

Public Document Pack



MID SUFFOLK CABINET	
DATE:	MONDAY, 6 JUNE 2022 8.30 AM
VENUE:	KING EDMUND CHAMBER, ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 8 RUSSELL ROAD, IPSWICH

SUPPLEMENT – RESPONSES FROM WARD MEMBERS

Page(s)

- 8 **MCa/22/2 RESPONSE TO NATIONAL GRID NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON THE EAST ANGLIA GREEN OVERHEAD LINE PROJECT** 3 - 18

Cabinet Member for Planning

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 8

Councillor Pratt

East Anglia GREEN Consultation: Feedback from parish councils in Ringshall and Battsiford Ward

The National Grid's plans for a new high voltage network includes routes that pass through or close to the settlements of Offton, Ringshall, Barking Tye and Battsiford.

As the planning authority ward member for these parishes I would like to report on the representations made by parish councils and concerned residents to myself.

In summary, there is a wide acceptance that new infrastructure is required to meet our future energy demands from renewables. However, the nature of the network and proposed route location has drawn numerous concerns and objections from landowners, residents and community leaders. Whilst many are concerned about the impact on their properties, the issues I wish to highlight concern the impact on our local natural and historical heritage assets.

There is wide support for an offshore cable which is not in the current proposal strategy documents. Dr Dan Poulter MP is one of many MPs from the OffSET (Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force) Group campaigning for an offshore route. Sub-sea cabling is being installed in other parts of the UK and there is little justification provided for not using them in East Anglia. I believe we should cautiously support this approach as a first preference, provided a thorough impact assessment carried out on the seabed environment and ecology during installation and operation.

On the National Grid's proposal for an overhead line between the Bramford substation and Norwich, there are many unprotected but sensitive landscapes as well as protected natural and historical sites on the boundary or close proximity to the graduated swathe.

For clarity, I have listed some of the sites.

Offton:

- Middle Wood (SSSI), Offton sits on the boundary of the swathe and is an ecologically sensitive site
- The site of Offton Castle (scheduled ancient monument) and moat is on the boundary of the swathe. Castle Farm and its 16th Century barn are Grade II listed buildings.
- Castle Farm is situated on a hill with panoramic views of the area that are cherished by the local community and served by many footpaths.
- Holly Road was recently designated a 'Quiet Lane' and because it is valued by residents in Offton, Willisham and Ringshall for its tranquillity. It is frequently used for walking, cycling and horse-riding.
- A disused Lime Kiln opposite the Limeburners public house west of Ipswich Road

Battsiford:

- Gibbon's Farm and the track leading borders the swathe. It is situated in a valley setting with a large amount of tree cover and has outstanding natural beauty, although not designated or protected as far as I understand.

Barking:

- The Old Rectory is a Grade II listed building and is situated next to St Mary's church on the boundary of the swathe. There are footpaths connecting passing through this

property connecting Needham to Battisford. The fields behind the property are managed to maintain grassland habitat.

- The swathe partially bisects The Causeway between the Old Rectory and Needham Market, which has both historical and natural significance and is an important recreation track. The views from the park would certainly be impacted.
- Bungeon's Farm, a Grade II listed farmhouse sits in the middle of the swathe
- Barking Tye common is partly bisected by the swathe. The Tye is managed in a wildlife sensitive manner by the parish council and is hoped to be a candidate county wildlife site. The Tye is also very important green space and recreation facility used by walkers and families.
- A coarse fishery operated by GVAC is situated in the middle of the swathe close to Barking Tye.
- A woodland called 'Ladies' Walk' is within the swathe

Taken together, it is clear that an overground line would cause substantial impact to the landscape, and it's natural and historical assets.

Offton and Willisham Parish Council have currently stated a preference for a hybrid option of subterranean and overground lines to reduce the impact on the valley landscape, however, this option would be an expensive and possibly less efficient in terms of transmission. The parish council will hold a separate meeting to discuss the lines and preferred options.

Barking Parish Council is to hold a meeting on June 6th to discuss their position on the line scheme.

Councillor Eburne

East Anglia GREEN Consultation Response submitted to Cabinet 6 June 2022

Dear Cabinet,

My apologies that I will not be at the Cabinet meeting on Monday. I also waited until feedback from last night's Parish Council meeting (Wednesday 1st June) before sending this.

Many residents and businesses in my ward, particularly in Old Newton, Gipping, Stowupland and Saxham Street, will be greatly affected by the proposed route of new high voltage pylons from Norwich to Bramford to Tilbury. The proposals have been discussed at local parish council meetings and in person to me.

When you consider the Mid Suffolk District Council response to the East Anglia Green Energy Enablement consultation, I ask that you please include the points that they have raised.

- There is concern that the consultation has not been well-advertised.
- There are no benefits to local communities, not even from the low carbon power as this is being directed to other areas of the country.
- The landscape, hugely valued by those who live here, will be scarred forever.
- The tourism industry will be negatively impacted for visitors and for businesses serving these visitors.
- Farms will lose agricultural land and the disruption during the building of the pylons will adversely affect business.
- SSSI sites or County Wildlife Sites are not being considered adequately for protection. For example, the proposal is for these huge pylons to run alongside Gipping Great Wood. Many voluntary groups do a lot of work locally to conserve and protect these sites making them pleasant spaces for all.
- Biodiversity is already suffering and while communities are involved in work to improve this (both Stowupland and Old Newton have biodiversity groups), this will be a big set-back.
- There will be a great impact on listed buildings and other heritage assets which are of great importance in defining our local area.
- There has been no prior public consultation on alternatives, such as under-sea cabling, despite this consultation showing a proposed under-sea cabling project from Sizewell to Kent.
-

The overwhelming preference is for an off-shore, under-sea approach and there is great concern that this is not being considered and national policy is overriding local opinion.

On this final point, please can the District Council lobby the two local MPs, Jo Churchill and Dan Poulter, for a change not just in national policy but in the way that it is applied so that our communities' quality of life has more importance in the decision-making of major infrastructure projects such as this.

Thanks for your consideration.

Kind regards

Rachel

Rachel Eburne

Mid Suffolk District Councillor (Green)

- Ward Member for Haughley, Stowupland & Wetherden (including Old Newton & Gipping)
- Jointly with Councillor Keith Welham

Councillor Field

East Anglia GREEN Consultation Response submitted to Cabinet 6 June 2022

Note: I did not readout the highlighted lines

The small rural village of Flowton is within my Blakenham ward. It has suffered the presence of the existing 400kV grid connection from Norwich and towards Twinstead Tee, a single pylon line, since the grid connection point at Bullen Lane 1.7km east of the village was constructed. It has also tolerated the twin line that connects Sizewell A and now Sizewell B and perhaps Sizewell C to the grid. Grid connections and other power assets have multiplied recently and the Bramford sub station on Bullen Lane will host the EA one and EA Three conversion and connection points. The village recognises that these assets are of benefit to the country at large but there is a limit to its tolerance. East Anglia Green exceeds that tolerance.

It is also proposed that it hosts connections to three local Solar Farms and major grid scale power storage batteries. The EA One and Three connections are underground but with large sheds to hold the conversion and switching equipment. The Twinstead line is currently single but to become a twin line.

The village itself is at present largely isolated from this intrusive infrastructure but not from the proposed Solar Farms in the area or from these proposals for the East Anglia Green 400kV line. This will blite this small community and there must be a limit to what they are asked to tolerate.

East Anglia Green, is intended to allow some 6GW power from North Sea wind and other sources to transit Suffolk as it heads for the centres of population.

The proposed route effects many communities but in Flowton is between the Church, which is on the southern edge of the village, and Gate Farm a gap of only 500 metres. It goes over Valley Farm, Mousehall Barn and Flowton Hall towards the Bullen Lane Sub Station.

This really is a step too far. Should we expect the Flowton community to live with a another major degradation of their environment. I believe not!

Is there any alternative? In fact there are three: to improve building insulation and provide local power generation and storage, to place the 400kV lines underground or to route power directly from the point of generation down the north sea to the capital. We are told that the last two options have been considered but rejected, largely on grounds of cost.

Underground lines we are told are 3 to ten times the cost of pylon lines, perhaps three times in rural areas and 10 in a city? We don't know but the option should be explored in detail and the estimates made public. The technology is not revolutionary but well known and deployed in areas such as the AONB's. The impact electricity bills across the country of this necessary grid reinforcement should be identified and be a penalty for all who will benefit to share. It should not be

hidden behind assurances that National Grid have examined the possibilities and find them too costly.

The more attractive option would be to route connection directly from north sea assets using DC technology to the areas of need. The converter station to achieve this are required wherever the power is landed with increased cost limited to that of the additional cable length. The technology involved is known and the cable laying process does not involve the trenching and duct work burial on land requires. We are informed that the power capacity required would involve multiple cables which is true but it is directly comparable to the combined capacity of the five existing links the oldest of which has existed since 1986. The 720 km Norwegian link suggests that the length of connection required would not be a problem. National Grid's statements on cost of that link at 4 million working hour perhaps indicates what could be expected.

The only estimate of the cost of the grid I could find was 0.2p per kW delivered. If we multiplied that entire cost by four duplicating the entire grid at the lower of the underground cost estimates we would add 0.8p to the 32.10 p/kWh I am currently paying, about 2.5% not welcome but a tolerable amount to limit damage to Suffolk.

Conclusion

I certainly support the proposal that the district advocates, an undersea link.

I also believe it would be appropriate for Suffolk to employ an expert capable of evaluating the proposals and providing an assessment of estimates to ensure we get what we want.

Councillor Mellen

East Anglia GREEN Consultation Response submitted to Cabinet 6 June 2022

I would first like to make a couple of over-arching points about the council's draft response before looking at the details.

Firstly, the proposed route for the overhead cables shown as a graduated swathe on National Grid maps, by my reckoning directly crosses 8 or maybe 9 council wards, from Palgrave and Gissingham in the north, down through Bacton and Mendlesham, Stowupland, touching the Stonhams ward, then Needham Market, Battisford and Ringshall, Blakenham and finally Bramford. Of these wards, I just make the point that most are represented by Councillors in the opposition Green and Liberal Democrat group, I make it something like 8 opposition Councillors' wards affected, compared to 3 administration Councillors. That being said, I welcome the opportunity that all affected Councillors have been given to state their concerns to this cabinet meeting and hopefully have some influence on the Council's response.

Secondly, as myself and Councillor Morley have already discussed, this is an issue where I think there is likely to be a strong cross-party consensus - which means that the Council can speak powerfully with one voice . there may be some slight differences in approach but we are all on the same page.

Since I only have three minutes I will leave my colleagues to make some of the detailed points, however our main concerns about this non-statutory consultation are as follows:

1. This timing of this consultation seems to be inappropriate (ie too soon) since the government is expecting this month the report of the Offshore Transmission Review group, set up by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which may well impact this and other energy infrastructure projects.
2. Whilst we welcome the increase in renewable energy production, there is a lack of strategic, long-term planning to connect multiple offshore wind farms into the national grid in a co-ordinated way, and we hope that the Offshore Transmission Review will bring this forward.
3. The proposed overhead lines and pylons will have a massive impact on the areas through which they pass – visually dominating the landscape and also impacting heavily on many heritage assets along the route. This overground route is only the best value option for National Grid if no intrinsic value is ascribed to these landscapes.
4. There is a huge issue of blight affecting properties on, or close to the proposed route, and given that this is only the first stage in a very long process, this could go on for many years.

Turning to the Council's draft response, I largely agree with what has been written, but I would like to encourage a few amendments:

- The response on page 2 highlights undergrounding the whole route as something that requires further consideration – from my understanding this

would be vastly more expensive and more environmentally destructive than an undersea cable route and therefore seems an unrealistic option.

- Some individual bullet points, (such as the one halfway down page 4) – if taken out of context appear to show support for the scheme and should be removed, or edited so that they show the full context of the Councils' objection to the scheme.
- Lastly, benefits to the communities through which the line may pass. On page 8 some potential benefits are discussed in terms of training, skills and local supply into the project. We think that here we should be demanding more of National Grid: if the line is built, what are the benefits that this project brings to these communities, how and when will they be delivered?

Councillor Norris

East Anglia GREEN Consultation Response submitted to Cabinet 6 June 2022

Dear Councillor Morley

With apologies for the short notice, as a joint ward member for Needham Market Ward I would be grateful if you would accept the following comments from Mr Russell Stott, Chair of Creting St Peter Parish Council in respect of the above, which were forwarded to me yesterday, for consideration in respect of item 8 on the agenda for the Cabinet Meeting on Monday:

(Quote) The principal concerns of our residents is the route and visual impact. On the latter this would be part mitigated by use of the new T pylons which are 15 metres shorter than the usual lattice pylons and better still by routing it underground but the webinar and public exhibition made it clear that the T pylons and underground are more expensive and will only be used where mitigation is necessary. Therefore we seek mitigation given it runs:

- right next to our village and its ancient church
- through the Gipping Valley
- over and alongside the listed buildings at Roydon Hall

We have already been blighted by Gateway 14. This adds to our dismay.

It is also on the flight path to Wattisham and the 50m lattice pylons will affect their low flying route over our village.

With regard to the route needless to say we support the campaign of MPs to route the system on the sea bed. You'll be fully abreast with that. Over its lifetime it makes sense in terms of cost and solves all of the problems which this consultation is going to reveal. I also heard various comments at the exhibition and on the webinar about a distorted benefits analysis between sea and land options.

I am unhappy with the lack of a consultation by National Grid with our Parish council which was promised. I have chased them in person and by email but to no avail.

I shall be hosting a session in our village this coming Friday evening to share more information with our residents and they have had several messages from me directing them to information and the deadline for their responses. (End)

Many thanks,

Mike

Mike Norris

Mid Suffolk District Councillor
Joint Ward Member,
Needham Market Ward

Councillor Stringer

East Anglia GREEN Consultation Response submitted to Cabinet 6 June 2022

Response to East Anglian Green Consultation – 06 June 2022

Report MCa 22/2	Mid Suffolk has agreed a response to the recent consultation, I include the thoughts of the residents of Mendlesham I have conversed with since the consultation was started.
Page 4 paragraph 2	The document states, “achieving net zero, 50 by 30 an ongoing change...” Not sure I understand what this phrase is saying, could this be amended or at least clarified?
Breaches of N.G guidelines	National Grid guidelines clearly state that elevated areas are resisted when pylons are proposed, this proposal includes one of the highest points Suffolk (Wickham Skeith)
Community & Ancient Woodlands	The proposed route includes “carters meadow” a community owned woodland and wildlife site, that has been nurtured for over 25 years as a place of peace an tranquillity, many residents use this site as part of recuperation post illness etc. if pylons are erected over this woodland this site will be ruined for its long used purpose. There is also an area of ancient woodland at Mendlesham Green included within the proposed area, another breach of NG guidance
Land & house values	The peer reviewed statistics regarding land values post construction would be significant, along one village alone contains 11 listed buildings less than 50 mtrs from the proposal, with resultant reduction in land values of over £4,000,000.00 in one village alone, with many of these properties being used as collateral for business ventures, this will at a stroke leave many enterprises in negative equity, it does seem that the difference in cost from undersea and land is being directly born by the land owners and businesses concerned.
“Strongly” object	Could we change the wording to “strongly” object, on page 4, we have used it on page 5 under biodiversity, so it gives the impression that we have less objection to the proposal rather than the biodiversity element, if the cabinet believe that just using Object is stronger, then just use stronger in both, at the moment we are giving a mixed message.
Consultation	The consultation if it is to be meaningful needs to give clear costed options, not just input into moving to one or other side of a “band”

This page is intentionally left blank

Councillor Warboys

East Anglia GREEN Consultation Response submitted to Cabinet 6 June 2022

Statement to MSDC Cabinet re National Grids Proposals for 110 miles of mostly overhead transmission lines, otherwise East Anglia Green Energy Enablement

First, the consultation, the response proforma does much to establish the need for and lead us to support this proposal as the UK adopts widespread use of renewable energy, essential to delivering net zero carbon emissions by 2050. So far so good, but this is the only green element of this proposal, and the only significant consultative part. It assumes that we have decided on the car model and now for the options list.

There are no viable alternatives proposed. This consultation is about refining the proposal.

The proposal is about the transmission of power through Suffolk, it is not driven by Suffolk energy needs, the question needs to be asked: "Why through when it can go around?"

Another National Grid project is Sealink which will connect Sizewell with Richborough in Kent, an offshore link.

National Grid identified 23 possible reinforcement solutions and in April 2022 produced a Corridor and Preliminary Routeing and Siting Study Report.

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/document/142461/download>

and the appendices

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/document/142466/download>

East 7 the proposed scheme is not the cheapest, estimated at £2.189 billion, the closest to East 7 but with an offshore link between Norwich and Grain is East 9 estimated at £3.046 billion, a difference of £857 million. An easy decision one should expect however these costs do not factor in the individual cost to every householder within 300m of the route

A study by Dr Sally Sims, a lecturer in real estate and construction at Oxford Brookes University reveals that valuers and agents tend to underestimate the effect that overhead high voltage lines have on property values, usually between 2 and 12%. Her findings confirm that living close to overhead power lines, and particularly pylons, has a negative effect on the resale value of homes, reducing their selling price by as much as 38 per cent. Homes within 300m of an overhead power line sell for as much as a third less than similar properties in the same locality.

In addition, there is the socio-economic effect of planning blight whilst construction is underway.

<https://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/490634/study-verifies-pylon-impact>

An offshore route would not be without its environmental impact but, in its own assessment National Grid claims it is possible to mitigate against this.

Gislingham Ward is one small section, about 10% of the proposed route, the route passes Wickham Skeith, skirts Gislingham, proceeds across the southern end of Mellis Common, passing three historic monument sites in Burgate through Wortham and touching the edge of Wortham Ling – a SSSI- before crossing the Waveney Valley to Bressingham. Wortham alone has 58 grade 11 buildings.

This part of Suffolk retains its medieval settlement patterns interspersed with commons, ancient woodlands and rolling farmland. It is an important asset as an amenity to local residents and also an important aspect of what makes Suffolk attractive to tourists.

This cannot be valued easily but to dismiss it as collateral damage is short-sighted to say the least.

The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy – EN5 - sets out the factors influencing site/route. It states that: “at particularly sensitive locations the potential adverse landscape and visual impacts of an overhead line proposal may make it unacceptable in planning terms, taking account of the specific local environment and context. The IPC will have to balance these against other relevant factors, including the need for the proposed infrastructure, the availability and cost of alternative sites and routes and methods of installation.”

I was invited by Mr Kemp of Spring Farm Gislingham to view the route of the pylons as it crossed his land, North to South across the railway line. We could see a pristine swathe of countryside from Mendlesham mast in the south, Thornham Estate to the East, and across the Dove Valley to Big Wood before it would turn slightly and travel between two Special Landscape areas. Context here is everything, Special Landscape areas cannot exist in isolation, if their context is diminished so are they. This is a part of Suffolk that has been nourished by successive generations, avenues of trees planted, habitats conserved.

Individuals, small groups, and parish councils have all contacted me to express dismay and opposition to the proposals, there is some support for underground cables, and some support for alternative, lower pylons but overwhelmingly the message is that the route should be offshore.

I ask MSDC cabinet to consider rejecting totally this proposal, to appeal directly to OFGEM and the Secretary of State that the offshore route 9 be reappraised, in the light of the excessive costs of the overland route in terms of financial impact, harm to our shared heritage, and loss of amenity to our residents. These factors should be considered in addition to the basic structural costs.

Rowland Warboys

5th June 2022.

Councillor Welham

East Anglia GREEN Consultation Response submitted to Cabinet 6 June 2022

National Grid – Route from Norwich to Tilbury

Before speaking about the proposed route as it may affect Mid Suffolk, and in particular the ward served by Cllr Eburne and myself, I'd like to ask Members if they would consider the most logical and least damaging method of transmitting energy from the North Sea to Tilbury in the Thames Estuary. Why would you first connect offshore windfarms to Norwich? And then erect miles of 50 metre high pylons through South Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.

Before any transmission lines are implemented overland, or underground, a National Energy Strategy is essential. Suffolk MPs should join with MPs in other parts of the country which might be threatened by similar schemes to ensure a UK wide strategy is approved before this proposal is considered.

Residents have told me that they are confused by the approach of showing a band of interest rather than a specified route. Most of those who have homes or own land from which the pylons would be visible are against an overhead scheme. Others who fear the disruption of an underground scheme object to such a scheme and some believe they should support the overhead scheme as the least worst option.

Clearly, the consultation is flawed as there is no comparison of costs between overland, underground and undersea options. Nor is there any comparison of disbenefits of the three options. For instance, effect on Listed Buildings, wildlife habitat, visual amenity, agricultural production, disruption during construction. The administrative costs of dealing with, potentially thousands of individuals, the economic cost due to loss of tourism and other knock on effects all weigh against the current proposal.

Through our ward, if the proposal goes ahead 50 metre columns will stride across the high claylands plateau and will be seen for miles around. Listed Buildings are within the coloured band. The effect on SSSIs, wooded areas, in particular Gipping Great Wood, and a whole range of conservation and biodiversity projects is given no consideration.

Some of the comments of National Grid staff have been unhelpful and in many cases questionable. 'We don't take other matters into account at this stage'; 'the technology for an undersea option doesn't really exist'. When questioned further, I was told that such expertise does exist in the private sector. Surely now is the time to come together to devise a strategy for the UK.

In discussion with one of the staff at the Needham Market consultation, he and I agreed that the undersea option, over the life of the scheme, would only add a few pence per year to the average household electricity bill. That's before taking into account the savings from using renewable sources of energy rather than fossil fuels.

Members of Cabinet, you have an opportunity today to tell government that this proposal and other similar schemes are unacceptable and using your contacts within

government to urge an end to this piecemeal approach and produce a National Energy Strategy fit for the future.

KPW 3 June 2022