

Reasons for my objection to the proposal:

- Disproportionate landscape and visual harm: The scheme proposes approximately 510 steel lattice pylons up to 50 metres high across open, largely unspoiled countryside. This would permanently industrialise a rural landscape harming its character for residents and visitors alike.
- Failure to properly assess an offshore/subsea alternative: National Grid's own ESO review (2020) identified a coordinated offshore grid as technically feasible, potentially cheaper by up to £2 billion, and requiring roughly half the onshore infrastructure. I do not consider the applicant has adequately justified why an overhead pylon route was preferred to full undergrounding or offshore reinforcement, particularly given that undergrounding has already been accepted as feasible through the Dedham Vale.
- Impact on residential amenity and property: Pylons of this height, sited close to homes will affect visual amenity, outlook and property values and saleability. Impacts of this kind on individual households do not appear to have been given sufficient weight in the applicant's assessment.
- Loss of trees, hedgerows and habitat: The works will require substantial tree and hedgerow removal along the corridor and the creation of temporary haulage roads for construction traffic, with associated harm to local wildlife and ecological connectivity. Impact on the rural environment has been downplayed and sufficient mitigation is not evident.
- Disruption to public rights of way: Public footpaths along the proposed path of construction cross or lie close to the proposed line and would be restricted or made inaccessible during a construction period expected to last several years.
- Construction disturbance: Years of heavy plant, haulage traffic, noise and disruption are proposed. In a quiet rural area, such as Chignal Smealy, the road network is not designed for sustained industrial construction traffic, nor is the impact on quality of life acceptable.
- Uncertainty over need and timing: unresolved concerns have been raised about the clarity of the need case for a 2031 connection date and the lack of alternative proposals put to the public. I share the concern that the case for this specific route and technology, at this scale, has not been adequately made out.
- Cumulative and precedent effect: Approving a 180km overhead line of this kind risks setting a precedent for further pylon-based reinforcement across East Anglia, rather than encouraging the coordinated offshore approach that government and industry studies suggest is achievable and highly preferable. In isolation, this project is destructive to the local area, but when reviewed in the wider context of whole country, the result will be devastating on a national scale; this is one of dozens of similar reinforcement schemes now moving through the system as part of the Great Grid Upgrade and the Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment programme, each justified on the same project-by-project basis, without any of them being tested against a coordinated, whole-system alternative such as an integrated offshore grid. The cumulative effect will be many hundreds of kilometres of new pylons driven through England's countryside, market towns and villages, permanently altering landscapes that took centuries to form, simply because no single scheme is ever assessed against the true national picture. Chignal Smealy is not an isolated casualty; it is one small part of a pattern in which the easiest, cheapest onshore option is chosen again and again, at the expense of the country's shared landscape, while a genuinely strategic solution is left unexamined.