

Deadline 8 Submission

After four years of consultations and six months of examination, I remain deeply concerned about the overwhelming scale of the proposed project in a small village such as Little Bromley. The impacts cannot be considered in isolation from the proposed developments associated with Five Estuaries and North Falls, as well as the Tarchon Converter Station. Taken together, these projects will fundamentally change the character of Little Bromley and the surrounding countryside.

Site selection and lack of community involvement

I remain concerned that critical decisions regarding the location of the project were made before meaningful public consultation with the local community. The proposed EACN site is situated on prime agricultural land within an area of unspoilt countryside.

I believe brownfield and previously developed industrial land should have been properly prioritised before highly productive agricultural land was considered. The fact that other major energy infrastructure is also proposed in the surrounding area makes the choice of location even more concerning.

Loss of high-quality agricultural land

The changes proposed through National Grid's Targeted Consultation appear to significantly increase the land required within the draft Order Limits. This is particularly evident to the north of Little Bromley Road, where additional horticultural and agricultural land is affected.

This is not simply a question of losing open countryside. The land is amongst the highest-grade agricultural land in East Anglia and is a finite resource. Once productive agricultural land is taken for permanent infrastructure, it cannot readily be replaced.

The consequences could extend beyond the individual landowners. The loss and fragmentation of agricultural land could affect the viability of existing farms and could have wider implications for food production and national food security. There is a real concern that one or more farms could become unviable as a direct or indirect consequence of the proposals.

Traffic, safety and cumulative impacts

I remain extremely concerned about the predicted construction traffic. Document APP-275, Figures 16.3.30 and 16.3.31, indicate that more than 800 HGV and LGV movements could occur daily.

This is an extraordinary volume of traffic for the rural roads around Little Bromley. These roads are currently used by cyclists, horse riders, runners, walkers, local residents and buses travelling to and from Manningtree.

The issue is not simply whether the roads can technically accommodate vehicles. It is whether they can safely accommodate such a dramatic increase in heavy construction traffic while continuing to function as local rural roads.

The cumulative impact also remains a major concern. The effects of this project cannot properly be understood without knowing how construction traffic and infrastructure associated with National Grid's proposals will interact with the proposed Five Estuaries, North Falls and Tarchon projects.

Bentley Road and agricultural access

Although widening Bentley Road is proposed, this does not resolve the concerns.

Bentley Road is an important route into Little Bromley from the A120 and is also used by buses and agricultural traffic. Increased traffic, particularly during peak periods, could cause significant disruption and create added safety concerns.

The impact on local farmers also needs much greater consideration. Construction works and road widening could create serious logistical difficulties during planting and harvesting periods, when agricultural machinery and farm traffic need reliable access to fields and between holdings.

The existing roadside drainage ditches are also important to agricultural land drainage. Any widening or alteration of Bentley Road must therefore accurately assess the potential consequences for drainage and the risk of increased surface-water flooding.

War Memorial and heritage hedge

There is particular concern about the Little Bromley War Memorial.

The War Memorial is a Grade II listed structure of special architectural or historic interest and is more than 100 years old. Document APP-011 indicates that it lies within an area of compulsory purchase.

The possibility that a memorial of such importance to the village could be threatened by the proposed development is deeply distressing to the local community. The War Memorial is not simply a physical structure; it is a place of remembrance and an important part of the village's heritage and identity.

Opposite the War Memorial is a historic heritage hedge which also appears to be at risk of removal.

The permanent access-road proposals should therefore be reconsidered to ensure that the War Memorial and its setting, together with the historic hedge, are properly protected.

Noise and vibration

Document APP-256 identifies only five properties as having the potential to experience damage from construction noise and vibration.

I do not consider this assessment sufficient to provide reassurance to residents.

There are other properties within Little Bromley, including older buildings, whose foundations and construction may make them vulnerable to vibration. The fact that only five properties have been identified does not demonstrate that other properties are safe from potential damage.

The assessment should therefore not be treated as conclusive. A comprehensive assessment of all potentially affected properties should be undertaken, particularly along the proposed construction and permanent access routes.

This is especially important given the scale and duration of the proposed works and the potential for heavy construction vehicles to pass close to residential properties.

Permanent access road

I remain particularly concerned about the proposed permanent access road through the centre of the village.

The permanent road would not simply be a temporary construction inconvenience. It could permanently alter the character, appearance, tranquillity and functioning of Little Bromley.

If the project proceeds, the location of the permanent access road should be reconsidered, with particular regard to:

- the Grade II listed War Memorial;
- the historic hedge;
- residential properties;
- noise and vibration;
- pedestrian, cycling and equestrian safety;
- agricultural access;
- drainage and flood risk;
- the bus route; and
- the cumulative effects of traffic from other major energy projects.

Property values and compensation

Residents are also experiencing considerable anxiety about the effect of the proposals on their homes and property values.

It is understood that property values in Little Bromley have already been affected, with one resident reportedly reducing an asking price by approximately £150,000 and still being unable to sell.

Whether or not every individual loss can ultimately be attributed to the project, the concern is genuine and should not be dismissed.

There has also been insufficient clarity for affected residents regarding compensation. If residents and property owners suffer financial losses or are unable to sell their homes because of the development, there needs to be a clear, transparent and properly discussed compensation mechanism.

Conclusion

The issues described above are only some of the concerns affecting Little Bromley. The full list is extensive and includes the impacts on the village's landscape, heritage, agricultural land, roads, drainage, homes, businesses, community facilities and quality of life.

My overriding concern is that the cumulative effect of this development, together with Five Estuaries, North Falls and the Tarchon Converter Station, could be overwhelming for a small rural community.

The scale of development being imposed upon Little Bromley is disproportionate to the size and character of the village.

In my view, the fundamental issue remains the location of the project. Highly productive agricultural land and an unspoilt rural community should not be treated as the default location for nationally significant infrastructure when alternative locations, including brownfield or previously developed industrial land, should be properly investigated.

The preferred solution would therefore be to relocate the project to a more suitable location, including consideration of brownfield/industrial sites or alternative offshore arrangements, rather than permanently transforming the centre of Little Bromley and sacrificing valuable agricultural land.

If the project is to proceed, the proposed permanent access-road arrangement in the centre of the village should at the very least be reconsidered, and the cumulative effects on Little Bromley must be fully assessed before any final decision is made.