

Andrew Buxton [REDACTED]

I spoke right at the end of ISH2 Day 2 on the subject of heritage at Little Wenham Castle which is a scheduled monument, first scheduled in 1936, and is covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 which creates a legally binding schedule for any works that could damage or alter these sites. Historic England state in their report dated January 28 2026 that "the national importance of the site is not in question". The National Planning Policy Framework backs this up by saying that the threshold for acceptable harm to a scheduled monument is exceptionally high. After my presentation to ISH2 the Chairman asked National Grid to address my points in writing. As far as I am aware that has not happened. I have looked through National Grid's replies on Oral Cases in ISH2 and can find no reference and have been in regular contact with the Inspectorate staff but no result.

In an earlier presentation to OFH1 dated February 23 I described National Grid's approach to heritage issues as sloppy because their records did not appear to recognise that scheduled monuments and their settings require special attention. For instance on map 6.11.F2 dated Aug 21 2025 showing Listed buildings only 2 of the 8 Listed buildings in the setting are shown and the fact that the Castle is scheduled is not even recorded. Given the NPPF guidance it is also extraordinary that National Grid think that they have no need to comment on apparent disagreements with Historic England (ES 6.11.A7 2.60) who say there is not substantial harm but there is mid level harm. Historic England also assesses that there is harm to the Grade 2 star tithe barn which is part of the setting and is the nearest building to the pylon line. Given that the barn is part of the important setting at Little Wenham it is also covered by the 1979 Act. National Grid say in their assessment of harm that the project will be only partially visible due to distance and some vegetation. In the flat land of Suffolk that is not true. It is interesting that National Grid say, in another context (APP-224 8.3) that " Significant effects are identified within 1.5km of overground infrastructure " but in the context of Little Wenham are trying to say that a distance of 1.2km on flat Suffolk farmland is a long way. My guess is that Historic England will know much more about scheduled monuments than National Grid.

In my view, the Inspectors were quite right in their schedule of questions dated March 20 HE1.7 to ask National Grid why a mid level of harm is acceptable given the 1979 Act and the NPPF guidance.

I am not an objector to the project which is needed to improve the infrastructure of the UK but the construction should not be driven purely by monetary price. I have here an email from National Grid's agents dated April 8 which says that " under Ofgem's funding rules we are required to use the lowest cost option that is acceptable" and I remember at ISH2 [REDACTED] making the same point. The setting at Little Wenham is recognised as exceptional, it is not only one of the first brick built buildings in the UK but also is one of the finest examples of mediaeval domestic farm development. There is a considerable community cost to this development in addition to the monetary costs which should also be taken into account. I would also like to draw your attention to the submission dated July 24, 2024, from the Churches Conservation Trust which comments on the effect on the Grade 1 Listed church which is also part of the setting.

I ended my written follow up to ISH2 by saying that in 100 years time National Grid will have long gone but Little Wenham Castle which has been in Suffolk since 1260, will still be part of Britain's heritage. It would be a shame if it was known as the Castle by the Pylons.