

I write to provide my final comments on the Applicant's response to my oral submission made at Open Floor Hearing 4. Having carefully reviewed the Applicant's response, I remain disappointed by both its content and its approach. Rather than engaging with the detailed, site-specific evidence I presented during the Examination, the Applicant has largely relied upon generic references to its Environmental Statement and previous application documents.

In doing so, it has failed to properly address the unique circumstances of my home, the evidence I provided, and the very significant impact that it has repeatedly acknowledged the proposed development would have upon my property.

The purpose of the Examination process is to test the Applicant's evidence. It cannot be sufficient for an Applicant simply to repeat conclusions already contained within its own documents when detailed evidence is submitted by those directly affected.

Where an Interested Party provides site-specific evidence, a meaningful response requires genuine engagement with that evidence. In my case, I do not believe that has happened.

**Acknowledgement of significant impact without mitigation**

Throughout the Examination, the Applicant has repeatedly acknowledged that my property would be "significantly affected" by the proposed development.

This acknowledgement is important because it confirms that the impacts I have raised are real and recognised.

However, it creates a fundamental question:

If the Applicant accepts that my property will be significantly affected, what meaningful action has it taken to avoid, reduce or mitigate those effects?

I have not been provided with a satisfactory answer.

There has been no meaningful route amendment, no site-specific mitigation package, no practical solution offered and no indication that the Applicant has seriously reconsidered whether this infrastructure could be delivered in a less harmful way at this location.

An acknowledgement of significant harm is not mitigation.

The Applicant appears to accept the impact but expects those affected to simply bear the consequences.

**Impact on our home:**

My home is not simply another property shown on a plan.

It represents many years of hard work, investment and personal sacrifice. It is our family home, carefully designed to sit within the surrounding landscape, and completed only recently after investing our life savings into creating the home we believed would be our forever home.

The Applicant's response gives little confidence that these individual circumstances have been properly considered.

The effect of this proposal is not merely visual. It affects our enjoyment of our home, our privacy, our outlook, our sense of place and our ability to feel secure in the property we worked so hard to create.

**Groundwater, drainage and flooding concerns**

I remain deeply concerned about the engineering implications of the proposed works.

Our property includes a full basement. During construction we experienced significant groundwater issues and were required to continuously pump water throughout the excavation process. Even now, the basement relies upon permanent pumping systems.

We therefore have first-hand experience of the sensitivity of local groundwater conditions.

The proposed development includes substantial engineering works, including concrete pylon foundations, construction compounds and haul roads across existing agricultural land.

My concern remains simple; Where will the water go?

Replacing permeable agricultural land with extensive temporary and permanent engineered surfaces has the potential to alter surface water flows and groundwater behaviour.

The lane immediately below our property already floods regularly following periods of heavy rainfall. This is an existing local issue.

Despite this, I have not seen convincing evidence demonstrating how the Applicant has properly assessed the cumulative effect of:

- extensive hardstanding;
- major concrete foundations;
- construction compounds;
- haul roads;
- altered land drainage patterns; and
- changes to groundwater movement.

Given our own experience during construction of our property, I consider this a significant omission.

The Applicant cannot simply rely upon general drainage assessments without addressing the specific conditions at this location.

**Cumulative impact:**

The impact on our property cannot be assessed by considering individual elements separately.

The true effect arises from the combination of:

- permanent pylons positioned within the surrounding landscape;
- construction compounds;
- haul roads;
- heavy construction traffic;
- vegetation removal;
- landscape change; and
- years of construction activity.

Together, these elements fundamentally alter the character, tranquillity, setting and enjoyment of our home.

The cumulative impact must be properly considered because that is the reality residents will experience.

**Market blight and uncertainty:**

The Applicant has also failed to meaningfully address the issue of market blight.

Our property has already been affected by the uncertainty created by this proposal. Potential purchasers are understandably concerned about living close to major electricity infrastructure and the associated construction impacts. Simply referring to statutory compensation does not resolve this issue.

Compensation is not mitigation. Community benefits are an insult to those "significantly affected".

It does not address the current uncertainty, the difficulty of selling affected properties, or the emotional impact of being unable to properly plan for the future of our home.

Consultation process:

I remain extremely concerned that the consultation process was inadequate for a project of this scale and significance. Consultation events were, in some cases, held in locations that were not close to the villages and communities most affected by the proposed route. Public transport options were limited, making attendance difficult for many residents, particularly those without access to a vehicle.

For a nationally significant infrastructure project extending over many miles, far greater efforts should have been made to ensure that all potentially affected residents understood:

the scale of the proposals;

the location of the route;

the potential impact on their homes and communities; and

how they could participate in the process.

Even now, I continue to encounter people who remain unaware of the extent of the proposals or the impact on their area.

That suggests that many people did not have a meaningful opportunity to engage at the earliest stages.

Throughout the process, the Applicant's approach has given the clear impression that the preferred route had effectively been predetermined, with consultation focused more on explaining the proposal than genuinely reconsidering whether alternative approaches could reduce harm.

Alternatives and technological progress:

I am also concerned that the Applicant's assessment of alternatives has failed to keep pace with technological progress.

Since the initial consultation and route development process began, significant advances have continued in:

high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission;

underground cable technology;

cable installation methods; and

coordinated offshore transmission solutions.

The assessment of alternatives should not remain frozen in time.

A decision being made today should reflect today's technology, today's engineering capability and today's available solutions.

The Applicant should demonstrate that these alternatives have been properly reassessed rather than relying primarily on assumptions made several years ago.

Need for infrastructure versus choice of solution

I wish to make clear that I do not dispute the need for investment in the electricity network.

I understand the importance of energy security and the transition to net zero. I recognise that additional transmission capacity may be required.

However, demonstrating that infrastructure is needed does not automatically justify this particular route, this particular technology or this particular level of harm to affected communities.

The question for the Examining Authority is whether the Applicant has demonstrated that this proposal represents the most appropriate solution, having properly considered reasonable alternatives and taken all reasonable steps to avoid, reduce and mitigate adverse effects.

In my respectful view, that has not been demonstrated.

The need for infrastructure cannot remove the obligation to minimise harm wherever reasonably possible.

Policy considerations:

National Policy Statement EN-1 requires adverse impacts to be avoided, reduced and mitigated wherever possible.

National Policy Statement EN-5 recognises the importance of minimising impacts from electricity infrastructure on communities, landscape and the environment.

The Holford Rules have long provided guidance on the careful routing of electricity infrastructure to minimise harm.

In my view, the Applicant has not demonstrated that these principles have been fully applied in relation to my property and this location.

Personal impact:

Finally, I wish to explain the personal impact this proposal has had upon me.

This process has dominated our lives for an extended period. We invested our life savings into creating what we believed would be our forever home.

Instead, we now face the prospect of living beside major electricity transmission infrastructure which the Applicant itself accepts will significantly affect our property.

The uncertainty, stress and worry have had a profound impact on my wellbeing.

I genuinely struggle to imagine being able to live beside this development if it proceeds as currently proposed.

The prospect of years of construction activity, permanent pylons dominating the landscape around our home, concerns about drainage and flooding, and uncertainty over the future of our property have placed an enormous emotional burden upon me.

This is not simply about financial value.

It is about losing the enjoyment, tranquillity and security of the home and environment we worked so hard to create.

Conclusion

Throughout this Examination I have sought to engage constructively and respectfully.

I have not simply objected to the proposal. I have provided evidence, raised genuine engineering concerns, highlighted the impact on my home and questioned whether less harmful alternatives are now available.

Despite the Applicant repeatedly acknowledging that my property would be significantly affected, I remain without a meaningful solution.

Recognition without mitigation is not an acceptable outcome.

I respectfully ask the Examining Authority to give significant weight to the detailed local evidence provided by those who will live with the consequences of this project every day.

I submit that the Applicant has not satisfactorily rebutted the evidence I presented. It has acknowledged significant harm but has failed to demonstrate how those effects will be avoided, reduced or meaningfully mitigated.

I therefore respectfully invite the Examining Authority to attach limited weight to those parts of the Applicant's response which simply repeat previous conclusions without engaging with the specific evidence submitted during the Examination. Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours faithfully,

Elizabeth Reynolds