

Appendix K Historic Environment

Pylons East Anglia Ltd – Heritage Response to Document 8.4.1: Applicant’s Comments on Relevant Representations

1. Introduction

This submission provides Pylons East Anglia Ltd’s assessment of the Applicant’s Document 8.4.1, *Applicants’ Comments on Relevant Representations*, submitted following the Planning Inspector’s Rule 17 request. The Rule 17 request appears to have arisen from concerns regarding the Applicant’s approach to consultation and assessment, including the treatment of heritage assets, the adequacy of responses to consultees, and the robustness of the Applicant’s methodology.

Pylons East Anglia has reviewed the revised historic environment material and sets out below a summary of the outstanding matters that, in its view, remain unresolved.

2. Background to the Rule 17 Request

The Planning Inspectorate issued a Rule 17 request following concerns that the Applicant had not adequately addressed consultation responses. These concerns included:

- **Scoping Methodology:** The Applicant continued to apply a broad-brush scoping approach despite the Planning Inspectorate advising it was not in a position to scope out heritage matters without case-by-case consideration.
- **Responses to Historic England:** The Applicant did not adopt Historic England’s advice to treat designed landscapes and views as cultural assets in their own right, nor did it undertake the requested asset-specific assessments in urban contexts.
- **Responses to Stakeholders:** Responses provided to local authorities, statutory consultees, and community groups were largely generic and did not demonstrate how feedback influenced the development of the scheme.

Following this, the Applicant submitted Document 8.4.1 to provide more detailed responses. The Pylons East Anglia has reviewed the revised heritage information and concludes that significant concerns remain.

3. Planning Policy, Legal Duties, and the Planning Balance

3.1 Critical National Priority Infrastructure

The Applicant reiterates that the scheme is a Critical National Priority (CNP) project and that the need for energy security and meeting national net zero targets outweighs residual heritage effects. However, the Pylons East Anglia notes that:

- The Applicant’s scoping methodology has excluded a substantial number of heritage assets on the basis of distance thresholds alone.

- As a consequence, the overall scale of heritage impact is materially understated in both individual and cumulative terms.

3.2 Assessment of Harm

The Applicant concludes that the scheme would result in no more than “*Moderate Less than Substantial Harm*” to any designated heritage asset. However, a range of statutory and non-statutory consultees have set out evidence indicating that, in several cases, impacts may reach the higher end of the less-than-substantial spectrum or, in certain cases, constitute substantial harm.

3.3 Policy Compliance

The Applicant states that its methodology accords with NPS EN-1, NPS EN-5, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and statutory duties. A number of representors, including the Pylons East Anglia, dispute this position.

4. Compliance with Legislation and Policy

To satisfy the Rule 17 request, the Applicant must demonstrate compliance with the following.

4.1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – Sections 66 and 72

These sections require *special regard* to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings, and the character and appearance of conservation areas.

Pylons East Anglia considers that the Applicant has not demonstrated that such special regard has been given.

4.2 Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

The Regulations require the Applicant to provide the information reasonably necessary for the Secretary of State to reach a reasoned conclusion.

The scoping out of numerous assets without individualised assessment is considered insufficient to meet this requirement.

4.3 NPPF Chapter 16

The NPPF requires:

- Identification of all heritage assets likely to be affected.
- Assessment of their significance, including the contribution of setting.
- Allocation of appropriate weight to conservation (Paragraph 212).

The Applicant has not, in the view of the Pylons East Anglia, fully complied with these requirements.

4.4 Holford and Horlock Rules

These industry principles seek to avoid areas of high amenity, including historic landscapes. Pylons East Anglia considers these have not been successfully applied along the route, given the number of conservation areas and registered parks and gardens affected.

4.5 National Policy Statements EN-1 and EN-5

NPS policy requires alternatives to be robustly assessed. Pylons East Anglia considers the Applicant has not adequately assessed reasonable alternatives (e.g., HVDC undergrounding), which could reduce or avoid harm to heritage assets.

5. Consideration of Alternatives and Consultation Feedback

5.1 Undergrounding Options

Despite requests from Historic England, local authorities, and community groups, undergrounding has been discounted. The Applicant argues it is not justified under NPS EN-5; however, this position does not reflect the scale of cumulative impact on heritage.

5.2 HVDC Alternatives

Pylons East Anglia notes that HVDC undergrounding would significantly reduce heritage impacts. Stakeholders consider that the Applicant has not undertaken the level of assessment required, including in light of established case law such as *Forge Field v Sevenoaks*, which requires alternatives to be examined where harm is identified.

6. Methodological Issues and Scoping Concerns

6.1 Assessment Methodology

The Applicant's heritage baseline relies primarily on desk-based and algorithmic assessments. Pylons East Anglia considers that this approach is inconsistent with best practice, including Historic England's staged approach, which requires on-site assessment to understand how setting contributes to significance.

The Applicant states that the methodology was developed in consultation with Historic England and local authorities; however, ongoing requests from these consultees suggest continuing concerns.

6.2 Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs)

Pylons East Anglia remains concerned that NDHAs have been inadequately assessed. There has been no assessment whatsoever of buildings that have a level of heritage interest sufficient to be identified as an NDHA. Furthermore, the scoping out of NDHAs on the basis of low or negligible value, without detailed evaluation of setting or potential interest, represents—in Pylons East Anglia's view—an incomplete assessment.

6.3 Distance-Based Scoping

The Applicant's reliance on distance-based criteria to exclude assets from further study is considered arbitrary. Historic England guidance emphasises that setting is not solely defined by distance and requires a case-specific approach. Pylons East Anglia considers that many assets with partial setting overlap have not been properly assessed.

6.4 Underestimation of Harm

Across the route, Pylons East Anglia considers that the Applicant has underestimated the degree of harm to listed buildings, conservation areas, and scheduled monuments. While direct physical impact may not occur, setting impacts are still considered to be significant.

6.5 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation proposals—primarily involving screen planting and route refinement—are considered insufficient to address the scale of visual and experiential changes associated with 50 m pylons. The Applicant’s own assessment confirms that significant visual effects extend up to 1.5 km (Environmental Statement, Chapter 13, 6.13). Pylons East Anglia notes that undergrounding has been accepted by the Applicant as effective in removing heritage harm in the Dedham Vale National Landscape.

7. Data Accuracy and Cross-Referencing

A number of inaccuracies were identified during the statutory consultation phase, including errors in data tables and inconsistencies between the Historic Environment Baseline Report and the Preliminary Environmental Information Report. Pylons East Anglia is unclear whether these discrepancies have been fully addressed.

8. Conclusion

Pylons East Anglia acknowledges the Applicant’s provision of additional information in Document 8.4.1. However, after review, significant concerns remain regarding compliance with statutory duties, adherence to national policy, assessment methodology, consideration of alternatives, and the overall level of harm to heritage assets.

Pylons East Anglia respectfully submits that the issues identified above warrant continued scrutiny through the Examination process, and that further clarification, assessment, and justification from the Applicant are required to enable a fully informed decision by the Secretary of State.