



**FINANCE, ASSETS, INVESTMENT & RECOVERY COMMITTEE
13 SEPTEMBER 2023**

REPORT TITLE:	Response to the National Grid Non-Statutory Consultation on Norwich to Tilbury Scheme
REPORT OF:	Phil Drane, Director – Place

REPORT SUMMARY

The following report considers the non-statutory consultation in respect of National Grid's Transmission's 400kv grid reinforcement between Norwich and Tilbury. This project was previously referred to as East Anglia Green. This project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

This report provides an overview of the project and its potential impacts on Brentwood borough. A draft response has been submitted to comply with the consultation deadline and is subject to committee approval in line with the recommendation (Appendix A). The response objects to the proposed Norwich to Tilbury scheme on the basis that alternative options including re-routing and undergrounding need to be given more serious consideration, direct impacts on the delivery of Dunton Hills Garden Village (DHGV), and impacts on effected communities, Green Belt, heritage, landscape and ecology. This is consistent with other responses from affected local authorities, including Essex County Council (Appendix B).

This non-statutory consultation remains the starting point for the project. There will be further statutory consultation in 2024. The Council requests further ongoing engagement with National Grid on the scheme to help resolve its objections.

RECOMMENDATION

- R1. Approve the response to the Norwich to Tilbury non-statutory consultation, as set out in Appendix A.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 Officers consider that Brentwood should submit an in-principle objection to the scheme, as the alternative options have not been fully explored and considered versus the impact that the on land overhead pylons and cabling option may have on a variety of factors, as set out in Appendix A.
- 1.2 Despite the accepted need for the project and movement to a low carbon future, it is our position that the installation of numerous new pylons across the borough is not the right option in terms of environmental impacts and impact on residents/businesses, and that alternative options should be given more serious consideration.
- 1.3 The Council have previously stated a preference for a coordinated, offshore approach to the delivery of transmission reinforcement, to minimise onshore infrastructure and the associated impact on communities and environment, this position still applies. However, it is acknowledged that all possible options will give rise to impacts on the local environment, whether that be marine or land, and will have wider costs and benefits that need to be carefully considered. In the event that the preferred offshore approach cannot be delivered, and re-routing to avoid this section altogether is ruled out, National Grid need to seriously consider the case for further undergrounding of the infrastructure across this section of the route to a greater extent than the published consultation documents show.
- 1.4 The Council's response highlights the significant adverse heritage, landscape and visual effects the overhead transmission line is likely to have on the corridor running to the east of Ingatestone. In addition, it highlights the harmful severing effect the overhead line will likely have on Haverings Grove, around which the proposed routing of the transmission line would in effect surround the village in all but its eastern outlook, visually severing the settlement from Hutton and the wider borough of Brentwood. The Council's response calls for serious consideration of re-routing or undergrounding in these areas of sensitivity.
- 1.5 The case for undergrounding is strong on and around land allocated for DHGV. The Council has worked closely with local authority partners at Basildon Borough Council and Essex County Council in producing a joint local authority response to specifically set out the need for the consideration of alternatives, including the undergrounding of the route at this location (Appendix C).

- 1.6 National Grid's preferred route of the transmission line has the potential to seriously undermine the delivery of DHGV and its legacy as a garden community. It's not simply the potential reduction of the available development area that is of concern, although this is one aspect, it is the potential for the routing of the proposed overhead transmission line to impede upon the ability of DHGV to align with the garden community principles upon which it was allocated. The same principles that shape and inform Local Plan Policy R01 and the DHGV SPD, which set out how the allocation must come forward.
- 1.7 Officers wish to highlight within the Council's response the need for transparency regarding what consideration of undergrounding on the section of the route effecting the borough has been undertaken to date, what, if any, specific financial modelling has National Grid done on the cost of undergrounding? What does National Grid estimate will be the total costs of settling claims for damages - including legal expenses? And, apart from meeting obligations to the taxpayer, what are the specific planning reasons for National Grid ruling out undergrounding?
- 1.8 Whilst recommending this position it is also necessary to consider the detail of the scheme we have before us. With its partners 'Place Services', Essex County Council has led on the coordination and submission of a technical response to the consultation on behalf of affected authorities in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk (Appendix B). This sets out a strong objection to the Norwich to Tilbury proposals as currently proposed. In addition to this joint high-level response the BBC response emphasizes the need for further consideration of the following key issues of local significance (as set out in Appendix A):
- a) Green Belt
 - b) Heritage Assets
 - c) Landscape
 - d) Environmental Health
 - e) Pylon Design
 - f) Compound Sites
 - g) Mitigation Measures
 - h) Community Benefits
- 1.9 The Council requests further ongoing engagement with National Grid on the scheme to help resolve its objections.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Norwich to Tilbury project in its entirety proposes the following:

- a) A new 400kv electricity transmission line over a distance of roughly 180km from Norwich to Tilbury and a new 400kv connection substation in Tendring district.
- b) The route comprises mostly of overhead line (including pylons and conductors – the “line” part) and underground cabling through and near to the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- c) Cable sealing end compounds. A compound which enables electricity to transition from above ground to below ground).

2.2 The preferred route for the 400kv powerline would enter Brentwood borough to the northeast of Ingatestone (from the Chelmsford area) and broadly run close to the borough’s eastern boundary with Basildon borough.

2.3 As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, the planning process will be overseen by the government through a specialist unit of the Planning Inspectorate. National Grid will be seeking a ‘Development Consent Order’ (DCO) from the government, as opposed to planning permission from the local planning authority. Brentwood Borough Council, like the other affected councils, are classified as ‘Host Authorities’ for the purposes of the Planning Act 2008 and The Infrastructure Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017. As a Host Authority, the Council plays an important role in helping to shape and assess the impacts of the proposals. However, the Planning Inspectorate are the determining authority for the development.

2.4 Members may recall that this is the second non-statutory consultation for the scheme, which was considered in July last year by the Policy, Resources & Economic Development Committee.

2.5 The first non-statutory consultation gave an indication of the pylon corridor, whereas this second non-statutory consultation shows the positioning of the pylons giving a more detailed route. Additionally, a number of changes have been made to National Grid’s preferred draft alignment, two of which have direct implications for the borough and are set out below:

- a) Changes outside the 2022 preferred draft corridor ‘Further East of Ingatestone’: The alignment now passes further east of Ingatestone, diverting from the crossing of the A12 east of Stock Lane, continuing south passing to the east of the treatment works and re-joining the preferred corridor north of the crossing of Rayleigh Road. This has been made to reduce impacts on Ingatestone Hall and St Giles Church.
- b) Changes inside of the 2022 preferred draft corridor: Between West Horndon and Basildon the alignment runs along the eastern edge of the

preferred 2022 corridor with the intention to reduce interaction with the Dunton Hills Garden Village.

Consideration given by National Grid to an offshore approach

- 2.6 Since the previous consultation further information/justification has been provided on Strategic Options such as an undersea route. National Grid's supporting consultation document, 'Strategic Options Backcheck and Review (June 2023)' states that the offshore route is considerably more expensive than the alternative onshore routes and does not provide sufficient capacity for energy generation at Sizewell and the Essex Coast Generation Groups. Other issues for an offshore route include limited opportunity to avoid the Broads National Park and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB but some mitigation could occur, and the offshore route would not provide the flexibility of onshore connection options which facilitate flows both to the West and East of the transmission system for different system faults. A detailed analysis is available in this document for each of the options.

Next Steps

- 2.7 The project is currently at a non-statutory consultation stage. It is expected that National Grid will undertake extensive community engagement and liaison with the host authorities between now and the submission of the Development Consent Order. BBC (and the other Host Authorities) are nearing completion of negotiations with National Grid to cover the costs of the project via a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA).
- 2.8 The currently anticipated timescales for the Development Consent Order process are as follows:
- a) Statutory Consultation during 2024
 - b) Environmental Impact Assessment 2024
 - c) Submission of Development Consent Order application to the Planning Inspectorate during 2025
 - d) Examination, recommendation by the Planning Inspectorate and decision by the Secretary of State from 2025 to 2026
 - e) Build by National Grid commences during 2027
 - f) Fully operational by 2031
- 2.9 As expected at this stage of the development of the Norwich to Tilbury proposals an enormous amount of background information remains to be presented at the Statutory Consultation stage within the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report. BBC are engaging with National Grid in their development of this essential report. It is expected that further adjustments to

the proposals are likely to be required as greater knowledge is gained of the environment.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 At this stage the consultation is non-statutory and therefore could be subject to changes as the scheme develops and moves towards the statutory stages. The Council could decide not to engage at this point, however, due to the nature and scale of the proposals it is considered imperative to respond to the consultation. This then informs National Grid of our position and strengthens our ability to positively influence the proposals as they head towards Development Consent Order Examination.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

4.1 As a Host Authority, the Council plays an important role in helping to shape and assess the impacts of the proposals. Should the Council fail to engage with the consultation we would miss an important opportunity to outline our main concerns with the proposed scheme and reduce our ability to positively influence its outcome through the Development Consent Order process.

5.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

5.1 In 2022 National Grid held their first non-statutory consultation to introduce the project (previously known as East Anglia Green), to present their preferred draft route corridor and the process that they had been through to identify it.

5.2 National Grid have undertaken a second non-statutory consultation for an eight week period, between 27 June and 21 August 2023. This second consultation shows the positioning of the pylons giving a more detailed route. A number of changes have made following the 2022 non-statutory consultation to National Grid's preferred draft alignment of overhead powerline. The changes impacting Brentwood Borough are outlined in this report.

5.3 National Grid publicised the consultation via a range of measures, including sending out newsletters to residents, parish councils, local authorities and businesses within a 1km radius from the edge of the preferred draft alignment. The non-statutory consultation included webinars, face to face consultation events and information points open to the public. This included a public consultation event held at The Brentwood Centre on 6 July 2023, where National Grid staff were in attendance to discuss the project and answer questions (115 people attended this event).

5.4 This non-statutory consultation remains the starting point for the project. There will be further statutory consultation in 2024.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Tim Willis, Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer)

Tel & Email: 01277 312500 / tim.willis@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

6.1 The Council are nearing completion of negotiations to agree a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with National Grid to agree project inputs and outputs, timeframes and reimbursement of relevant council costs.

7.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Claire Mayhew, Acting Joint Director – People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)

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7.1 The Planning Act 2008 sets out provisions for the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project pre-application process, including a duty for the proposer to consult parties including local authorities and communities affected.

7.2 The comments submitted by the council respond to this non-statutory consultation and the council will need to continue to engage in the project as it progresses with further statutory consultation.

8.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager - Communities, Leisure and Health

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8.1 It will be the responsibility of National Grid to undertake necessary assessments on the project including an Equality Impact Assessment.

9.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Phil Drane, Director - Place

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9.1 The proposed route puts the delivery of Dunton Hills Garden Village at risk in that it reduces the development and therefore viability, among other things. That would have negative implications for housing delivery in the borough and across the South Essex, which by extension impacts specific employment land to be delivered as part of the garden village as well as the wider economic benefits that would be reduced or lost entirely. Therefore, it is

important that the council identifies these issues and engages with National Grid to help identify alternatives.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Brentwood Borough Council response to the Norwich to Tilbury project, second non-statutory consultation (August 2023)
- Appendix B: Essex County Council response to the Norwich to Tilbury project, second non-statutory consultation (August 2023)
- Appendix C: Joint Local Authority response from Basildon Borough Council, Brentwood Borough Council and Essex County Council to the Norwich to Tilbury project, second non-statutory consultation (August 2023) - with a focus on the need to underground the Norwich to Tilbury route on and around the land allocated for Dunton Hills Garden Village.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Supporting information for the Norwich to Tilbury project is provided on the National Grid website at: <https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-to-tilbury>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy, Resources & Economic Development Committee: Item 81, National Grid East Anglia Green Proposal	13 July 2022