

Representation Regarding Asset 4081 — Roman Villa & Hunting Lodge Complex, Fordham
Submitted in connection with the National Grid (NG) Infrastructure Application

1. Significance and Valuation of Asset 4081

In my view, Asset 4081 — the Roman hunting lodge at Fordham — has been significantly undervalued by National Grid. The designation of a medium value fails to reflect the true archaeological importance of this site. Of particular note is the discovery of an indoor fountain (piscina), which NG has not mentioned at all in its assessment. This feature is of exceptional rarity: only two such fountains have been found in the UK, and only a handful exist across the rest of Europe. Further significant finds include Roman and Saxon burial grounds. Rural Roman burial grounds are rare; those of high status, evidenced by lead-lined coffins, are rarer still. A third Roman burial remains in situ, with further burials likely. NG has also failed to mention a complete child Saxon burial, nor the subsequent discovery of remains of at least four other individuals.

In addition to the bathhouse and what NG describes as an entertainment complex (more accurately characterised as a hunting lodge, given the substantial quantity of deer bone recovered, some bearing arrow damage), the site encompasses Roman and Saxon burial grounds of considerable importance. One find from this site was featured in *Britannia*, published by the Roman Society — a major academic publication.

The site is almost certainly connected to three other Roman sites located approximately half a mile away in Fossetts Lane. NG's proposals would pass through those sites as well.

2. Inadequacy of Mitigation Assessment

I strongly dispute NG's assessment that the post-mitigation impact is only 'low adverse' and 'minor'. NG's own documentation acknowledges that a portion of the asset would be destroyed entirely, and that the setting would be irrevocably harmed by the proximity of the proposed pylons.

Destruction cannot be mitigated. The current setting of the site commands views towards Roman Colchester on the hill — the likely origin point of visitors to the complex in antiquity. A 50-metre-high pylon in this setting would cause permanent and irreversible harm to that historical landscape. This is not a matter capable of mitigation, and it is inappropriate to characterise the residual harm as minor.

Pylon TB047, specifically, would be positioned directly above known Roman archaeology situated beneath our southern dig site fence and extending approximately 30 metres beyond it. This area was planned as Phase 4 of the excavation; the dig is currently in Phase 3.

I draw the Inspector's attention to the following passage from the Secretary of State's decision letter for the Five Estuaries offshore wind farm, dated 17 December 2025:

"The Secretary of State considers preservation by record does not amount to mitigation of harm for archaeological remains..."

This principle applies directly here. NG's proposed approach of surveys, trial trenching, removal of finds, and demolition of any structural remains (walls, floors and the like) constitutes destruction by record, not mitigation. It would permanently deny the local community, future researchers, and future generations of archaeologists — amateur and professional alike — the opportunity to study these remains in situ.

3. Factual Inaccuracies in NG's Evidence

NG's documentation contains material factual errors that undermine the reliability of its assessment:

- NG states that the dig ran until 2021 and has concluded. This is incorrect. The excavation is still active and is expected to continue for several years to come.
- The geophysical surveys were conducted in 2013 and 2014. NG's characterisation of the timeline is therefore also inaccurate in this respect.
- NG makes no mention of the indoor fountain (piscina), the child Saxon burial, the additional Saxon burials, or the high-status Roman burials in lead-lined coffins.

4. Community and Educational Value

NG's assessment entirely disregards the profound community and educational value of this ongoing excavation. The impact of the scheme will fall not only upon archaeology in the ground, but upon the community that has been working on this site since 2015 — a community that, in my submission, should be allowed to continue.

Participants in the excavation have included:

- Students from across Europe;
- A professor of archaeology from Argentina, who returns as a regular participant;
- A family from Australia;
- Approximately 30 regular volunteers from Essex and Suffolk;
- Children from the Colchester branch of The Young Archaeologists Club, who visit and participate in the dig — a genuinely rare opportunity for under-16s to engage with live archaeological fieldwork.

This is not merely an asset to be assessed in isolation. It is an active, living archaeological project with local, national, and international reach.

5. Additional medieval site

Amongst the three other Roman sites (between pylons TB043 & TB044) in Fossetts lane there is a medieval site. This been on the HER for a long time and is listed as a probable moated site. It is sited right next to the pylon TB043, so is under threat.

Geophysics and other research suggest it dates from at least 1250 (dated coin found), and pottery finds suggest it existed until the late 16th, maybe early 17th century.

Because of the dateable finds and its position in the parish, this is highly likely to be the lost Norman manor hall of Great Fordham (aka Fordham Magna).

The sites of the three other manors are known as later halls and still exist, while the location of the Great Fordham manor was "lost to memory" even in the 18th century.

6. Conclusion

The whole of this area is of local and national importance. Asset 4081 has been systematically under-assessed by NG. The rare finds, the ongoing community excavation, the burial grounds, and the irreplaceable setting all demand a higher

significance rating and a genuine re-examination of the proposed route in this area.

I also note, with regret, that I have raised these matters with National Grid over a period of three years without any meaningful engagement with the substance of my concerns. I ask the Inspector to give proper weight to this representation.

Additional information regarding:

2. Inadequacy of Mitigation Assessment

Pylon TB047.

Fordham Local History Society/Colchester Archaeological Group have just discovered (26.4.2026) remains of building foundations which confirms our belief that there are further Roman buildings on the site that lie within NG's proposed planned working area.

This means that the Roman site is larger, more complex and probably more important than first thought.

The entire field must be protected and avoided altogether.

Dear Planning Inspectorate,

I wish to draw your attention to the serious effects that National Grid's (NG) plans will have on the roads of Fordham.

I have previously been preoccupied with the visual blight on our beautiful valley and the devastation to our archaeology that the pylon route will cause and have neglected to deal with our roads; I am now addressing that omission.

But first I will talk about our roads as they are; having been on Fordham Parish Council for some six years and now chairman, I can tell you that it is always our poor, crumbling and potholed roads that come up all the time and is the bane of our parishioners. Many have had burst tyres, broken wheels and even ended up beached on the edge of a road. The main reason for this is the dozens of HGVs and enormous tractor and trailers we get passing through every day, our roads were not designed to cope with this amount of heavy traffic.

NG's plans will increase the road damage and inconvenience to parishioners considerably.

I have attached a map with NG's plans and highlighted the three crossing points where their access road crosses our roads at A, B & C.

Note: south means looking south and north, looking north.

Point A. (what 3 words location: ///unpainted.announced.indicates)

Fossetts Lane 2 north.



Fossetts Lane 2 south.



As you can see, this is an extremely narrow road, even a car and bicycle cannot pass each other, in the “south” picture the road bends to the right and goes down-hill, it is a totally blind bend and dangerous at the best of times. NG’s very heavy plant and vehicles will crush this tiny road into the mud, it frequently has water running down it from the surround fields and springs. Hence “Fossetts” Lane. There is also a public footpath entering here, sign visible to left.

Point B. (what 3 words location: <http://whistle.hubcaps.ferrets>)

Fossetts Lane 1 north.



Fossetts Lane 1 south.



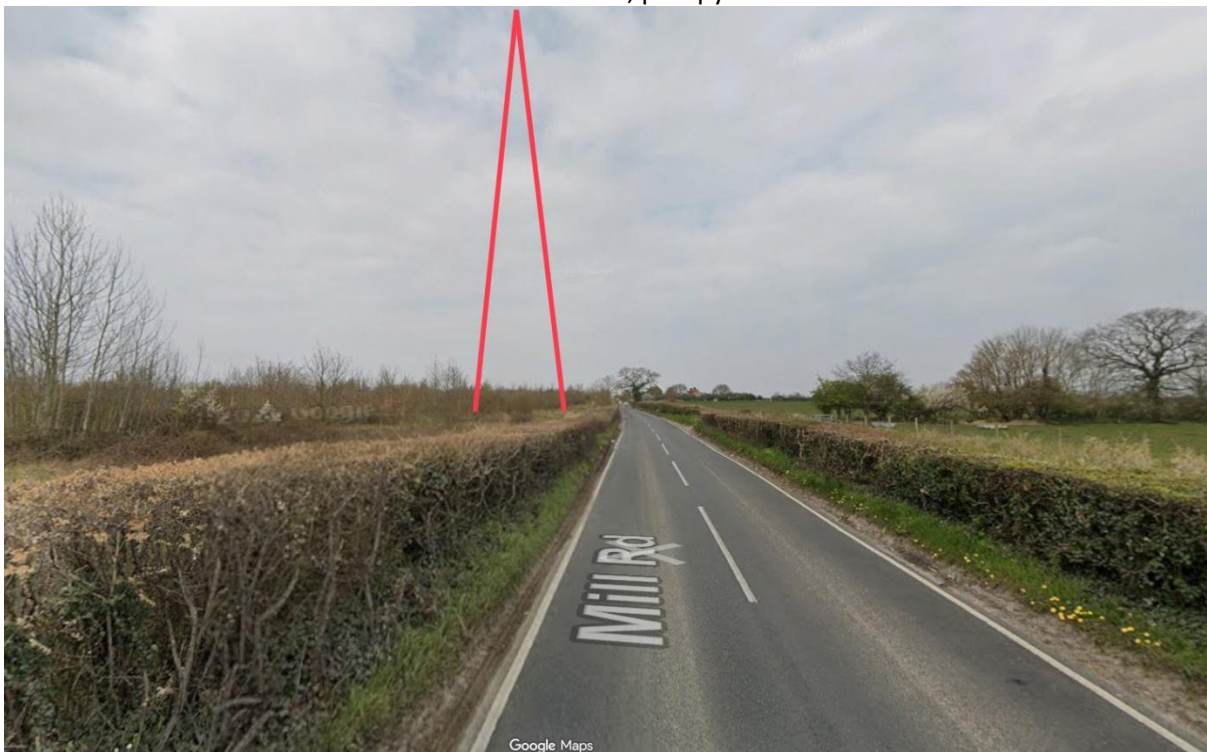
Again, this is a very narrow, single track section of Fossetts Lane, but this time NG thought it would be a good idea to put their crossing point between two blind bends!

The two bends are only 75 metres apart! Their road will also cut a swath through 135m of trees planted by the woodland trust.

On a similar subject: immediately south of pylon TB047, their access road cuts, diagonally though a hedge line, but it's not just low hedging, there are mature trees all along that field boundary. There are [REDACTED], not to mention colonies of rooks, jackdaws and a barn owl nest.

Point C: [REDACTED]

Mill Road north, plus pylon.



This is where the real damage to our roads occurs as it is the access road into Fordham from the A12. I have added, in red, NG's "welcome to Fordham" pylon where one is proposed to be sited.
Mill Road south.



When NG's multiple HGVs, cranes diggers etc. leave the A12 to get to Fordham they will pass down Fiddlers Hill, which has two blind bends on it, across the River Colne over a humped back bridge, then up Mill Road around another blind bend. They will then turn left or right onto their access road. Parts of these two roads are already in a very poor state of repair and frequently suffer from water damage from river flooding and field runoff. The turning action of NG's heavy vehicles, in and out of their access road, will chew up our roads and make a mess of the whole area. There is also the added danger to road users caused by NG's vehicles leaving, entering and crossing our road. Below is the view looking up Mill Road, close to the house on the bend (visible on the left of the road in the picture above), it is a dangerous bend at the best of times.

Mill Road north 2.



Ironically, our road in the last three pictures looks in fair condition; the worst parts at present are down Fiddlers Hill and the 200m section north of the bridge.

I am unable to join you on your accompanied site inspection on the 27th of May as I will be away. Please include Fiddlers Hill, Mill Road and Fossetts Lane in your route if possible.

If you will be coming up Mill Road, there is a lane, with turning space you can park in, just before three terrace cottages on the right. (What 3 words location: [///heightens.commuted.sprouts](http://heightens.commuted.sprouts)).

This is a very good vantage point to look across the Colne River valley to Colchester; the water tower (aka "Jumbo") is visible, on the horizon, nearly four and a half miles away!

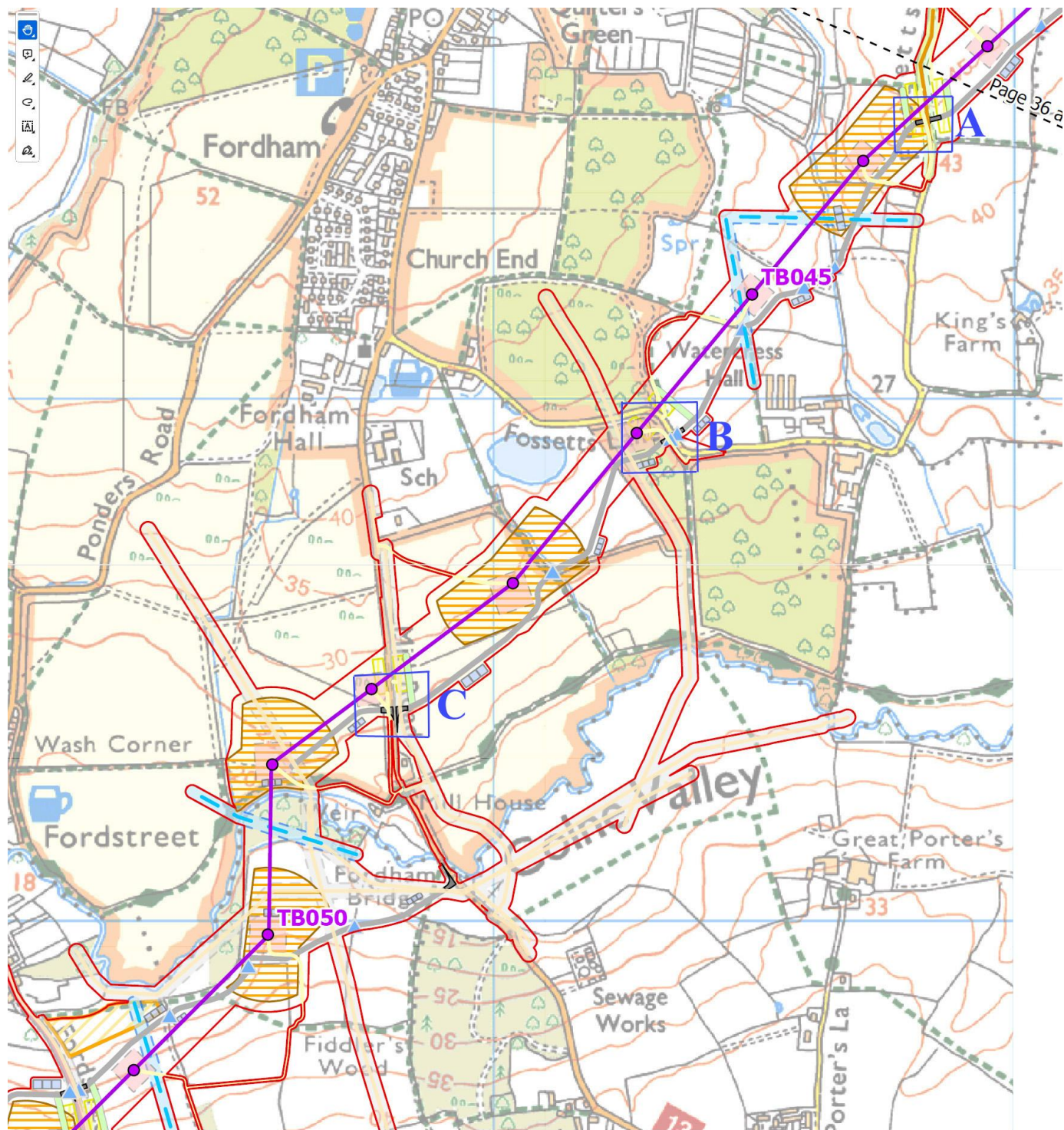
The pylons will march from left to right across your field of vision in the field immediately in front of you.

FYI, our Roman dig site is in the top right hand corner (north-east) of the same field.

Please consider all of the above when making your decision regarding our landscape and heritage.

Regards [REDACTED].

Fordham Parish Council (chairman).



Dig panorama plus pylons

