Act 1989, which places a statutory duty on the applicant to preserve natural beauty, conserve flora and fauna and protect sites of architectural and archaeological interest. Woodland trust land within the Freedom Hall Estate, described as having regional conservation significance, would be fragmented by access corridors and vegetation removal.

00:11:24:09 - 00:12:01:00

Pylon lines will introduce collision risks for swans, geese and herons, which can be spotted along the river cone, which in this area sits in a floodplain. The site for pylon TB 050 has frequently been underwater since early January. Fourthly, consultation and option appraisal has been and has been inadequate as residents were presented with one solution rather than a genuine comparison of alternatives. National Policy Statement N5 states that where significant visual impacts are likely. Applicants should demonstrate proper consideration of undergrounding subsea solutions and or reinforcement of existing infrastructure.

00:12:01:02 - 00:12:35:03

The absence of transparent whole life costing comparisons and a true environmental impact analysis undermines confidence in the environmental statement. In addition, the construction logistics associated with the route have not been convincingly shown to be feasible on our local rural roads, particularly around the A123 Bridge and Mill Road, where increased heavy vehicle traffic should raise safety and environmental concerns. I therefore request that the examining authority gives substantive weight to policy conflict and cumulative harm. In sections TVO 47 to TVO 52 are not grant consent.

00:12:35:05 - 00:12:49:04

I ask the applicant undertakes a full reassessment of alternatives, including undergrounding, rerouting along lower contours and reinforcement of existing corridors in accordance with planning policy, statutory duty and the least harm approach required by law. Thank you.

00:12:50:00 - 00:12:52:28

Thank you very much. Thank you all for your contributions.

00:13:36:21 - 00:13:46:01

Okay, our next five speakers are Tamsin Fairley sorry for speakers Tamsin Fairley, Graham Lucas, Jane Lushington, and John Stacey.

00:14:01:27 - 00:14:11:23

Okay. Thank you. Um, so our first speaker in this section is, uh, Tamsin Fairley. Um, if you'd like to start when you're ready and you have three minutes. Thank you.

00:14:12:00 - 00:14:51:17

Tamsin Fairley of Savills instructed, on behalf of T Fairley and Sons Limited, we have set out in more detail the affected areas as part of our relevant representation. But for context, the project proposes the acquisition of T Fairley and Sunderland to provide the principal access route to the econ and the acquisition of drainage routes for the ECN site. We have not yet received proposals for a voluntary agreement, nor have we received sufficient detail to fully understand the potential impact on the business and my client's family home of the project. My clients have therefore been left with no choice but to engage with the examination process and object to the project at their own additional cost, a wholly unreasonable position for this stage of the process.

00:14:52:05 - 00:15:43:07

We understand in part that this is a result of the change request, which has been submitted in Little Bromley. However, we have raised the same concerns over an extended period and in all of our consultation submissions prior to the DCO being submitted. This change request also does not affect the drainage rights being requested, nor the Ardley road widening proposals. We have already set out in writing a number of our concerns in relation to some of the detail of the proposals, which we suggest are most appropriately discussed as subsequent issues specific hearings. We would, however, today like to highlight that there is a significant uncertainty around the use of the permanent haul road and part of the proposed widened Ardley Road for not only future ale access as it was initially proposed, but also for construction traffic, until such time that five estuaries and or north halls construct their temporary hall road across adjacent farmland, which is also farmed and partly owned by Tiffany and Sons.

00:15:44:01 - 00:16:26:11

Our preference is that all construction traffic should use the same temporary Hall road, which National Grid are seeking a right to use but do not wish to construct. In the event that the permanent hall road is used for construction traffic, we are concerned about the impact of construction vehicles passing immediately to the front of Norman's Farmhouse. We are particularly concerned about the impact on the structure and fabric of the building, the safety of the access into and out of the house, the farmyard and field accesses which will be altered as a result of five estuaries. Screening proposals. At present, the detail available to us indicates that my client will be responsible for the ditch infrastructure, carrying water away from all three sites without any maintenance contribution obligations on the project or the future operators of the sites.

00:16:26:13 - 00:17:04:03

This is an unacceptable position, given the value of the project's infrastructure in an area that is known to have a high water table, and has seen localized flooding in recent years. Moving to the siting of the ECN substation, we object to its placement on grade one best and most versatile land. The positioning of the ECN and the connections that National Grid have prematurely offered to five estuaries and North Falls result in the permanent loss of approximately 100 acres of tea fairly and sons land. We request that the Planning Inspectorate carry out an accompanied site visit at the eastern location, with sufficient detail to hand of the five estuaries and North Force substation sites, to appreciate the impact of all three on Norman's farm.

00:17:04:19 - 00:17:36:28

This is the third DCO examination my client has now been subject to, and at no point has the cumulative impact on their business or property being appropriately assessed. The lack of cooperation and coordination between the three projects has made this process significantly more difficult. Whilst five estuaries has consent and North Forres is due to have a decision imminently, neither project can nor will progress without National Grid's action. We ask that the Planning Inspectorate examines and fully appreciates that your recommendation in this examination will directly result in the development of this project and North Wales and five estuaries.

00:17:37:00 - 00:17:39:04

My client's business currently supports £4.

00:17:39:11 - 00:17:41:21

To which we close now, please. Two seconds. Thank you.

00:17:41:28 - 00:18:01:17

The cumulative impact of the known projects, not including any subsequent projects such as Tarkine, will result in the permanent loss of a significant percentage of this business, bringing into question its viability to support these families and the ability of one of those families to continue to live in their home. The cumulative impact of all three projects on my client must really be assessed as part of this examination.

00:18:01:25 - 00:18:02:18

Thank you.

00:18:04:21 - 00:18:06:23

Our next speaker is Graham Lucas.

00:18:07:18 - 00:18:44:29

Good afternoon. Thank you. Good afternoon. Giving me the opportunity to speak. I'm a resident of Little Bromley. I just want to draw your attention to a number of concerns with the project in the East Anglia connector. Now, the substation there. The first is around noise pollution. Um, there will be significant and long term adverse impacts arising from the operational noise of the proposed substation at local property. Um, there'll be a constant hum from the substation equipment. Uh, will be clearly audible within homes, um, leading to persistent disturbance, stress and reduced well-being for the lifetime of the infrastructure.

00:18:45:07 - 00:19:27:00

The environmental statement and I'll provide the referenced under the document I'm referring to. My statement does not consider that electrical substations generate substantial amounts of noise in the colder winter months of the year, when there's high water, when there's high electricity demand. The best baseline assessments that were completed as part of that assessment were done during the warmer winter months of the year, meaning that the cumulative impact of the existing list of Bromley's substation was not considered the worst case. Furthermore, the environmental assessment did not consider the cumulative impact of the approved approved battery storage facility next to the current substation or the task on project that's planned for the village.

00:19:27:11 - 00:20:01:24

In addition, the report failed to consider the location of the icon to the west of Little Bromley and the prevailing wind conditions resulting in sound travelling towards the village, exacerbating the noise pollution. I'd also like the Planning Inspectorate to consider the noise complaint process for the joint substations and the owners, and costly conditions imposed on residents who need to raise concerns about the impact of operational noise pollution and visual impacts. A high proportion of the public rights of way in Bromley, which are regularly used by residents, will be severely impacted by the ICAN site.

00:20:01:26 - 00:20:42:00

There will be significant and substantive substantial adverse visual impacts on footpath users with views that are currently dominated by open countryside, replaced or interrupted by industrial scale infrastructure, eroding the recreational and amenity value of these routes. Whilst screening is planned, it will take decades to become effective if it survives beyond the first summer of planting in one of the driest parts of the UK. In addition, the public rights of way used to access Saint Mary's Church from the village will be disrupted, requiring crossing arrangements over the permanent access route to the proposed beacon substation and then traffic flow.

00:20:42:04 - 00:21:15:10

The requirement to build a new permanent access road for the canal has not been justified by National Grid and could have significant impact on traffic flows in Little Bromley. If measures are not put in place to ensure that other road users cannot use it as a route run or shortcut between other major routes, and then just following the around consultation. And I appreciate it's been a constant theme of today. It's clear from the outset that the process National grid of a master plan for the East Anglia

connector node and to concentrate a very substantial amount of new infrastructure next to the existing missile Bromley substation.

00:21:15:12 - 00:21:42:27

We've had North Falls, five estuaries, this task on the battery storage facility and the East Anglia connector node itself. But what else the national Grid have planned is they've not shared a joined up overall plan. It's not possible to consider the cumulative impact of National Grid's masterplan is kept a secret. Your legitimate alternative proposals have not been included in the consultation completed by National Grid, with only some very minor changes. Suggested decisions appear to have been driven.

00:21:42:29 - 00:21:45:04

Have you just ask you to draw to a close, please.

00:21:45:06 - 00:21:49:10

Rather than by a balanced consideration of long term environmental and social impacts.

00:21:49:18 - 00:22:01:13

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Lucas. Um, our next speaker is, uh, Jane Lushington. Uh. Good evening. Um, you have, uh, three minutes. Thank you. Thank you.

00:22:01:27 - 00:22:24:07

Uh, first of all, um, there were due to be two other speakers from Oftern and William villages today, but, uh, neither have been able to be here for one reason or another. Um, I've asked that, uh, their submissions and what they're their submissions will be emailed to yourselves. Um.

00:22:24:09 - 00:22:25:09

That's fine, thank you.

00:22:25:11 - 00:23:01:15

Yeah. They would have gone into a lot of detail about the impact of the project on particularly the often village and its surroundings, but which I won't go into. Uh, however, what we would ask is that, uh, there would be a site visit by the team to the village. Um, particularly in the light of your, um, uh, travel through the, uh, along the route earlier in the year, which bypassed the village completely so you could just check the maps and and we can arrange for, um, a site visit.

00:23:01:17 - 00:23:34:08

That would be good. All right. I can only going on to my own submission. I can only repeat comments that have been made about the inadequacy of the consultation, um, and about the, uh, the alternatives that have not been offered, particularly in the light of the East Anglia study, which, as previous speakers have said, um, provides an alternative, at least one alternative which could or could could solve the, uh, the energy requirement problem.

00:23:34:11 - 00:24:06:18

Um, so I won't go into the detail of that either, but it's the key. Key point from my point of view is the lack of transparency of costs, uh, Costs that we have been given, uh, cover supposedly the the the the

the build of the, uh, the line from Norwich to Tilbury to provide power from offshore wind farms. Now, as. As far as I'm concerned, Norwich is not on the coast.

00:24:06:26 - 00:24:24:26

It certainly wasn't 50 years ago when I was at university there. Um, so therefore there must have been a cost to get the power from the shore to the Norwich substation. Uh, the other part of it is that the. What is the purpose of the of the project? It is.

00:24:30:12 - 00:25:15:17

Run by a company which is, uh, American owned in the in the main part. And its objective is to enhance the profit share and asset register of that company with no due regard to the impact on consumers. Um, so I won't go into into any more detail on that, but what I would like to say is that we would like to see, uh, due consideration of the alternatives, the total cost, which would include not just the build but also the that the impact on the compensation on the local, uh, communities, businesses, farms and families.

00:25:15:19 - 00:25:16:15

Thank you.

00:25:17:11 - 00:25:23:03

Thank you very much for your contribution. Um, it's our next speaker, please. John Stacy. Thank you.

00:25:23:05 - 00:25:23:20

Hello, there.

00:25:23:22 - 00:25:25:02

Thank you for your opportunity.

00:25:25:04 - 00:26:01:17

I'm effective. Farm with four pillars going across our farm. National grid have not engaged with those affected and paying not to care. National grid are using land agents. Fisher German to be the buffer between us and them. So we don't have to engage with us. They claim in all their publicity to engage with those affected by this project. This is not the reality. This is a common thread across all the affected landowners. We, like other landowners, sign intrusive and non-intrusive survey licences with a promise for us to receive the raw data within 14 days of National Grid being receipt of this data.

00:26:01:20 - 00:26:40:15

National grid have continuously refused to give out this data. We had to serve them with an EIA and eventually, after a lot of pressure, we received our survey information. Why does this matter to us? We could have used this data to support our case. We have the line crossing over horse paddocks, and the line is within 160m of a house. We had requested at every opportunity that this should be moved to the adjacent field, which in our opinion is feasible. The walkover survey, commissioned by National Grid recommended that the line be moved away from a horse paddock, and this would have supported our case.

00:26:40:26 - 00:27:25:19

The reply was not directly to us but was found in the application documents and it was that it could not be moved as it be, contrary to Holford rules. However, at the very beginning in the Braintree webinar in May 2022, Nick Coombs from National Grid did explain that the Holford rules could not be applied across the whole route. He also said the gun in principles still apply as they were options. However, they were not presented. We were not presented with any options, just presented with a narrow purpose wave on the map that told us where the parents would be within the chosen option had already been decided by National Grid in their application.

00:27:25:21 - 00:28:06:05

National grid claims that the route chosen was compliant with N1, as there are no other suitable sites of poor agricultural quality that could not accommodate the project. How can this be the case as at the very beginning they had scoped out soils? As stated in their 2020 document, Corridor and Primary Routing and Siting Study Report, April 2022. Additionally, National Grid in this application claim under Health and Wellbeing for Health and Wellbeing that there is no significant residual effects to health and well-being during construction and operations of a project.

00:28:06:08 - 00:28:41:14

Therefore, these matters should be afforded limited weight in the planning balance. National grids lack of engagement, the length of time of the project, the lack of consideration of alternatives are causing great anxiety and stress even at this pre-construction stage. What will it be like when there is three years of noise, dust and financial stress? How can they claim there's no significant residual effects to health and well-being? For National Grid's lack of engagement in a scheme, they should be ashamed of themselves.

00:28:41:16 - 00:28:51:01

Their company with CPO powers, and they have no care for anyone apart from their shareholders dividends and capital growth. Thank you.

00:28:52:13 - 00:29:06:06

Thank you, Mr. Stacy. Okay. Um, thank you for your contributions. And thank you, everyone, for your contributions this afternoon. We've heard everyone registered to speak in this session. It's everyone here today who has not spoken and who would wish to be heard.

00:29:09:01 - 00:29:37:26

Seeing any hands in the room or online. So that's a no. So yes. Thank you for your contributions. Um, as we noted earlier, if you, um, could submit what you have said in writing at deadline one Thursday, 26th of February, um, and the applicant will provide a written response at the same time. We will now adjourn this hearing and reconvene with session two at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning. So it's now 1756, and the hearing is adjourned. Thank you.