

Norwich to Tilbury Planning Inspectorate Examining Authority

Objection – Neil Luckett Mellis, Suffolk

Further to my earlier objection and presentation to the Planning Inspectorate I object to this proposal in its current form for reasons which are fully set out in my initial written submission.

I, and members of my community, recognise the need for a resilient national energy infrastructure and many support the move towards net zero, but this project has left me and many in my community **overwhelmed, excluded, and fearful**

While this project is promoted as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, national significance does not displace the duty to properly assess, understand and consider local impact, nor does it override the requirement for a fair, and inclusive project development stage. To date it has been far from that.

Overwhelming

We have had to try to deal with the vast volume, complexity, and technical nature of the project development and application documents, combined with constrained consultation periods, poor communication and a lack of meaningful local focus from National

Grid. Consultation events have been limited and staffed by people without any real understanding of local concerns and issues.

Swathes of documentation have been provided online, often with short notice, with no real simple guidance or explanation which would enable wider understanding and inclusion. This has materially limited the ability for me, and my community, to understand and participate effectively.

Many have taken the view that 'there is just no point getting involved, its going to happen anyway' or 'I just don't understand, its too complex'.

My view is that this raises significant concerns regarding the adequacy of consultation, and whether any consultation was genuinely accessible and fair.

In essence the process to date has been overwhelming, it has been disproportionate on our communities.

Excluded

In addition to the overwhelming nature of the proposal development NG have taken a 'tell' rather than an 'inform and listen' approach.

No evidence of any clear consideration of alternative options (offshore/underground) has been produced. I have asked and been told 'its been considered, this is the best and cheapest option'. We have been told overground is best but not why.

I attended an on-line meeting about changes which were apparently being implemented as result of the statutory consultation. No map was provided for Mellis so I was unable to comment and was told to 'look online'. The meeting was closed in an hour when many still had unanswered questions.

A consultation event where it took 6th person I spoke to explain that section between Burgate and Wortham would involve undergrounding current lower voltage pylons, removing those pylons and building new pylons for higher voltage cable. I have still not received any meaningful explanation why all cannot be placed underground.

I have been met with blank looks when I asked about risk assessment relating to increased vulnerability of pylons to climate change/terrorism/war compared to alternatives.

We occasionally receive copies of National Grids pointless, 'ticking a box' copy of their 'Pravda' style newsletter. This instead of transparent, accountable and accessible community focused engagement.

We have been dictated to, there has been no due diligence in terms of alternative options, we have not been listened to, there has been no transparency. We have been excluded.

Fearful

This is one of three NSIPs within and five mile radius of Mellis in addition to at least two other significant energy infrastructure projects. The lack of any meaningful coordination between this and other projects to limit their cumulative effect on communities, wildlife and bio diversity is stark, it raises significant concern and fear about short, medium and long term impact.

I am fearful for my community, Mellis Common Nature Reserve, my local barn owl, the families of deer, the abundant wildlife. The throwaway '10% net bio diversity gain' is essentially meaningless when we still have no real clarity on what that actually means in practice.

Local fears are that the lack of meaningful local engagement and understanding will translate into the inevitable lengthy construction phase and community fears will be ignored. The evidence suggests this fear is not unfounded and is based on National Grid's exclusionary approach to date.

This about proportionality. A nationally beneficial project must not impose disproportionate harm on a single community and must engage and really understand local fears and impact.

This objection is not to infrastructure in principle. It is an objection to this project which, in its current overground option, fails to meet the tests of fairness, necessity, adequacy of consultation, proportionality and respect for genuine community fear and wellbeing.

I, therefore, ask this Examining Authority to give substantial weight to the overwhelming, cumulative and permanent impacts on Mellis and surrounding communities, to recognise the deficiencies in assessing alternatives, deficient community engagement, and to conclude that this proposal does not provide a lawful or proportionate balance to enable it to proceed.

Neil Lockett

Mellis

Suffolk

[REDACTED]