

Roydon Parish Council submission Open Hearing 3

Roydon Parish Council's verbal submission today focuses on National Grid's ignoring of the Holford Rules around our village.

This disregard means that, uniquely along the Norwich-Tilbury route, Roydon **will be surrounded on three sides by 50-metre high pylons** - to the north, alongside Snow Street and Brewers Green, to the west along Darrow Lane and Hall Lane, and to the south through the Waveney Valley.

No other village from Norwich to Tilbury is impacted in such a dramatic way, no other village will be so significantly hemmed in by pylons and their cables.

Holford Rule 1... States that pylons should avoid, if possible, major areas of highest amenity value. However, supplementary notes state that routes should also minimise the effect on other special landscapes including those of county, district or local value.

Ignoring this, National Grid has routed pylons through the Waveney Valley, considered a Valued Landscape by Suffolk and Norfolk county councils, both Wildlife Trusts and residents. Details of this designation were included in the Valued Landscape Assessment from 2024 jointly commissioned by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils.

What makes the valley so special is its contrasting habitats of peatland fen, deciduous woodland and heath, specifically Wortham Ling, an SSSI, and Roydon Fen Local Nature Reserve, a spring fed fen habitat with deep peat soils, a rare survivor of the fens that were once were such a significant feature of this part of East Anglia, but which have largely been lost to agriculture and development. To compound the impact, the pylons will run through the narrow gap between these sites, seriously detracting from their setting.

This area is within a DEFRA funded Landscape Recovery Project (Waveney & Little Ouse Recovery Scheme) which seeks to enhance its biodiversity, landscape, heritage assets and their surroundings, and enable positive cultural and social benefits. These objectives will be adversely affected by the proposed route of the National Grid development.

Holford Rule 2... states that pylons should avoid smaller areas of high amenity value, such as areas of architectural, historic and archaeological interest.

However, the proposed pylon route National Grid has chosen has significant impacts on the setting of listed buildings in Roydon. For example, one pylon will be just 200m or so from the Grade 2 listed, 17th century Limetree Farm on Snow Street. A further pylon, at the point where the route turns sharply south, will also impact the setting of Limetree Farm and The Gables, another 17th century Grade II property currently owned by National Grid. To the south the setting of the Grade 1 listed St Remigius Church is impacted by at least four pylons to the west, south west and south, again in open ground currently used as pasture. Some of these pylons would be just a few hundred metres away in some cases but will look much closer purely because of their great size. The timber-framed Grade 2 listed Grove Farmhouse to the south of the A1066 will be similarly impacted.

Some of the route through the Waveney Valley runs close to the long-distance Angles Way footpath and the archaeological moated site of Bush Hall, a medieval house and non-designated heritage asset within the Diss and District Neighbourhood Plan. Excavations there recovered mediaeval and Roman remains.

Heron Meadow on Doit Lane, a valued Community Interest Company care farm and local community asset, will have at least one pylon in clear sight, about 100m to its north.

Holford Rule 3... states that all other things being equal, choose the most direct line, with no sharp changes of direction.

There is no greater example on the entire Norwich-Tilbury route where a village is so impacted by disregard for this rule.

The towers and cables will be the single most dominant feature of the landscape on three sides of the village, with two sharp changes of direction to the north-west and south-west of the village. In some cases the towers will be about 100-200 metres from properties, for example on Darrow Lane, at the western end of Snow Street and Hall Lane.

Routes with significantly less impact on people and their environment would either swing more gently through sparsely populated areas to the west of Bressingham and west of Wortham Ling, or more directly to the east of Diss following the approximate route of the A140.

Subsequent notes on Rule 3 state that where possible the Grid should choose inconspicuous locations for angle towers and other infrastructure.

There are very few inconspicuous places around our village, which lies in a largely flat and lightly wooded agricultural landscape especially to the north and west of the village.

This same point applies to **Holford Rule 4**, which states that routes should choose tree and hill backgrounds in preference to sky backgrounds, to help hide the impact of pylons.

Roydon is known for big sky views because of those landscape characteristics. Several of those views are protected under Policy 16 of the Diss and District Neighbourhood Plan, made in October 2023. These Key Views were chosen by the public before they ever knew of the Norwich-Tilbury project and will be devastated by the presence of pylons.

Key View 28 is from Darrow Lane to the north and east, where the pylons will come down across the fields from Burston. Key Views 24 and 25 seek to protect the views south of the village. View 25 is from the churchyard of Grade 1 listed St Remigius Church. View 24 is south, east and west from village footpath 15.

In conclusion, the Holford Rules exist to minimise the impact of pylons on people and the landscape but it's hard to think of anything more intrusive and prominent around our village than 50-metre pylons and cables. We ask, what is the point of the Holford Rules if National Grid are going to so egregiously ignore them around our parish?

National Grid repeatedly talks about the prohibitive cost of changing its preferred route. But throughout this project compromises that involve additional costs have been made to reduce significant impacts on communities, landscapes and residents' health and wellbeing. Why should Roydon be any different? And would changes to the route here really make such a dramatic difference to the overall cost?

To help make our case we ask that the Planning Inspectorate come to our village and walk the route with us, so you can see first hand how this proposed route will damage our community.

Thank you for your time.