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Norwich to Tilbury

Volume 5: Reports and Statements

Document: 5.9.23 Draft Statement of Common Ground - Thurrock
Airfield - Tracked Changes Version

Final Issue C

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Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure)
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nationalgrid

Revision History

Version	Date	Submitted at
A	29 August 2025	DCO Application
B	26 February 2026	Deadline 1
<u>C</u>	<u>12 May 2026</u>	<u>Deadline 4</u>

Thurrock Airfield

Draft Statement of Common Ground

1. ~~1~~ Purpose of the Statement of Common Ground

This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared to outline the areas of agreement and any remaining points of discussion between National Grid and Thurrock Airfield regarding potential aviation impacts in relation to the proposed Norwich to Tilbury Project.

The aim is to clarify the shared understanding of any issues and facilitate an efficient resolution process.

2. ~~2~~ Parties to the SoCG

This SoCG is agreed between National Grid and the owner and operator of Thurrock Airfield.

3. Summary of Matters Under Discussion

As requested by the Examining Authority, the below table provides an 'at a glance' summary of matters which are under discussion, together with a deadline by which such matters are expected to be resolved.

<u>SoCG ID</u>	<u>Summary of matter under discussion</u>	<u>Deadline for resolution</u>
<u>7.1</u>	<u>The Applicant has proposed a commitment to inform the Operator of any proposed and relevant adjustments to the Project alignment within the Limits of Deviation (LoD) to ensure potential adverse aviation impacts can be appropriately considered and the operability of the airfield is not detrimentally affected. The Operator is seeking further assurances regarding the continued proposed use of low height pylons within the vicinity of the aerodrome.</u>	<u>Prior to Deadline 5, following the further development and agreement of commitment requirements and mechanisms, responding also to the recently dismissed housing development planning appeal at the site.</u>

4. ~~3~~-Background

4.1 ~~3.1~~-Description of the Project/Development

National Grid Electricity Transmission plc ('National Grid') owns and maintains the national high voltage electricity transmission network throughout England and Wales. The transmission network connects the power from where it is generated to the regional Distribution Network Operators who then supply businesses and homes.

National Grid holds the Transmission Licence for England and Wales, and its statutory duty is to develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated and economical system of electricity transmission and to facilitate competition in the generation and supply of electricity, as set out in the Electricity Act 1989.

National Grid has developed plans for Norwich to Tilbury (referred to as the 'Project'). The Project would support the UK's net zero target through the connection of new low carbon energy generation in East Anglia and by reinforcing the transmission network.

The Project comprises reinforcement of the transmission network between the existing Norwich Main Substation in Norfolk and Tilbury Substation in Essex, via Bramford Substation, the new East Anglia Connection Node (EACN) Substation and the new Tilbury North Substation.

The reinforcement is needed because the existing transmission network, even with current upgrading, will not have sufficient capacity for the new renewable energy (a substantial proportion of which would be generated by offshore wind) that is expected to connect to the network over the next 10 years and beyond. Completion of the Project, together with other new reinforcements across the country, will meet this future energy transmission demand both in East Anglia and across the UK.

The Project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), and National Grid is seeking development consent under statutory procedures set by government. NSIPs are projects of certain types, over a certain size, which are considered by the government to be of national importance, hence permission to build them needs to be given at a national level, by the relevant Secretary of State (in this case the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero). Instead of applying to the local authority for planning permission, the developer must apply to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order (DCO) that would grant development consent.

National Grid has submitted an application for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate. The Examining Authority (consisting of five examining inspectors), after a period of public examination, will make their recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, who in turn will decide on whether development consent should be granted for the Project.

The Project is identified as critical to delivering a network which supports the clean power pathways for 2030 delivery.

The Planning Act places duties on National Grid as the DCO applicant to consult with prescribed or affected persons as well as to take account of responses to consultation and

publicity. In accordance with these statutory requirements, National Grid has undertaken two non-statutory consultations and one statutory consultation to inform its proposals, together with further targeted consultations.

5. ~~4~~ Stakeholder Interests

The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) has effect for the decisions by the Secretary of State on applications for energy developments that are nationally significant under the Planning Act 2008. Amongst other impacts, it recognises that all aerodromes can be affected by new energy development and the need, therefore, for NSIPs to be developed collaboratively alongside aerodromes so that safety, operations and capabilities are not adversely affected. Reciprocally, EN-1 states that it is essential for aerodrome operators to work collaboratively with energy infrastructure developers essential for net zero, recognising the need for the important economic and social benefits of aerodromes to be balanced with the urgent need for new energy developments which bring about a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits.

EN-1 places a requirement on DCO applicants to consult with any aerodrome likely to be affected by the proposed development in preparing an assessment of the proposal on aviation interests. Thurrock Airfield was identified and included in the scope for assessment, with its runway end being located within 5 km of the Project's proposed overhead line alignment, recognising the potential for the proximity of the infrastructure to impact aircraft flight patterns and aerodrome operations. In accordance with EN-1 requirements, the operator of Thurrock Airfield was identified as a priority stakeholder for engagement in relation to aviation impact considerations.

The chronology of National Grid's engagement with Thurrock Airfield to date, and the evolution of the Project's design is summarised as follows:

- 2022
 - National Grid presented information on how the Project was evolving from the evaluation of strategic options to a preliminary preferred graduated swathe within which new infrastructure (pylons and underground cables) could be located as well as a proposed new substation site on the Tendring Peninsula, as described within the **7.18 2022 - Corridor and Preliminary Routeing and Siting Study [APP-356]**
 - 21 April - 16 June non-statutory consultation
- 2023
 - Development of the 2023 Preferred Draft Alignment, responding to feedback and other studies, as described within the **7.20 2023 - Design Development Report [APP-358]**
 - 27 June - 21 August non-statutory consultation on the 2023 Preferred Draft Alignment
 - 24 July meeting at Thurrock Airfield between National Grid, its appointed aviation consultants Alan Stratford and Associates (ASA) and the Managing Director of General Aero Services (the Operator)
- 2024

- Development of the 2024 Preferred Draft Alignment, responding to feedback and other studies, incorporating an additional pylon in this area to reduce heights and improve clearance margins, as described within the 7.21 2024 - Design Development Report **[APP-359]**
- 10 April - 26 July Statutory Consultation on the 2024 Preferred Draft Alignment
- 1 May meeting between National Grid (with ASA) and the operator of Thurrock Airfield. Matters raised included:
 - The height of the proposed overhead line, due to the high terrain it would be located on, would make airfield take-offs and approaches marginal, with minimum clearances;
 - The proposed alignment position would cause pilots to fly at a lower level closer to residential areas to the east of the airfield, risking noise impacts;
 - The area between the existing 132kV overhead line and the proposed overhead line would be unsuitable for emergency landings, increasing risks to aircraft;
 - The potential for an alternative alignment comprising low height pylons parallel to the existing 132kV overhead line; this suggestion was positively received by the Operator.
- 2025
 - Development of the proposed Project Alignment, responding to feedback, altering the design to use lower height pylons and re-locating the overhead line approximately 700m west, re-orientated to parallel the existing 132kV line, minimising distances between the two overhead lines to enable the Project Alignment to benefit from shielding from the more prominent obstacle and to avoid aviation risks associated with land availability for emergency landings. The proposed use of lower height pylons improves clearance distances for overflying aircraft. Described in 5.15 Design Development Report **[APP-122]**
 - 25 February - 27 March targeted non-statutory consultation on proposed changes to the 2024 Preferred Draft Alignment near Langdon Hills Golf Club
 - 3 October correspondence notifying of DCO acceptance and publication of 6.15.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 15.2 - Review of Aviation Impact **[APP-267]**
- 2026
 - 16 January [National Grid](#) correspondence regarding proposed commitment in relation to Limits of Deviation (LoD)
 - [3 February to 14 April correspondence regarding Stakeholder review of proposed commitment, draft SoCG submission for Examining Authority Deadline 1, and proposed final SoCG submission by Deadline 4.](#)
 - [15 April to 28 April correspondence from Operator requesting additional clarification regarding LoD parameters, with National Grid providing detailed explanation, and](#)

[Operator seeking further assurances regarding continued agreement of use of low height pylons within the vicinity of the aerodrome.](#)

6. ~~5~~-Matters Agreed

ID	Issue	Thurrock Airfield position (including date)	National Grid response (including date)	Relevant documentation
5.16.1 <u>6.1</u>	Proposed Project Alignment and Impact Assessment Conclusions	<p>Strongly object to the proposed 2024 Preferred Draft Alignment height and location in the vicinity of Thurrock Airfield runway 25; concern for serious negative impacts to safety of aircraft operations; request for undergrounding of cables as an alternative to the overhead line. (July 2024)</p> <p>Thurrock Airfield is content, following implementation of design changes, that adverse aviation impacts have been minimised. Furthermore, the airfield concurs with the assessment that the proposed Project Alignment will not be detrimental to the operability of the airfield. (July 2025)</p>	<p>Further design changes have been implemented in response to stakeholder feedback received regarding the 2024 Preferred Draft Alignment during the statutory consultation and are assessed to minimise adverse aviation impacts. These include altering the design to lower height pylons and re-locating and re-orientating the alignment to parallel the existing 132kV overhead line. It is assessed that, in view of the existence of the 132kV overhead line in the location, the proposed Project Alignment will not be detrimental to the operability of Thurrock airfield. The need for underground cables is therefore not justified on the grounds of aviation impacts. (April 2025)</p>	<p>Impact assessment summary and technical drawings; Aerodrome Assessment Summary – Thurrock v3 Jun25 and Technical Drawing 01_220101_130_R evA; 6.15.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 15.2 – Review of Aviation Impact [APP267]</p>

7. ~~6~~-Matters Currently Under Discussion

ID	Issue	Thurrock Airfield position (including date)	National Grid position (including date)	Relevant documentation
6.1 <u>7.1</u>	Limits of Deviation Commitment	Thurrock Airfield is currently reviewing this matter and the associated relevant documentation and will respond to confirm its position as soon as possible. (February 2026)	The Project limits of deviation (LoD) as defined in Article 5 (limits of deviation) of 3.1 Draft Development Consent Order [APP-056] and the lines and situations shown on Volume 2.3 Works Plans (and Table of Parameters contained within the Works Plans) allow for adjustment to the final positioning of permanent Project features in accordance with the limits set. National Grid recognises the potential for allowable localised adjustments to pylon design heights and lateral positions to increase adverse impacts on aircraft taking off from and approaching Thurrock airfield by altering overflight clearance distances from the Project overhead line or limiting shielding effects provided by the existing PAB overhead line. To ensure the operability of the airfield is not detrimentally affected, National Grid commits to informing the operator of proposed and relevant adjustments within the LoD to ensure the potential aviation impacts of these adjustments can be appropriately considered. This commitment is applicable to the LoD of pylons TB240 to TB242 whilst the aerodrome remains operational.	3.1 Draft Development Consent Order [APP-056] 6.15.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 15.2 – Review of Aviation Impact [APP-267] 2.3 Works Plans - Section H [APP-024]

ID	Issue	Thurrock Airfield position (including date)	National Grid position (including date)	Relevant documentation
			<p>Paragraphs 15.3.25 to 15.3.26 of 6.15.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 15.2 - Review of Aviation Impact [APP-267] explain consideration of the LoD within aviation impact assessments. Table A15.2.10 of the same document identifies pylons TB240 to TB242 as being within Thurrock's runway splay. 2.3 Works Plans - Section H [APP-024] are relevant to pylons within the vicinity of Thurrock airfield.</p> <p>(January 2026)</p>	

8. ~~7~~-Signatures

This Statement of Common Ground is agreed upon by the undersigned parties:

For National Grid

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

For Thurrock Airfield

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

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