

Three-Minute Oral Presentation

Good morning. My name is Carolyn Mason, and I have lived in Ardleigh for over 20 years. I support renewable energy and recognise the need to upgrade the grid. But this proposal asks our small rural communities of Ardleigh and Little Bromley to accept permanent damage to some of our best farmland, when food security has never mattered more.

My objection is simple: National Grid would take irreplaceable land, conflict with national policy, and place an unfair burden on our communities.

This is not ordinary farmland. The project's own documents say the proposals will "*result in the damage & loss of prime agricultural land*". Much of it is **Grade 1 and Grade 2**: the best and most versatile soil we have.

Once cut through by haul roads, cable trenches, compounds, three substations and one interconnector, this land cannot be restored simply by putting the soil back.

National policy recognises this. The National Planning Policy Framework says Best and Most Versatile land should be protected, soil used prudently, and significant adverse impacts avoided, not softened afterwards. This proposal does not avoid harm. It creates it.

The **Government Food Strategy** commits the UK to maintaining domestic food production. The UK Food Security Report 2024 shows food production is already under pressure from extreme weather, climate volatility and import dependence. In that context, losing our best farmland is not a local inconvenience. **It is a national concern.**

The burden of National Grid's proposal falls with extraordinary force on Ardleigh and Little Bromley. Alongside Five Estuaries, North Falls and Tarcon, the cumulative loss, estimated at over **170 hectares**, is far greater than any single project suggests. For two small rural parishes, this is not a balanced share of national infrastructure. It is a disproportionate concentration of harm.

And the harm is not only agricultural. It would industrialise our countryside, change the character of our villages, affect wildlife networks, and add to existing pressure from housing, logistics, warehousing and mineral extraction. All take land away from production and enjoyment.

That is why reasonable alternatives must be properly tested: offshore, brownfield or industrial sites, and undergrounding where it would reduce land take. Routes can change. Engineering can bring new opportunities. **But Grade 1 soil, once lost, cannot be replaced.**

I ask the Examining Authority to give real weight to what would be lost: irreplaceable farmland, rural character, nature recovery, and local resilience. Renewable energy should not mean sacrificing the land that feeds us when less damaging options have not been fully tested. Thank you.

Carolyn Mason, Ardleigh Resident. 22.06.26

Additional supporting information:

This is the extract from NG's response to Farley Farms

8.2 Landscape and visual effects – general issues, including limits of deviation (LoD)

Comment: T Fairley and Sons [REP4-375] The citing of the EACN and the connections the Applicant has prematurely granted to North Falls and Five Estuaries, results in a disproportionate burden on a small number of landowners, the Little Bromley and Ardleigh community, and the character of this landscape. The Applicant clearly accepts that the substations will cause significant harm to the area given the scale of landscaping and environmental mitigation proposed. Yet they fail to recognise that in this circumstance, policy requires avoidance first. EN1 and EN5 require applicants to avoid BMV land, which is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a, wherever possible. If the Applicant had appropriately assessed the citing and routing of their Project against EN1, EN5 or the Holford Rules they would not have identified a site for the EACN that is directly in the middle of the largest contiguous block of grade 1 land in the county.

Response: During route optioneering the impacts on agricultural land, including on agricultural land-take and on agricultural activities/operations, as far as was understood based on the data available at the time, were a consideration in the route selection process, as outlined in 6.3 Environmental Statement Chapter 3 - Alternatives [APP-127]. As set out in 5.6 Planning Statement [APP-085], the Project has sought to minimise impacts on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land as far as practicable and includes mitigation measures to reduce impacts on the soil resource and on agricultural activities (as set out in 6.6 Environmental Statement Chapter 6 - Agriculture and Soils [APP-138]). It is nonetheless noted that routeing and siting decisions about the East Anglia Connection Node (EACN) substation were taken in light of a wide range of factors influencing both the site of the EACN substation (factoring in the potential for co-location of the North Falls and Five Estuaries substations) and the effects of the 400 kV connections to the EACN substation as well as the customer cable corridors from the offshore generation site to potentially co-located substations. **Paragraph 5.11.12 of NPS EN-1 sets out that ‘Applicants should seek to minimise impacts on the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification) and preferably use land in areas of poorer quality (grades 3b, 4 and 5)’.** Given the predominance of BMV agricultural land within East Anglia and the geographical extent and scale of the Project, it has not been possible to avoid both temporary and permanent effects on this resource. The permanent loss of BMV land is considered necessary on the basis that there is urgent need for critical national priority Infrastructure such as the Project. The routeing and siting selection process confirms that there are no other suitable sites of poorer agricultural quality that can accommodate the Project.

As you can see they claim there are no alternative sites ignoring

- Undersea
- Brownfield sites
- Coastal sites nearer Tilbury
- Boxted airfield

Comments to me from local farmer:

BMV: Its value will NEVER be restored.

The harms to the soil will cause severe, often irreversible degradation, as stripping topsoil exposes subsoil to erosion, destroys natural drainage and restricts root growth.

The use of soil stabilizing agents (as suggested by NG) is not recommended for BMV agricultural land and usually violates UK planning regulations.

Carolyn Mason

28.06.26