



## Hearing Transcript

<b>Project:</b>	Norwich to Tilbury
<b>Hearing:</b>	Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) - Session 2 - Part 1
<b>Date:</b>	11 February 2026

**Please note:** This document is intended to assist Interested Parties.

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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 - 00:00:17:02

Good morning, everyone, and welcome. Can I just confirm that everybody can hear me clearly, please? Thank you. Uh, could also confirm in a case team that the live streaming and recording this event has started. Thank you.

00:00:18:17 - 00:00:43:10

It's now 10 a.m., and this open floor hearing in relation to the Norwich Tilbury project is resumed. Thank you for all attending this hearing, whether here in Ipswich or online. My name is John Hockley. I'm a planning inspector and a chartered town planner, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to the panel to examine this application. I'll just ask my fellow panel members, who have also been appointed by the Secretary of State to examine this project, to introduce themselves. Now.

00:00:44:23 - 00:00:49:05

My name is Christopher Butler. I'm a planning inspector and a chartered town planner.

00:00:50:06 - 00:00:57:20

Good morning. I'm Susan Hunt, I'm a planning inspector and a chartered town planner. I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the lead member of this panel.

00:01:01:21 - 00:01:05:19

Hello, my name is Matthew Sims. I'm a planning inspector and a chartered civil engineer.

00:01:08:19 - 00:01:13:21

Good morning. My name is Kenneth Stone. I'm a planning inspector and a chartered town planner.

00:01:14:09 - 00:01:49:15

Thank you. I can confirm that all members of the examining authority have made a formal declaration of interest. And there are no known conflicts of interest. With regard to us examining this application, together we constitute the examining authority or the WSA for this application. There are other colleagues from the Planning Inspectorate who are joining us today, both here in Ipswich and online. Our case managers are Sian Evans and Lily Robins, who are supported by case officers Harrison Coles, Georgina Hannigan and Jessica Dunlop. It's the case team who's your contact regarding the application process and in general and today's arrangements, including any online connection issues.

00:01:50:09 - 00:02:23:29

In addition, there are technicians from CVS international in the room who are attending solely for the purpose of managing the recording and the live streaming of the event. Today's hearing is being undertaken as a blended event, meaning some of you are present with us at the hearing venue and some of us are joining us virtually using Microsoft Teams. We will make sure, however, you've decided to attend today, you'll be given a fair opportunity to participate. You should also be aware that the meeting is being recorded. I'll just deal with a few housekeeping matters for those attending in person today. And apologies for anyone who is here yesterday, because there's going to be some repetition here.

00:02:24:01 - 00:02:59:25

So the emergency exits are at the front and the back of the room, and the meeting point is in the South Stand car park. There are no planned fire alarms or drills today. Could everyone please settle their devices and phones to silent? Online participants should make sure their cameras are switched off and microphones muted unless you're speaking. No requests have been made for any special measures or arrangements to enable participation in this hearing. If you do need assistance, then please speak to the case team. If at any point during the hearing you can't hear us, then please could you just raise your hand? Or virtual attendees use the raise hand function on teams.

00:03:01:00 - 00:03:18:06

It's been explained to the virtual participants what to do if you lose connection. There will be a short break within the hearing and if any breaks are required before this, you should just alert the case team or if you need some extra support during the hearing, then take the case team. This hearing this morning will not continue beyond 12:30 p.m..

00:03:19:25 - 00:03:54:07

The event is being live streamed and recorded. Our letter of the 13th of January, which we refer to as the rule six letter, explained that because we retain and publish the digital recordings, they form a public record to which the General Data Protection Regulation applies. The Planning Inspectorate publishes and retains recording recordings for a period of five years, from the date of the Secretary of State's decision on the Development Consent Order. So if you participate in this meeting, it's important that you understand that you will be recorded and that you can send to the retention and publication of the digital recording. We are aware of one person here today who has let us know that they don't wish to be filmed.

00:03:54:09 - 00:04:01:14

That's fine. The audiovisual team are aware of this, and they've been seated in the location, which are not covered by the cameras.

00:04:03:16 - 00:04:36:12

We would only ever ask for information to be placed on the public record. That is important and relevant to the planning decision to avoid the need to edit digital recordings. What we did ask? So if you try your best not to add information to the public record that you would normally wish to be kept private or confidential, details such as your address or financial circumstances or medical conditions. If you do feel the need to refer to something that is private or confidential. If you could please discuss that with a case team to explore whether it could be submitted in writing and then redacted before being published. I don't have any questions with regards to this matter.

00:04:38:25 - 00:05:13:04

Okay. Thank you. Uh, for those attending virtually, I'll just repeat the request made in the arrangement conference. Um, to minimize background noise. If you can make sure your phone, your computer is, uh, muted and with your camera turned on and left, you're speaking. And I just want to say a little bit about conduct during the hearing. Um, we do understand that people have very strong feelings about the proposed development, but it's important to recognize that we do have a process to follow. We therefore ask for good manners and respect to be shown to each other and to all of us throughout the hearing.

00:05:13:17 - 00:05:46:27

Uh, we want everyone to have an opportunity to speak. So please don't talk over anyone when they're speaking. And we do ask, please, for no clapping, cheering or boozing as we need to be able to hear what people are saying. And we don't want anyone speaking time to be impacted. So please, could you be polite to each other as everyone deserves the same level of respect, even if you don't share the same views? Thank you. We should avoid frivolous, libelous, and vexatious comments about any individual, and we may need to stop you from speaking if you do do that. And we also understand, obviously, that some people feel nervous when having to speak in public.

00:05:47:04 - 00:06:00:22

Please be reassured that we understand that. And if you do stumble over your words or need to repeat something that isn't a problem, and it will be taken account of in a lot of time. Does anyone have any questions about the technology, general housekeeping, or any of the matters that I've just run through?

00:06:03:16 - 00:06:37:13

Nope. Not seeing any hands. So just to confirm that this is the first of the free hearings this week. This is the second session, a second session of the open floor hearing, one which commenced yesterday evening, open floor hearing two and open floor hearing three are both taking place tomorrow in Norwich and Orsett. There will be two or more members of the panel at each of those hearings, and the remaining panel members will watch the event afterwards, so you can be assured every panel member will hear your submissions. The agendas are broadly the same for each hearing session, and all have been published on the project page of the National Infrastructure web page.

00:06:37:16 - 00:06:46:24

Today's agenda can be found in the examination library at reference EV 2001. Thank you. I'll now pass to Mr. Butler to go through item two of the agenda.

00:06:47:23 - 00:07:22:06

Thank you very much. Um, so item two is the purpose of the open floor hearing. Uh, normally open floor hearings are held at the request of interested parties. However, we've called this open floor hearing because we want to hear firsthand from interested parties your thoughts at an early stage of the examination. It would also help us form a view about what we want to discuss in more detail at later issue specific hearings and in our written questions. Uh, we're we're familiar with the representations. So when speaking, you don't need to repeat at length what anything you've already put in writing.

00:07:22:09 - 00:07:42:15

Uh, what we're seeking is for you to provide further, further details or evidence to help us understand the issues you're raising, uh, to make the best use of time. And whilst not wishing to limit contributions, it would be greater for a great assistance if points aren't repeated. Um, you can be rest assured that we will have understood the the points you were making the first time.

00:07:44:25 - 00:08:22:08

We are aware that the applicant is attending this this meeting this morning. Um, we will ask the applicant to respond to everything they've heard through all of the open floor hearing sessions in writing. We won't ask them to do it here. Um, it's not the purpose of these hearings to enable the

applicant to make their case. We're at the start of a six month examination process, which runs for up to six months. And indeed, the timetable currently indicates a full six month program. The examiner authority then prepares a report to, with its recommendation to the Secretary of State for the Department of Energy Security and Net zero, who will make the final decision.

00:08:24:22 - 00:08:29:07

Thank you. I'm going to hand over now to Mrs. Hunt, who's going to take us through attendance today.

00:08:31:00 - 00:09:05:02

Thank you. It's our intention today to hear from interested parties who are pre-registered to speak, and you will all be listed on the agenda for this hearing under session two. And after that, if time permits, we may choose to hear from any interested party here in the room or online who is not pre-registered but who wishes to speak. And then finally, for any other, any other persons or a non interested party so they have not previously submitted a representation. However, this is at our our discretion and we'll see if time allows.

00:09:05:04 - 00:09:06:27

And once we've got to that point

00:09:08:23 - 00:09:48:12

and if time is not available for any any additional persons and during this open floor hearing session today, then they can request a further open floor hearing later in the examination. And this should be put in writing to us by deadline one, which is the 26th of February. So due to the number of parties who are wishing to speak today, we have set time limits per person. And so it's a maximum of five minutes for those who are representing a group. So that would include councils, counsellors, membership organizations, societies, for example, and three minutes for individual interested parties.

00:09:49:23 - 00:10:22:09

So attendees here in Ipswich, you'll see that there's a digital clock in front of you when you come to the to the front table. So you should take account of the time that's remaining on that clock, and that will give you an idea of how much time you've got left. For those attending virtually, we can let you know verbally when you've got one minute left. So please try and finish in your allotted time. Um, so we can ensure that everybody's had the opportunity to be heard today and to ensure that we can hear from as many people as possible during this hearing.

00:10:22:11 - 00:10:32:03

We won't ask any questions of you afterwards. We'll just we'll just let you have your say. But if we do have any questions later, we can always put those in writing to you.

00:10:34:19 - 00:10:50:07

So the list of speakers is in the order that they will be heard, is on the same as it is on the agenda which we've already published, and that's in the examination library at reference EV 2001. So that's unchanged. Um.

00:10:52:19 - 00:11:18:15

We'll ask people to come forward to the table that you can see with the microphones on it. There are five seats. So you come five at a time. If there is anyone that doesn't wish to be filmed, they don't come through. Don't come forward to the table. They will have a roving microphone taken to them and they won't be on the camera. Some of the speakers may well be attending virtually, so if there's an empty table, it's because they're online.

00:11:22:07 - 00:11:41:07

So we'll still ask each of you to speak in turn, based on the order that's in the agenda and to the time allocated to you, whether that's 5 minutes or 3 minutes. And when we've heard from all five of you. So stay there while all five of you speak, and then you can leave and go back to your seat, and we'll call the next group of five forwards.

00:11:43:14 - 00:12:05:26

So if you've got written summaries of what you've said today, you can submit those to us, um, via the Planning Inspectorate website. You can do that in depth by deadline one, which is the 26th of February. And if there was any additional points that you had, perhaps you ran out of time and you want to put those in those written comments. You can you can do that as well.

00:12:07:21 - 00:12:19:07

So and also just to remind you, we do give equal weight to both written and oral submissions. There's no disadvantage if you if you haven't managed to speak or a later day.

00:12:23:11 - 00:12:31:13

Does anyone have any questions on the speaking process today before we move on to agenda item for.

00:12:36:14 - 00:12:38:21

Our pass to Mr. Sims. Thank you.

00:12:39:02 - 00:13:09:10

Thank you very much. So I'm now going to invite those listed in the agenda to speak when I read out your names. If you are in the room, please come forward to the table at the front. Unless you've informed us that you do not wish to be filmed. And if online, please turn on your camera. When I call all the names. When it's your turn to speak, please turn on the microphone. If you're at the table, the microphones have a button on the base plate. When it's red, you're speaking at the end. Please turn that off so the red button goes on off.

00:13:10:02 - 00:13:51:04

Um, a timer is displayed in the room. You should be able to see it from in the front of you. And Mr. Stone will let those online know when we have one minute remaining. Can I just remind you again not to supply any personal details when speaking here today? For example, do not state your home address, your age, or any medical conditions you may have. If you feel that you need to supply this information to us, please talk to the case team about how this can be done without it going on the public record? So the first five people or organisations are Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, Faber District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Sawston and Hampton District Council and Rosie Pearson for Pylon East Anglia.

00:13:51:06 - 00:13:54:09

If you could come forward or turn on your camera please.

00:14:04:03 - 00:14:16:22

Thank you very much. You each have five minutes at this open floor session here in session. And I will start with Sir Bernard Jenkin MP. Thank you very much. Who was online.

00:14:17:20 - 00:14:50:19

Good morning and thank you for arranging this session. And I should just add that I'm chair of the offset Group of MPs, which represents all the MPs along the um, along the Norwich Tilbury route, who are all equally concerned about this proposal, but my remarks are very much concentrated on my own constituency. My main argument here is that the examining authorities should pause the examination, because the application is not capable of lawful approval.

00:14:50:21 - 00:15:22:27

The Secretary of State's lacks the legal power to grant development consent due to the following reasons. First of all, um, there has not been proper consultation about all the alternatives. Um, there are alternatives, um, around. Uh, they have been, um, surfaced many times, um, in several documents. And community groups like SNP, um also represented proposed specific schemes and routes and schemes.

00:15:23:03 - 00:15:44:29

Um, they proposed less harmful alternatives, uh, including HVDC undergrounding and offshore options, uh, which are set out in my original submission, and some of these are in fact cheaper in the longer term than the present scheme. These should have been properly considered and they have never received substantive responses.

00:15:46:14 - 00:16:16:23

Um, it is also clear from the alternatives, um, that the location of the East Anglian connection node in Ardley, uh, that it does not have to be there. And yet this seems to have driven the whole, um, this, this predetermined seems to have driven the whole design of the scheme. Um, this the alternatives are proposed by the East Anglian Network study carried out by UCL proved that the EA, OECD, ECN did not need to be in Ardley.

00:16:17:02 - 00:16:51:03

Um, and all these alternatives would avoid the harm that is going to be done to the international landscape. So failure to consider the alternatives to avoid harm to Dedham Vale, uh, is actually contrary requirements of NPS, N5, and furthermore, the statutory purposes of the national landscape as required by section 2.5 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 is also illegal.

00:16:51:06 - 00:17:22:21

This legal requirement has recently been tested in judicial review brought by Dedham Vale Society in relation to Manningtree station car park, in which the Secretary of State conceded an error of law. The principle that the development within a national landscape must conserve and enhance the that

landscape was not contested and is directly applicable to the present proposals, and this imposes a duty on the Secretary of State to conserve and enhance such landscapes.

00:17:22:29 - 00:18:01:06

Now, I don't advocate any of the alternative routes that have been canvassed, but such alternatives exist and were available and identified, including the westerly route described in the applicant's strategic options Backtrack review and the network had studied. In summary, these alternative routes should have been considered at the outset. They cannot just be dismissed because National Grid was already committed to its existing route, which appears to be the case, and they cannot continue to be dismissed just because there is political pressure from the government to do this as quickly as possible.

00:18:01:19 - 00:18:05:08

That is not a consideration that can be taken into account.

00:18:07:28 - 00:18:10:01

That's the end of my submission. Thank you very much.

00:18:10:08 - 00:18:17:00

Thank you very much, Sir Bernard. That's very kind of you. And we will now move on to Babergh District Council, please.

00:18:18:02 - 00:18:20:18

Good morning. My name is Councillor John Ward.

00:18:20:20 - 00:19:02:20

I'm the leader of Baber District Council. And thank you for the opportunity to address the examination. The full details of the council's concerns are set out in our relevant representation and other submissions, so I will take this opportunity to summarize some matters that are of particular relevance to the council and our residents. Maintaining our in-principle objection to the project by the District Council cites the conclusion of the Highlands Report that the current transmission network capacity, including the Bradford to Twin City reinforcement, which is currently under construction, is likely to be sufficient for committed connections until 2035, and that as a result, it is reasonable to call for a delay to the consideration of this project to allow appropriate analysis of alternative options.

00:19:02:28 - 00:19:38:07

I also doubt that the current project could be delivered by 2030 or 2031, which calls into question the assessment that it is the only viable option deliverable within the timescale. Large infrastructure projects are notorious for overrunning and exceeding estimated costs. The council maintains a preference for high voltage direct current undergrounding of the entire length of the project to mitigate its considerable impacts. This is particularly important when considering the proposed underground sections of Norwich to Tilbury. The impact on the Dedham Vale national landscape will be particularly devastating, with a very wide swathe cut through one of the most beautiful and historic parts of the region.

00:19:38:24 - 00:20:15:01

The impact of the overpowering cable ceiling and compounds on those living nearby cannot be ignored either. Underground HVDC cables would have far less short term and long term consequences for this sensitive environment. Baber is also concerned that the arguments that have been used to justify the overhead AC solution seem to contradict what has been said about the proposed solution for the eastern green links. National grid has decided on an undersea HVDC solution for these, arguing that it is better technology is more controllable, carries a much lower delivery risk with comparable capital costs and much lower lifetime costs than AC.

00:20:15:15 - 00:20:54:19

All these should also apply equally to an underground HVDC link for Norwich to Tilbury. Baber wants to see a full options appraisal and a detailed cost comparison of all alternative solutions. Price alone should not be the principal consideration when selecting the preferred option. We mean we remain convinced from comments received that our residents would happily pay a few pounds extra a year for the environmental and other benefits of a better solution, particularly one that, by National Grid's own admission, is a better technology. Baber has over 3000 listed buildings and numerous other designated and non designated heritage assets, which we are proud to seek to protect.

00:20:54:26 - 00:21:27:02

The applicant has failed to meet the requirements of National Policy Statement N-1 in their consideration of non dissipated heritage assets, undermining the value of their overall heritage assessment and risking significant harm to the historic environment of the district. Baber is very concerned about the potential impact on the grade one listed Little Wenham Castle, a scheduled monument and the grade one listed All Saints Church and medieval barns nearby. The castle is a unique example of a semi fortified 13th century structure in East Anglia, built using some of the first English made bricks.

00:21:27:25 - 00:22:05:13

The landscape of the district is highly valued, with a national landscape designation. Many cultural and historic associations and sensitive views that contribute to the unique character of the district and the wider region. All of these, of course, immortalised by Constable and Gainsborough, whose birthdays we're celebrating this year and next year. Those are important birthdays. The applicant states that the project will have significant adverse landscape and visual impacts, which are not considered to be adequately mitigated or compensated. Although we welcome the proposed funding of a feasibility study for the removal or rationalisation of existing 132 kV overhead lines within the district.

00:22:06:04 - 00:22:46:15

We also have significant concerns regarding the cumulative impacts of the scheme, its geographic and temporal relationship with other projects being delivered in the eastern region, and the impact of a failure of appropriate coordination and mitigation on residents, businesses and the environment. Of course, grid reinforcement is necessary and all options have impacts. Residents do understand that, but we have never had a proper national debate about the trade offs between costs and impacts of all the new energy projects. No one knows how much extra people might be prepared to pay to reduce those impacts. We must understand this and feed it into the the options appraisals for each and every project where the district council maintains a position of objection in principle to this particular solution.

00:22:46:20 - 00:22:56:02

We believe that we need a 21st century grid built using 21st century technology, not upgrading a 20th century grid with 20th century technology. Thank you.

00:22:56:22 - 00:23:03:22

Thank you very much, councilor Ward. And thank you for the time, Eunice. I'll now move on to Mid Suffolk District Council, please.

00:23:04:24 - 00:23:05:20

Thank you.

00:23:05:28 - 00:23:08:03

My name is Councilor Andrew Stringer.

00:23:08:05 - 00:23:08:20

I'm the.

00:23:08:22 - 00:23:09:07

Cabinet.

00:23:09:09 - 00:23:09:24

Member for.

00:23:09:26 - 00:23:10:11

Heritage.

00:23:10:13 - 00:23:10:28

Planning and.

00:23:11:00 - 00:23:11:15

Infrastructure.

00:23:11:17 - 00:23:12:02

At.

00:23:12:04 - 00:23:12:19

Mid Suffolk.

00:23:12:21 - 00:23:13:06

District.

00:23:13:08 - 00:23:13:23

Council.

00:23:13:25 - 00:23:14:10

Thank you for.

00:23:14:12 - 00:23:14:27

The.

00:23:14:29 - 00:23:50:08

Opportunity to address the examination for full details of our councils concerns are set out in our relevant representation and other submissions, so I'll take this opportunity to reiterate some of the main issues affecting our district. But firstly, I would want to state that I understand why Tilbury, but I simply do not understand how licences have already been granted to land, energy and knowledge with no forward customer. Mid Suffolk has a unique character and already has a north and south National Grid pylon route that was more than doubled in capacity in recent years.

00:23:50:15 - 00:24:31:01

In the transition to cleaner energy, Mid Suffolk will more than play its part, but as with all transitions, if the changes are not seen to be just, this essential transition could be delayed or even fail in maintaining our principal objection to the project. Mid Suffolk District Council cites the conclusion of the horns report that the current transition network capacity, including Bramford, to twin state reinforcement, which is currently under construction, is likely to be sufficient for committed connections until 2035, and as a result, it is reasonable to call for a delay to the consideration of this project to allow appropriate analysis of alternative options.

00:24:31:17 - 00:25:08:06

The Council maintain a preference for alternatives such as an undersea route or high and high voltage direct current undergrounding for the entire length of the project, or even using ultra high voltage direct current. Using existing infrastructure to avoid and mitigate the devastating impacts of this development. If China can fit the entire energy needs of a small country into one single ultra high voltage cable, why can't we have at least explored this option? Mid Suffolk District Council reiterates its disappointment that the Waveney Valley Alternative Route route has been abandoned.

00:25:08:12 - 00:25:51:26

It is necessary and appropriate for this project to take the opportunity for a strategic approach for the coordinated delivery of interrelated energy projects and network infrastructure to improve connectivity for Freeport East. Gateway 14, as well as other major commercial operations and the interests in the area, enabling decarbonisation and other green energy objectives for these sites and effective communities. But we have concerns regarding the volume, nature and cumulative impacts of development at and around the Bramford substation, and consider a strategic design and mitigation approach is essential to minimize impacts on the surrounding communities public safety, landscape, heritage and highway network.

00:25:51:29 - 00:26:26:04

Mid Suffolk has over 3400 listed buildings and numerous other designated and non designated heritage assets, of which the district have a duty to and are proud to seek to protect. The applicant has failed to meet the requirements of National Policy Statement N-1 in their consideration of non designated heritage Assets, undermining the value of their overall heritage assessment and risking

significant harm to the unique historic environment of the district. The district has a rich and diverse natural environment, including numerous protected species and habitats.

00:26:26:08 - 00:27:03:18

The applicant's reliance on post decision surveys and mitigation across such a large project area risks the lawful and effective protection of ecology. I have walked much of the route and can testify that rich array of biodiversity, from small farmyard ponds to ancient copses, many will be lost or at best blighted. The landscape of the district is highly valued, with many sensitive views that contribute to the unique character of Mid Suffolk and the wider region. The applicant states the project will have a significant adverse landscape and visual impacts, which are not considered to be adequately mitigated or compensated.

00:27:03:20 - 00:27:36:00

The project would have significant far reaching impacts on local and residential amenity and the health and wellbeing of our communities, which must be appropriately assessed and adequately mitigated. Tourism is a significant part of our local economy, supporting many jobs and businesses within the district and the wider region. The construction phase of the project, in particular, has the potential to irrevocably damage East Anglia's tourist economy through its visual impacts, traffic disruption, noise and disturbance, as well as the challenge of accommodating and integrating the construction workforce.

00:27:36:02 - 00:28:12:12

We feel there has been inadequate consideration of impacts on the existing tourism businesses, jobs and visitors. We have major concerns regarding the cumulative impacts of the proposals, with other projects across the region and the likely impacts on agriculture, social economics, tourism and other businesses, especially given the number of projects seeking to construct within the same geographic area time frame and affecting many of the same communities, landscapes and environments and highway networks. Mid Suffolk already transmits energy, generates energy, grows our food, has a rich biodiversity in enthralled tourists and inspires artists.

00:28:12:21 - 00:28:27:12

This project, in its current form will threaten food production, devastate biodiversity and will decimate local tourism and impoverish our unique heritage. Mid Suffolk District Council maintains a position of objecting in principle to this project. Thank you.

00:28:27:19 - 00:28:34:01

Thank you very much, Councillor Stringer. We'll move on now to Thurston and Hampton Parish Council, please.

00:28:34:24 - 00:28:35:11

Hello.

00:28:35:13 - 00:29:09:03

And my name is Anna Nabil. I'm the parish clerk for the Hampton Parish Council, which sits on the edge of many insights around our areas. That is literally going to surround our village. Um, we have various solar farms in the Tasman Energy Park and the field, best site for battery energy storage that

will swamp and take out the ability of local farmers to continue to farm as they do, will decimate the local farmland around our villages and destroy local soil and landfills around our village.

00:29:09:13 - 00:29:51:19

Hampton is a small rural community with many footpaths. All apparitions used to walk their dogs, ride their horses, and ramble along the main paths. Our BR one FP2 and FP 33. These are routes the pylons would take, and they would totally decimate these vital footpaths that everyone uses. Thurstan Hampton Parish Council have a fully green agenda in all aspects of its work, and undertakes using local suppliers to ensure emissions and travel to a limit for the construction of the pylons will now only bring an unwanted extra traffic to our very small rural roads, but also the extra emissions from the large lorries required to construct the pylons and would bring concerns to meet our green agenda.

00:29:51:24 - 00:30:30:20

The air pollution our area is moderate, but Norfolk has suffered 64 deaths this year alone from attributed air quality and emissions to date in 2026. This development undoubtedly add to this. It is also recommended that children adults with lung and heart conditions who experience symptoms of bad air quality admission should consider reducing the strenuous physical activity, particularly outdoors, which we feel the development should go underground to a people's health. Thus, Knapton Parish Council. All are ask that the underground cabling is considered, as they feel it's the best option moving forward and would not hinder local areas and wildlife.

00:30:30:22 - 00:31:05:06

The parish council put lots of thought into its local biodiversity planning and feels that, for the reasons I will detail, that this scheme is not suitable for our small rural Council to incur. It also has some very rare birds, a colony of bats that have been seen close to the footpaths, along with an owl colony that can be seen flying around the area during the stunning sunsets. It's also a worry that the infrastructure needed to put the plans in place would decimate the local area and wildlife around our footpaths and small country roads that would not take the heavy traffic.

00:31:05:08 - 00:31:37:10

Need to install the pylons and also maintain them. Thus, the Hampton Parish Council is mentioned in the Domesday Book as many old trees and heritage homes, and these large lorries that come along our rural roads would really make a problem with that. We've recently built a community project as the parish has no infrastructure to meet, which many people use at all times. Upwards of 100 people an evening can be seen at the play area.

00:31:38:07 - 00:32:09:23

They are widely used. Many, many dog walkers, people on their horses. Everything comes there. We also worry that the areas are very much a very farming area, and that the land will be lost to this construction. The effects on farming and practices it used will be lost to the area, along with the damage to the soil and the lack of soil management procedures from the development is unknown. Thus, the Hampton Parish Council are still suffering from large lorries using the areas of run causing local parishioners. Walkers, horse riders along with local drivers.

00:32:09:25 - 00:32:40:04

Many issues with having to move out to accommodate the large vehicles and what is a sea road with many difficult bends that are dangerous in themselves. And these even larger lorries that will be used for the pylons would use this route, damaging the road even further. Passing up to parish councillor looking at all options around. Special orders to stop our C497 road being used due to the continued use of the large lorries using our village road surface is very damaged already.

00:32:40:14 - 00:33:17:06

Finally, the Planning Inspectorate meeting falls between one of our February Parish Council meeting, which is disappointing and the councillors cannot debate in time for me to speak to you with the comments. So we'll be sweating a written objection as well as this verbal one, and respectfully ask that we have an assisted site visit to see the issues that we face. And to see the era and look at the issues we did tell. Our parish council and parishioners are very aware that have not been properly consulted at any time and feel as they have been walked over, not listened to at any time at the very underwhelming and poorly managed consultations.

00:33:17:08 - 00:33:25:28

And as such, that's why we are very worried parish council and we ask that our objection under this oral report, details are upheld. Thank you for listening.

00:33:26:09 - 00:33:33:13

Thank you, Mr. Robert. Um, and finally, for this session, Rosie Pearson from East Anglia.

00:33:36:07 - 00:34:08:07

Good morning, panel. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. Uh, East Anglia is also known as the Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk Pylons Action Group. We span the three counties. We have committee members in each of the three counties, some of whom run local groups. Uh, we have a petition signed by 40,000 people calling for alternatives to the pylons. And we have a Facebook group with 7000 members. So we're kind of representative of communities along the route, Um, since April 2022, we've informed residents, we've held meetings, we've helped them with their consultation responses, and we've generally provided information that might have been lacking from the applicant.

00:34:09:01 - 00:34:40:24

As the founder of the group. I've had the privilege of meeting, talking to, corresponding with countless residents along this route for the past four years. Every single person I speak to has a heart rending story to tell about the devastating impact of this project on their home, their landscapes, the wildlife and their businesses. The applicants approach has led to mental distress, tears and sleepless nights for far too many residents. This 180km scar through the heart of the three counties of East Anglia is our very own HS2 with very similar mismanagement.

00:34:41:05 - 00:35:21:16

The frustration that every single one of our supporters shares is that there are so many better ways of transmitting power from the North Sea to broadly London and the South. There's too much to say about these alternatives the heritage, the flood risk, everything we've submitted to you. So I'm not going to say that today. I'll leave that for the rest of the examination. Today I'm going to focus on just one topic, which no one else has said and has not been. Um, not been covered in as much detail by us. And this is acid sulfate soils. These are often described as the nastiest soils in the world. These soils

cause no harm when left undisturbed, but once exposed to air, through excavation, piling, drainage, groundwater pumping, they oxidize, they generate sulfuric acid, and they mobilize toxic metals.

00:35:21:18 - 00:35:53:27

That means highly acidic water. Collapse of aquatic life. Contamination of drains and ditches. Sickness and animals that drink the water, and human health risks well documented internationally. Acidic water irritates eyes and skin ingestion can make people ill, and the dust that's exposed when soils dry out will harm people. Once this reaction to the soils begins, it can persist in the groundwater for many years. Not only is the infrastructure a problem that causes this acidification, it also triggers erosion of pylon bases themselves. So the infrastructure itself is attacked by these soils.

00:35:54:07 - 00:36:32:01

In 2024, sales expert Doctor David Dent, who couldn't attend because he's been ill, warned National Grid of the presence of these soils in the Waveney valley and pointed out that in some places the bottomland side is already acidic enough to erode pylon bases. He advised National Grid it's entirely possible that these soils are found in the Store Valley in Suffolk, which the pylons cross, and recent conversations with him reveal that perhaps the River Cone in Essex, also crossed by the pylons, may present a risk. So despite this, it appears the applicant has not carried out the recognised tests for these potential soils. It requires either three months of incubation under oxidizing conditions or hydrogen peroxide treatment, and we can't find any evidence of that in their submitted documents.

00:36:32:24 - 00:37:04:05

The soil sets presented by the applicant don't match with the Soil Survey of England and Wales, nor with Doctor Dent's own mapping. That discrepancy warrants scrutiny. So the questions that arise are why is the applicant not tested rigorously and scientifically for these soils across all three counties? What assessment has been made of the environmental and human health impacts when these soils are exposed during construction? What is their management plan if these soils are encountered, and what assessment have you made of the rest of the pile on basis themselves? These nasty soils are far from the only area where we believe the applicant has fallen short of the required standards is just one example.

00:37:04:08 - 00:37:21:22

We look forward to participating fully in these hearings, and to demonstrating why pile on should be the very last resort, and how the region's energy needs can be met in ways that are more cost effective, far less harmful to communities and the environment. Seeing the impacts of this project on the people, the nature and the landscapes of my beloved region is truly heartbreaking. Thank you.

00:37:22:12 - 00:37:43:12

Thank you very much, Mr. Pierson. I'd just like to come back to a point, Mr. Arbour, you mentioned about a company site visits. There is in the rule six letter for the examination, a request, a timeliness. So if you if you make sure you note that by deadline one um, that will be, um, what you need to do to make sure that your request is with us.

00:37:43:16 - 00:37:44:20

Okay. It's already noted.

00:37:44:22 - 00:38:14:15

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. For the first five, um, uh, people that we've heard from today, um, if you'd like to take your seats. then, as we said. You're more than welcome to leave the, um, the hearing or or remain here. So can I please now ask David Burns, who's representing villages against pylons? Um, Charlotte Banks, Neil Luckett, Catherine Raynor and John Raynor to either turn on their camera or come to the desk, please. I think we are all in person.

00:38:23:07 - 00:38:36:29

So, Mr. Burns, from villages against pylons, you will have five minutes as you're representing an organisation, and the remaining four of you will have three minutes as individuals. So, um, if you're ready, Mr. Burns, thank you very much.

00:38:37:11 - 00:39:08:20

Good morning. And thank you for the time to see you and speak with you today. Um, the group that I represent, um, comprises around 500 residents in the villages north of Colchester. Um, some within and some just outside of the Dedham Vale. Um, the area is extremely rural. Um, residents, uh, suffer from, uh, lack of, uh, lack of resources generally. Uh, buses can be a mile away. Many of the houses are not on gas supply.

00:39:08:29 - 00:39:41:14

Many of the houses use septic tanks, and broadband is lacking. Um, why do people live there? They live there because of the rural environment and the fantastic setting and the beauty of the area. Um, this is the Dedham Vale we're talking about. The applicant's plans have caused enormous distress to residents. Um, I pick up on and echo many of the points made by, uh, Rosie Pearson earlier. Um, I won't repeat them here. Uh, but the points were well made.

00:39:42:00 - 00:40:27:26

Um, the fact that the proposals will damage the, uh, Dedham Vale is not disputed by the applicant. So going back to their documents, the CPRS are they make extensive mention of harm. Their preliminary environmental reports make mention of harm in the park presented to you. Document 613 F 19 demonstrates that between 11 and 23 pylons will be visible across more than half of the vale and their reverse visibility diagrams at six 1305, and a particular figure, 13.53, demonstrate that the CFCs will be visible the western across about 20% of the vale, and that at Great Hawksley and the pylons at Ardleigh, across about 25% of the vale.

00:40:28:09 - 00:41:02:27

All major routes into the Vale will be covered by pylons from the south, and, of course, all major routes are already crossed by pylons in the north, and there's a line of pylons running down through the west of the Dedham Vale, so the Dedham Vale will be ringed in steel if these proposals go ahead. Now, this is a planning meeting, so it makes sense to have recourse to planning policy. Um, NPS N5 tells us what applies here and it's quite simple. Um, these proposals must avoid altogether, if possible, harm to the national landscape.

00:41:03:06 - 00:41:42:11

Harm is not disputed. Let's be very clear about that. Um, at section two 912, it tells us what degree of harm is permissible to the national landscape with the words even residual damage is likely to be

unacceptable in planning terms. Um, so Bernard mentioned the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act earlier. It's a point well made. We won't repeat it here. So the question, which is very important in thinking about the route across Sydenham Vale, is was it necessary? Now if you go back to the applicants document, CPRS, they started by assuming that the East Anglia connection node would be an Ardley.

00:41:42:29 - 00:42:16:12

And all of that planning since then has been founded on that one point. Um, they made the point that going around the Dedham Vale to get there would cause more damage than coming through it. Um, they looked at alternative routes coming out from the Dedham Vale. They never considered whether the East Anglia connection node needed to be in Ardley at all. And the reality of the situation is it never did. Um, there are brownfield sites further south. There are sites, um, nearer to Tilbury.

00:42:16:14 - 00:42:41:27

There are sites elsewhere. I don't propose any of them. I merely point out that they exist, and the fact of their existence is sufficient to bring into play the requirements of MPs. And five um, the strategic options back check and review document. Um, you know, the name gives us a hint here. Um, it is a back check. There was never a consideration in the first place. Um.

00:42:44:10 - 00:42:51:06

They also proposed themselves with their own words. The root is one which is far further east, and the sorry

00:42:52:29 - 00:43:26:28

West sorry. And the only reason they've discounted it is because of the state of their current application. They only say in their documents that this process is already too far advanced. They do conclude that the other alternative would have been 140 million cheaper across the life of the project, had they only considered it earlier. Well, it is unfortunate for National Grid that they did not consider it earlier. It is inconvenient for them. We understand that, but this is a protected national landscape that we're talking about.

00:43:27:00 - 00:43:53:20

And there are requirements in policy and in law with which they have not complied. I met with John Pettigrew, and he was very clear that, um, he saw policy as applying only within the Dedham Vale. That, unfortunately, is not the case. It applies to the Dedham Vale and to its setting, and these proposals will be dramatically damaging and therefore cannot be approved in law. Thank you.

00:43:53:22 - 00:43:59:26

Thank you very much, Mr. Burns. Um, next is Charlotte Banks, and you have three minutes. Thank you very much.

00:44:00:24 - 00:44:03:09

As an owner of a Mid Suffolk listed building.

00:44:03:11 - 00:44:33:09

It's very clear that we are custodians of history for future generations. Listed buildings need to be preserved and nurtured and their stories told. If people do not want to buy a house because of its proximity to a badly executed grid upgrade, then the house will fall into disrepair and the story is lost forever. We owe our children and grandchildren the right to the history of our green and pleasant land. Upgrading the grid is not impossible to do without damaging beyond repair our historical assets.

00:44:33:21 - 00:45:06:09

The Hall in Cotton is one of 2000 listed properties directly affected by the National Grid. This grade two house with a manorial history dates back to the Domesday Book. The manor house was owned by Sir Robert de Sackville during the reign of Henry the First in 1068. The fortification walls of the original manor are still visible today. By 1367 it became the property of the German Heil family and was the birthplace of Ralph de him and his grandson William de la pole, fourth Earl and first Duke of Suffolk.

00:45:06:19 - 00:45:40:27

It has been owned by many historical figures. Sir John Forstall, Shakespeare's Falstaff, who created the deer parks that surround the house, Charles Brandon and Anne of Cleves, who has given it as part of her divorce package. It has been owned by John Paston, who wrote the Paston Papers at the house by candlelight, although his ownership was disputed by the wife of Henry VII, Queen Elizabeth, who claimed it as her own. The setting and view from the hall has not changed for many hundreds of years, and maps from the 1800s show the house as it is today, with fields around it.

00:45:40:29 - 00:46:10:28

Set and named as they are today under the Historical Environmental Good Practice Guide to Planning, it is noted that settings and experiences of heritage assets should be protected as well as the assets themselves. The hall will lose its character when hall rows are built and far higher than usual. Pylons seen within 400m. The original configuration of deer parks and fields will be industrialized and the land use changed.

00:46:11:10 - 00:46:42:17

The hall has two well-used footpaths that run through the grounds, and one will have direct views of the proposed pylons. It's important to realize that if we, the owners, wanted to change anything around the curtilage of the house, we would need to follow planning rules and regulations. But it seems that National Grid can irreparably damage the setting and experience of this house, with ties to Tudor kings and queens. There are other ways to upgrade the grid without shattering British countryside and making a mistake by wiping out our important history.

00:46:42:28 - 00:46:59:19

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I hope I speak for all owners of listed buildings, since National Grid have taken little notice of the region's concern. I feel it is essential to have additional hearings to consider viable alternatives to these unnecessarily destructive pylons.

00:47:00:09 - 00:47:15:28

Thank you very much. And you, if you weren't here yesterday, you would have heard us go through the opportunities for additional hearings that are already in the timetable, and we'll be considering those as the examination proceeds. So thank you very much on that point. Um, Mr. Luckett, please.

00:47:16:24 - 00:47:53:17

Good morning. Thank you for giving me the chance to talk to you today, in addition to my written submission. Um, I want to try and put a bit of a human context on this in terms of how I and my community feel about, um, this project. And that's I want to base that on three words. Actually, we feel overwhelmed, excluded, and fearful. Um, we accept that actually, any project like this will have significant amounts of significant amounts of paperwork that there will be of a technical nature. But the lack of local focus and engagement by National Grid to try and explain that to local communities has been significantly lacking.

00:47:53:25 - 00:48:27:01

That has left many without any real understanding of the impact of this project on our community, the local environment and local wildlife and, um, biodiversity. Many people are taking the view. There's no point getting involved because it's going to happen anyway. Or they say, I just don't understand. It's too complex. That is a failure because people don't understand what's happening. National grid have taken that tell rather than inform and listen approach.

00:48:28:25 - 00:48:42:08

There's been no evidence and I've asked on several occasions About what? What about alternatives? And I've been told this is the best option. Overground is best. And. But not why.

00:48:43:25 - 00:49:19:22

I've been to online meetings where National Grid was supposed to be. Supposed to outline what changes have been put in place as a result of consultation. And they didn't provide a map for my list. They excluded us from that process. They didn't bother to show what the changes looked like. That exclusion is endemic in National Grid's approach. I've been met with blank looks. I mean, I've asked them about where's the risk assessment around increased vulnerability to pylons, to terrorism, to climate change, to war?

00:49:21:15 - 00:49:22:08

Nothing.

00:49:23:25 - 00:49:55:22

We've been dictated to. We've not been listened to. There's been no transparency. And so that's why our communities are fearful. This is one of three nationally significant infrastructure projects which are planned to surround Mellis, in addition to two other significant infrastructure projects. There's been no coordination to mitigate, um, the cumulative effect on our community. Nothing. No communication between all of those projects. It's appalling. So I'm fearful for Melissa Coleman.

00:49:55:24 - 00:50:27:19

I'm fearful. Fearful for my community. Um, and and actually, uh, what we need to do is understand that, um, any consultation must be based on, um, accountability, on transparency and honesty. And so far, that has been significantly lacking in National Grid's approach. And so we feel overwhelmed excluded. And actually my community is fearful because we've been left out of this process.

00:50:28:00 - 00:50:28:15

Thank you.

00:50:28:17 - 00:50:33:21

Thank you very much, Mr. Luckett. I'll now turn to Catherine Rayner. Please.

00:50:35:05 - 00:50:42:23

Um, my objection fundamentally, is like everybody else. It's not a true consultation. The general route.

00:50:42:25 - 00:51:15:09

The use of pylons was predetermined. And when you speak to them, they do not deal with the problems along the route they've chosen. We face a lot of problems, but now talk about the concerns of access to our home and farm business that I've raised repeatedly since May 1912. Sorry, 2022 of the public meetings. They are still unresolved. And this failure to address the actual problems on the ground, I'm sure, affects a lot of other people. Our access serves my home and other home at the farm.

00:51:15:11 - 00:51:45:28

12 business units on our farm, 140 000 chicken unit, another 11 houses and a business centre at EE schools further down the road. So a significant number of vehicles use the lane every day and also at night. It's a narrow country lane off the A120. It's the only viable route for large vehicles serving our farm and the businesses here and all those other properties they would. We were told there would be pairs of traffic management using traffic lights.

00:51:46:07 - 00:52:32:26

This is a problem. It is a single track road where cars can currently pass each other using the collapsing verges of passing spaces or back long distances when meeting lorry traffic lights need space for the moving traffic to pass standing vehicles on this narrow lane they would cause a blocked road. Now when we spoke to somebody at a meeting at our house with the maps in front of us, he literally did not understand that a single track road cannot have stationary traffic in one thing and go past it with the other traffic and the other five people from National Grid and Fisher, chairman, were literally laughing in disbelief that he couldn't understand that was a problem.

00:52:32:29 - 00:53:07:07

So they also plan for temporary actual closure of the diversion route that they give on the national grid map is East Coast Road, which means that the main diversion route is well over two miles of mostly single track road. Our farm traffic alone includes 40 foot articulated bulk lorries and taut liners, as well as numerous smaller vehicles, and the route is obviously totally inadequate and these vehicles come in at various times, day and night to serve the livestock unit, amongst other things.

00:53:07:09 - 00:53:39:22

So for nearly four years, we've asked how they're going to solve this access problem. Most recently, at another meeting with plenty of advance notice of our questions, we had the fisher German man and he brought a National Grid project manager. They were both totally unprepared. The National Grid project manager promised to clarify the plan for access by the end of the week, but the reply only after chasing came after three weeks and was just the usual minimal, meaningless words.

00:53:39:24 - 00:53:41:14

Traffic management.

00:53:41:25 - 00:53:45:08

If I could just ask you to wrap up your submission, please.

00:53:45:10 - 00:54:03:18

Yes, certainly. I am really concerned. It is causing us massive stress as the traffic disruptions is going to cause significant harm. Serious welfare issues for the livestock business. Damage to our business viability and even problems of how we're going to get to our house.

00:54:04:04 - 00:54:07:28

Thank you very much. Um, Mr. Rayner, please.

00:54:09:12 - 00:54:09:27

All right.

00:54:12:24 - 00:54:40:27

Yeah. Good morning. Uh, since 2022, we have had regular meetings with National Grid representatives to discuss three key questions and problems concerning our farm business. We still don't have answers to specific questions about major problems that we can see arising. These include main farm access, drainage, managing field operations and how we will operate our farming business.

00:54:42:18 - 00:54:45:14

We need to know so we can plan ahead.

00:54:47:11 - 00:55:22:00

We feel this is deliberate withholding of information. This is not a consultation. The pile on roots cuts right through the center of our farm, and the approximately 70 acres will be unfilmable. NJ have still not explained to us how tractors will cross this whole road. We need to know so we can plan again. This shows that National Grid has no interest in genuine consultation. Repeatedly we have asked how road access will be maintain to the farm.

00:55:22:02 - 00:55:56:20

For four years we have been fobbed off at our last meeting in January. A project manager from National Grid came to the meeting totally unprepared. Promised he'd get back to us with answers. Didn't. Finally, three, three weeks later, their response still fails to answer this problem. We need to know so we can plan. This is not meaningful consultation. We have rejected to a siting of a large compound on one of our fields.

00:55:57:00 - 00:56:33:06

We wanted it moved to the other side of that field. We have now been told after two years that they will not change the site because of two nearby residential properties. However, these properties will still be harmed by the same number of vehicle movements using the junction that will be created to access it from the T road. If we could talk to the person who made this decision, we would point out that these houses are further away than the two houses in the farmyard.

00:56:33:08 - 00:57:04:18

Mine and my daughters. There are also two houses in Little Cray which are near as well. We are not allowed to negotiate with the manager to alter outcomes. It feels as though the pressures of running a viable farm business, which today is difficult enough, has not been given due consideration or weight. This is hardly a consult consultation. We will lose 2025m of hedging, either grabbed out or cut down.

00:57:04:25 - 00:57:29:07

We will lose trees, including a row of hybrid elms planted in the 80s. These losses are irreplaceable. Pages and trees provide, as you know, a valuable nature resource which over a few working days will be gone. Our farm has more trees and hedges planted by me over my lifetime here than any other farm in the area.

00:57:29:09 - 00:57:31:02

If I could ask you to wrap up, please.

00:57:31:04 - 00:57:47:07

It will never be restored in my lifetime, if ever at all. The project so far has been presented as put up with it. We're not going to change. There is no two way discussion. This is not a consultation. Thank you.

00:57:47:09 - 00:57:51:29

Thank you, Mr. Rayner. And thank you all for your participation in this session.

00:57:53:29 - 00:58:10:11

The time is approaching 11:00 and as on the agenda, we will now have a short break. For those watching on the live stream. You'll need to refresh your browser page to view the hearing when we reconvene, and we will now adjourn and reconvene at 1120. Thank you very much.