

As a resident who lives in the east of the village of Gislingham, Suffolk I am very concerned about the proposal by National Grid regarding the Norwich to Tilbury project and the impact it will have upon all aspects of the village including the local flora and fauna that also class this area as 'home'. I therefore strongly object to the project. Having reviewed the proposal for the Norwich to Tilbury project, I urge the Planning Inspectorate to insist that National Grid looks at other alternatives that would be more suitable for all parties concerned, including HVDC undergrounding, offshore coordination and upgrade the existing grid (more than what has been done recently).

The current plans will have a huge, detrimental impact on a significant number of key areas in and around Gislingham:

1. Housing & the inhabitants of Gislingham –

- Gislingham has an approximate population of 1200 and has 38 Grade II listed buildings, 3 Grade II* and one Grade I listed Church (St Mary's). Some of these are within close proximity to the proposed route and would cause significant impact on their structures, especially as one property (a Grade II listed Building – Spring Farm (///swinging.balancing.pelted)) will be within 100m from a pylon.

2. Access –

- Gislingham has six roads in and out of the village. The proposed plan for the haul roads and road closures will cause traffic to be forced to use roads that are not suitable for transporting large volumes of cars, vans, lorries, buses etc. The pylon route slices through half of the roads into and out of the village (Thornham Road, Mellis Road and Burgate Road), meaning traffic will be forced to use Finningham Road, Back Street and Mill Street. None of these are suitable for the increased volume of traffic that will be forced to use them.

- Footpaths - It is understood that the construction of the pylons and the haul roads will result in some footpaths being closed temporarily or some permanently. For Gislingham, this will affect the footpaths along the route & red draft order limit lines including footpaths FP267/021 and FP267/029 near pylons RG119 & RG120, and FP267/014 and FP267/014A near pylon RG115.

- The footpath that travels over the railway line (FP267/021 near pylon RG120) provides the village with one of the main footpath routes out of the village to connect with Thornham Walks, Thornham Magna, Wickham Skeith and the surrounding area. Losing this route will cut off residents from being able to do what they enjoy or put them at risk of being involved in an accident whilst trying to walk along the very busy Thornham Road.

3. Biodiversity – The impact this project will have on the biodiversity all along the whole route is going to be astronomical and will have lasting ramifications for many years to come, if not forever. Below is a list of various species whose habitats are in and around Gislingham that will be impacted by the project proposal. This is not a comprehensive list, and I have no doubt that there will be other species that I have not covered.

- Bats - There is a large bat colony who live in St Mary's Church and others that nest in many locations in the village whose feeding grounds are around the proposed route where they can be seen flying around the area to the east of the village as well as often seen flying along Thornham Road, taking them towards pylon RG118 and the cables that will cross the road and surrounding fields. This will have a negative impact upon numbers as the habitat and feeding grounds will be severely impacted and the potentially fatal impact of the bats colliding with the wires and be electrocuted. They are a protected species, and we need to do all we can to protect them in our village.

- Trees and hedgerows – there are a significant number of trees and hedgerows that fall within the red haul lines and proposed route. For example:

- o We have a healthy variety of birds in the village and surrounding area who thrive because of the habitat the area provides. Species such as the Buzzard, Red Kite, various Owls, and even the red listed Turtle Doves and Lapwings have been sighted in and around the area.

- o Black Popular Trees – these are a rare species of tree that can be found in a copse (///walking.spruced.biked) that would be surrounded on 2 sides next to the proposed route and the red haul lines, with a pylon (RG117) being positioned only a few metres from these rare trees. This copse is also the nesting site for buzzards that can be seen flying over the fields where the pylons and cables have been proposed.

- o Lines of established trees and hedgerow – there are a significant number of well-established trees, especially oak trees, and hedgerows with a lot of native species that fall within the red line draft order limits zones and other construction sites. The removal of these will see a significant loss of habitat for many species of animals and insects.

- o Water meadows (flagging.poke.boarded) – the meadows between pylons RG118 and RG119 provide a rich habitat for many species of flora and fauna. These meadows are hunting grounds for the barn owl and other birds of prey demonstrating the importance of this and surrounding areas to the variety of wildlife it supports.

- o Ground nesting birds – there are a number of ground nesting birds that are thriving due to the area providing the perfect habitat for them to breed and survive. One such species is the Grey Partridge whose numbers have declined by 95% since 1980 and is a red listed ground nesting bird and can be found in areas (such as Cotton) that will be impacted by the proposed route.

- o The fencing that will be used to line the haul roads and construction sites will cause a disruption to the paths and tracks used by the deer that roam the local fields, meadows, and woodlands. This will restrict their normal movement and impact the habitats that they use.

4. Other impacts

Flood risk – Gislingham has seen some significant flooding in the last few years, which at times has resulted at time in the whole village being cut off. The flooding that has been seen occurred along routes that are not in the usual flood plain as outlined on the National Grid map, including Thornham Road, Mill Street and Finningham Road. If National Grid take over agricultural land and build several haul roads, it will be guaranteed that we will see a significantly quicker run off during prolonged spells of wet weather, resulting in higher river and ditch levels and more flooding in the village.

Pollution – The increase in vehicles linked with the project (an estimated 127 construction, lorries, heavy plant machinery vehicles etc. a day) will increase the pollution both that is released into the air (fumes etc.) as well as chemicals that would run off into the water ways when it rains. This would have a detrimental impact on the flora and fauna that thrive in the rivers, causing the death of certain species, leading to a negative impact on food chains that feed on species from the rivers.

Effects on farming – around Gislingham and other villages along the route there are many small farms. The project would

see a significant number of acres of highly productive farmland being requisitioned, leading to the detrimental impact on the soil through erosion and contamination from pollutants long after the project has finished. This would result in a long-lasting impact on crop yield that would have a significant knock-on effect on food production, including a negative impact on food security, the rural economy, jobs, and those who form the agricultural supply chain.

Final thought –

Throughout this whole process, NG seem to have only ever considered the one option of pylons along a pre-chosen route. They continue to bulldoze a proposal to run out-of-date 1950's-60's technology in the modern era that is unsightly (why do they need to be 50m high?!) and highly destructive when there are other, greener, less destructive alternative solutions available. Alternatives such as HVDC undergrounding, offshore coordination and further upgrading the existing grid are viable options that NG have dismissed and state that they are more expensive than pylons. Offshore is certainly quicker and the seabed will recover within a matter of weeks, not years, which would be the case if pylons would be constructed. If undergrounding is considered an option, it uses cable ploughing which again is cheaper, quicker and less damaging. I urge the Inspectorate to challenge NG on looking at these alternatives and do what is right for everyone impacted. I fully appreciate the need to go 'greener' and understand the Governments 'Net zero' policy to provide cleaner energy now and for the future to meet the increasing demand for electricity, however the overall impact the project is going to have on East Anglia's countryside as a whole if it goes ahead will be disastrous and devastating for everyone. I don't want to go down in history as having been the generation that allowed our beautiful countryside to be destroyed and want my grandchildren to grow up as I did surrounded by nature, not steel wires, and monstrous pylons. Don't ruin the countryside for all future generations.