

Cllr Mike Steel

I am the Essex County Councillor, Chelmsford City Councillor, and Parish Councillor for the communities to the west of Chelmsford serving for the last 25 years. Ten of my parishes are directly affected by the proposed overhead line route. Across all three of my elected roles, I have been consistent in opposing the pylons to the west of Chelmsford, which would cut through previously unspoilt countryside. I have supported alternative routing options and undergrounding, and I have participated fully in every consultation — both as a councillor and as a private resident.

Given that these hearings are focused on how the application will be examined, I will not repeat all of my objections.

Instead, I want to highlight a specific design issue raised by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) in

AENC ARC ENV REP 0031, Volume 6, Chapter 4 – Project Description (August 2012)

This document describes a pre submission design change in the Walthams, with

and Little Waltham — the narrow pinch point often referred to locally as the “Waltham gap”. NGET replaced the standard

50 metre pylons (TB136–TB142) with lower 40 metre lattice pylons, which require

This change also introduced an additional pylon, including TB141, positioned immediately beside Chelmsford Road — the main pedestrian and vehicular route linking the two villages.

From extensive engagement with residents, I know that the proposed siting of lower height TB141 is a major local concern. From a distance, the top of the reduced height pylons may be less visible, but close up their bulkier form is ugly and overbearing and closer to the road, closer to the Great Waltham Conservation Area and closer to housing.

Crucially, the same NGET document explicitly requests flexibility to revert to standard pylons if the proposals are finalised. This could also remove the need for the extra pylon and allow relocation.

I strongly urge the Examining Authority to consider — and, if possible, require — this design change. Reinstating just two

standard height pylons in this section would allow TB141 to be moved further from the

main road, and nearby heritage assets, more towards the centre of the field, and significantly reducing the overbearing impact on the much used road and footway.

Whilst I would prefer that the route did not pass through the Waltham gap at all, if it must, this is a real opportunity to improve the visual impact on local residents and the historic environment — with no disadvantage or additional cost to National Grid, or even a saving with 1 fewer pylon.

A win for both parties.