

**IN THE MATTER OF AN
APPLICATION BY NATIONAL GRID ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION FOR AN ORDER
GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR THE NORWICH TO TILBURY PROJECT
PINS REF: EN020027**

**Deadline 8 Closing Submissions On Behalf of
Ardleigh and Little Bromley
Parish Councils**

Introduction

1. These closing submissions are made jointly on behalf of Ardleigh Parish Council and Little Bromley Parish Council (“the Parish Councils”). They summarise the principal matters raised by the Parish Councils during the Examination which remain unresolved at its conclusion.
2. The Parish Councils recognise the urgent national need for reinforcement of the electricity transmission network and the importance of connecting new renewable generation. They have never disputed that need, nor that the Project falls within the relevant national policy framework.
3. Their concern is with the particular means by which that infrastructure is proposed to be delivered, and especially the decision to establish the East Anglia Connection Node (“EACN”) at Ardleigh and Little Bromley and thereby concentrate an exceptional amount of existing and proposed energy infrastructure within these two rural communities.

4. That distinction has been a consistent theme of the Parish Councils' case. At Deadline 5, they expressly supported the submissions of Lord Banner KC concerning the interpretation and application of the Critical National Priority ("CNP") provisions of EN-1. They submitted that recognition of the need for a particular type of infrastructure does not predetermine the acceptability of the particular means by which that infrastructure is delivered [REP3-133; REP5-227].
5. The Parish Councils maintain that position at the close of the Examination.

CNP and Means of Delivery

6. The Examining Authority ("ExA") has before it the Opinion of Lord Banner KC [REP3-133]. The Parish Councils expressly adopted the substance of his analysis at Deadline 5 [REP5-227].
7. The important distinction is between the compelling national need for the relevant infrastructure and the particular means selected to meet that need.
8. The Parish Councils do not dispute the substantial policy weight which CNP accords to the provision of qualifying electricity infrastructure. Their submission is that CNP cannot itself answer whether the particular solution proposed here is acceptable.
9. The existence of national need does not, without further analysis, explain:
 - a. why the EACN should be located at this particular location;
 - b. why multiple nationally significant infrastructure projects should converge upon Ardleigh and Little Bromley;
 - c. whether reasonable alternatives were adequately considered;
 - d. why the particular overhead alignment has been selected;
 - e. why undergrounding should terminate where proposed; or

- f. whether the resulting environmental harm has adequately been avoided, mitigated or compensated.
- 10. Those are matters which the Parish Councils identified expressly at Deadline 5. They submitted that CNP did not relieve the Applicant of the obligation to justify the selected route, the siting of the EACN, the adequacy of alternatives or the sufficiency of mitigation; nor did it diminish the need for proper scrutiny of cumulative, landscape and community effects [REP5-227].
- 11. The ExA is therefore invited to distinguish carefully between the need for the infrastructure and the separate question whether the particular means proposed for delivering it at Ardleigh and Little Bromley are justified.

The Applicant's Approach to Unresolved Issues

- 12. There is a related concern which has arisen consistently through the Parish Councils' participation in the Examination. It concerns not merely the conclusions reached by the Applicant, but whether the reasons and evidence advanced sufficiently demonstrate why those conclusions should be accepted.
- 13. The Parish Councils raised this expressly in their response to ExQ2 [REP5-227]. Their concern was that questions were too often answered by stating, in substance, that the Applicant had considered the matter and reached its preferred solution, or by referring back to extensive existing documentation, without sufficiently demonstrating why the acknowledged environmental harm was unavoidable or why the identified less harmful alternatives and additional mitigation did not justify a different outcome.
- 14. That concern remains relevant at the conclusion of the Examination. It can be seen particularly in relation to:

- a. the cumulative consequences of concentrating several major infrastructure projects around the EACN;
 - b. the justification for the selected EACN location and rejection of alternatives;
 - c. the point at which undergrounding terminates and overhead transmission re-emerges;
 - d. the refusal to provide a number of requested visualisations notwithstanding acknowledged major and significant effects; and
 - e. the evolution of the Applicant's position on landscape compensation.
15. The Parish Councils do not suggest that disagreement with them demonstrates a deficiency in the Applicant's case. The point is different. Where significant environmental harm is acknowledged, and a less harmful alternative or further mitigation has been identified, the ExA requires sufficient evidence and reasoning to understand why that harm nevertheless has to be accepted.
16. The Parish Councils recognise that an Applicant is entitled to disagree with those submissions and, where appropriate, to respond by reference to earlier evidence. Their concern is different. On a number of the principal issues examined during the Examination, including alternatives, undergrounding, landscape compensation and cumulative effects, the Applicant's final responses rely predominantly upon cross-reference to earlier material rather than demonstrating why the substantial body of evidence produced during the Examination does not justify a different conclusion.
17. That is particularly important in the context of CNP. The compelling need for infrastructure should not substitute for scrutiny of whether the particular means of delivering it have adequately been justified [REP3-133; REP5-227].
18. There is a further and related concern about the manner in which the Applicant's case has developed during the Examination. The Parish Councils are small local authorities with necessarily limited resources. They have

nevertheless sought to engage constructively with a very substantial and highly technical body of material produced by the Applicant, including significant new and revised material submitted as the Examination has progressed.

19. The Parish Councils recognise that refinement of a nationally significant infrastructure proposal during examination is inevitable. Their concern is not refinement itself, but the extent to which important aspects of the environmental assessment, design justification, mitigation and compensation case continued materially to develop throughout the Examination. Much of that work appears to the Parish Councils to be work which could, and ordinarily should, have been undertaken before the application was submitted for examination.
20. That has had practical consequences. The Parish Councils have repeatedly been required, within the necessarily compressed Examination timetable, to understand and respond to substantial and sometimes highly technical new material while continuing to participate in hearings, written questions, action points and successive deadlines. The difficulty is not simply one of inconvenience or resources. Where important elements of the evidential case continue to develop during the Examination, the opportunity for Interested Parties to properly scrutinise, test and respond to that case is necessarily reduced.
21. The extent of that evolution also raises a more fundamental question. The purpose of examination is to examine a developed application, not to provide the principal forum in which important elements of the Applicant's environmental assessment, design justification and mitigation case are first worked through. The Parish Councils invite the ExA, when considering the weight which can safely be placed upon the Applicant's conclusions, to have regard to the extent to which important parts of the evidential case have emerged or materially evolved only during the Examination.

22. The Parish Councils do not seek retrospectively to challenge the decision to accept the application for examination. They do, however, submit that the volume and significance of material which it has proved necessary for the Applicant to produce, revise and develop during the Examination lends support to their concern that important aspects of the evidential basis upon which the Project is justified remained insufficiently developed when the application was submitted for examination. The significance of that history is not that the Applicant refined its case during the Examination, some refinement is inevitable, but that the ExA must now assess the weight which can properly be attached to conclusions that continued materially to evolve until the closing stages of the Examination.

The EACN and the Cumulative Concentration of Infrastructure

23. The Project does not merely pass through Ardleigh and Little Bromley. It establishes the EACN within them.
24. The EACN forms the focus for the convergence in this locality of Norwich to Tilbury, North Falls, Five Estuaries and the proposed Tarchon interconnector, together with associated infrastructure.
25. The Parish Councils addressed the scale of this concentration in their cumulative effects material submitted at Deadline 5 [REP5-227]. Their evidence identified the EACN, the offshore windfarm substations, the proposed Tarchon converter infrastructure and associated overhead lines, cable corridors, access routes, compounds and other works as creating, in practical terms, an energy infrastructure hub within this small rural area.
26. The significance of that concentration is not confined to land take. It includes landscape and visual effects, ecological effects, construction disturbance, traffic,

effects upon PRowS and recreational amenity, effects upon agricultural operations and the wider change in the character and experience of the locality.

27. The consequence is qualitatively different from that of an overhead transmission route simply passing through the countryside. It is the progressive transformation of the character and function of the area into a networked infrastructure landscape.
28. The Parish Councils' concern is also practical. At Deadline 5 they pointed out that the cumulative effects of all five relevant projects had not been clearly laid out and that there remained no single clear map showing their interrelationship, including order limits, haul roads, compounds and cable routes [REP5-227].
29. That matters. If the combined physical extent and interaction of the projects cannot readily be understood from the Examination material, there is an obvious risk that assessment by individual project, environmental topic and receptor understates the overall change which will actually be experienced by these communities.
30. This is not simply a Parish Council concern. Tendring District Council independently raised cumulative effects across the NSIPs in its Examination submissions, including [REP3-094]. The Parish Councils expressly supported Tendring's position in their own ExQ2 response [REP5-227].
31. The Parish Councils support Tendring's concerns as to the cumulative effects experienced in this locality. Tendring's evidence provides important independent local-authority support for the proposition that the consequences around Ardleigh and Little Bromley require consideration across the infrastructure projects rather than solely within the confines of Norwich to Tilbury.

32. The Parish Councils remain concerned that the Applicant's methodology fragments what is experienced on the ground as a single cumulative environmental change into separate projects, technical disciplines and receptor groups.
33. The ExA is therefore invited to assess the EACN not merely as one component of Norwich to Tilbury, but as the focal point for a substantial and permanent concentration of energy infrastructure.

Alternatives and the Location of the EACN

34. The magnitude of those cumulative consequences makes the consideration of alternatives particularly important.
35. Lord Banner's Opinion [REP3-133] also addresses the Applicant's approach to objectives and alternatives. The underlying issue for the Parish Councils is whether reasonable alternatives were assessed against sufficiently clear and consistent criteria before the preferred solution became fixed.
36. The Parish Councils do not contend that there was a freestanding statutory obligation to produce a document bearing the title "Project Objectives". The relevant question is substantive rather than semantic.
37. The Parish Councils have questioned the selection of the EACN location and consideration of alternatives throughout the Examination, including in their ExQ1 response [REP3-097], Deadline 4 material [REP4-319] and Deadline 5 submissions [REP5-227].
38. The Parish Councils do not contend that the Applicant was automatically required to select whichever alternative caused the least environmental harm. Nor does the mere existence of another option determine the application.

39. The question is whether, before selecting a solution carrying environmental consequences of this magnitude, the Applicant adequately examined reasonable alternatives and demonstrated why the selected solution should nevertheless be preferred.
40. That question assumes particular importance because selection of the EACN at this location does more than determine the siting of one component of Norwich to Tilbury. It creates the focus around which other nationally significant energy infrastructure converges. That decision therefore has consequences extending well beyond Norwich to Tilbury itself.
41. CNP does not make that inquiry redundant. To treat the urgent national need for transmission infrastructure as itself demonstrating the necessity of this particular EACN location would collapse the distinction between need and means of delivery which the Parish Councils have consistently maintained [REP3-133; REP5-227].

Costs and the Assessment of Alternatives

42. Cost has formed a material part of the Applicant's assessment of alternatives. The Parish Councils raised the need for transparency as to the costs attributed both to the preferred scheme and to the alternatives against which it has been compared.
43. That concern is reinforced by the fact that, in response to ExQ1, the Applicant clarified that the comparator used in the updated Funding Statement had uplifted the wholly overhead option rather than the majority overhead option incorporating approximately 20 km of underground cable. It explained that the appropriate 2025/26 analogue for the proposed scheme was approximately

£2,224 million. The Parish Councils do not rely upon that clarification merely as a criticism of presentation. Rather, it demonstrates why considerable caution is required before treating headline cost figures as determinative of the alternatives assessment.

44. In the Parish Councils submission, where an alternative capable of materially reducing environmental harm is rejected substantially on grounds of cost, the Examining Authority needs to be satisfied that the comparison is genuinely like-for-like; that equivalent assumptions, contingencies and price bases have been applied; and that the asserted differential is sufficiently robust to bear the environmental weight placed upon it.
45. A large gross cost for an alternative does not, without more, demonstrate disproportionality. Relevant matters include the incremental cost premium over the preferred scheme, the confidence which can be placed upon each estimate, the functions which the alternative has been required to reproduce and the environmental consequences which the additional expenditure would avoid.
46. That issue is particularly important where the Applicant's cost comparison depends upon the configuration of the alternative itself. The materially higher HVDC figures relied upon by the Applicant reflect assumptions as to capacity, system flexibility and connection capability. Those may be legitimate requirements. They nevertheless reinforce the importance of ensuring that the objectives against which alternatives were assessed were themselves clearly and appropriately defined.
47. The Parish Councils also support the broader concern raised during the Examination that a comparison confined to direct capital cost risks understating the economic consequences of the preferred overhead solution if material environmental, community and natural-capital effects are effectively

externalised. It is unnecessary for present purposes to determine whether HM Treasury Green Book methodology was legally mandatory. The Parish Councils' submission is simply that where cost is relied upon to justify materially greater environmental harm, the comparison must be sufficiently transparent and comprehensive for the ExA to understand the weight which can properly be attached to that consideration.

48. The Parish Councils do not invite the ExA to undertake its own economic appraisal. Their submission is that cost should not be treated as a sufficient answer to a materially less harmful alternative unless the underlying cost differential has been demonstrated on a transparent, consistent and realistic basis.
49. At the close of the Examination, the Parish Councils remain concerned that the Applicant's final material does not provide a sufficiently transparent explanation to dispel those concerns.
50. The Parish Councils do not submit that the Applicant's cost evidence is necessarily wrong. Their submission is that the Examination has not provided sufficient transparency to enable cost, of itself, to provide a complete answer to less harmful alternatives.

Landscape Effects and Undergrounding

51. The Parish Councils recognise the strong policy starting point in EN-5 in favour of overhead lines outside nationally designated landscapes.
52. However, the Applicant's own design evolution demonstrates that this starting point is capable of being displaced. National Grid concluded that undergrounding was justified on the section approaching the EACN because of landscape effects.

53. The Applicant's final response explains once again why undergrounding was considered appropriate up to the EACN. Respectfully, however, that is not the issue raised by the Parish Councils. The question is why the planning and landscape principles which justified undergrounding immediately north of the EACN cease to justify it immediately beyond the transition point.
54. The unresolved question is why the protection afforded by undergrounding should terminate where it does.
55. The landscape does not suddenly become materially less sensitive at the transition point. Ardleigh remains a settled rural landscape characterised by open countryside, mature hedgerows and trees, narrow lanes, PRowS, agricultural businesses and heritage assets and is closely related to the setting of Dedham Vale National Landscape.
56. The Parish Councils addressed this specifically in their later landscape submissions [REP6-133]. Tendring has likewise raised landscape concerns in this locality [REP3-094]. The Parish Councils support those concerns.
57. The Parish Councils therefore maintain that further undergrounding should be considered where it would materially reduce the exceptional concentration of landscape and visual harm.
58. National Grid's own design demonstrates that the policy presumption in favour of overhead lines is not dispositive. The question remains whether the Applicant has provided a sufficiently convincing landscape and environmental justification for the precise point at which overhead transmission is reintroduced.

"Scenario B"

59. That concern is particularly relevant to “Scenario B”, involving the revised overhead alignment north of the consented Flying Trade Group development.
60. The Parish Councils’ later landscape evidence identified continuing concerns, notwithstanding the Applicant's reliance upon earlier sensitivity testing, as to the alignment between pylons T18 and T20, its relationship with residential and heritage receptors and Dedham Vale National Landscape, and the adequacy of the visual evidence available to assess the alternative [REP6-133].
61. A solution cannot be justified merely because it is technically deliverable. Its environmental consequences must themselves be sufficiently understood to permit the planning balance to be undertaken.
62. To the extent that material uncertainty remains as to those consequences, that should weigh against reliance upon Scenario B.

Dedham Vale National Landscape

63. The relationship with Dedham Vale National Landscape clearly remains important. The Parish Councils’ case does not depend upon the Project itself lying within the designated landscape. Their concern is with effects upon its setting, views from and towards it and the wider landscape context in which the National Landscape is experienced [REP3-097; REP4-319; REP5-227].
64. The question is not simply whether an individual pylon, substation or converter station causes a significant effect upon an individually identified special quality. It is whether the progressive concentration of major electricity infrastructure around this part of the National Landscape materially alters the landscape context in which it is experienced.

65. Tendring has independently raised the cumulative consequences of infrastructure affecting this locality [REP3-094]. The Parish Councils support that aspect of Tendring's case.

Visual Evidence

66. The Parish Councils have repeatedly raised concerns about the adequacy of the visual evidence available to the Examination.
67. Following ISH2, Action Point 32 required the Parish Councils to identify suggested additional viewpoints and the Applicant to provide further visuals as necessary [EV9-023]. The Parish Councils identified 11 additional viewpoints at Deadline 4 [REP4-319]. The Applicant responded at Deadline 5 [REP5-194].
68. The Applicant agreed to provide visualisations for only two of those locations. More significantly, it acknowledged that the effects upon visual receptors would be "major and significant" at five of the nine locations for which the requests were declined [REP5-194]. The Parish Councils responded to that position at Deadline 6 [REP6-133].
69. The Applicant nevertheless stated that additional illustrated viewpoints would not change the conclusions of the LVIA [APP-226] or Historic Environment assessment [AS-068]. The Parish Councils pointed out that these were viewpoints which the Applicant had not previously assessed and that it was therefore impossible to conclude that the assessments could not change [REP6-133].
70. That concern is reinforced by the ExA's own ExQ2. At LV2.19 the ExA observed that images from the Applicant's 3D visualisation tool covered areas which had not been extensively represented by visualisations and would therefore be useful to the Examination. It requested screenshots [PD-023]. The Applicant subsequently supplied those at [REP5-211, Appendix H].

71. This illustrates a concrete example of the Parish Councils' wider concern: the Applicant's conclusion that further visual evidence could make no difference preceded the production of evidence which the ExA itself considered would be useful.
72. The subsequent 3D material also demonstrates the value of looking beyond the limited selection of formal photomontages. The Parish Councils referred the ExA specifically to [REP5-211, Appendix H, pp.396–414], together with the corresponding baseline images previously supplied at [REP4-319].
73. The Limit of Deviation visualisations at HE25 are particularly instructive [REP5-197, pp.43–49]. Images at pp.46 and 49, when considered together, provide an approximately 180-degree view from the centre of Ardleigh. The Parish Councils' Deadline 6 response explains why those images demonstrate substantial visibility of the overhead infrastructure, including angle pylons, from within the village [REP6-133].
74. The Applicant also declined the Parish Councils' requested "Viewpoint A" south of the A137, in part on the basis that it was not one of the key views identified in the Ardleigh Conservation Area Character Appraisal [REP5-194]. The Parish Councils demonstrated in response that the requested viewpoint corresponded with one of the identified key external views in that Appraisal [REP6-133; see also REP4-319].
75. Several important viewpoints have therefore never been fully assessed. The Parish Councils submit that the Applicant's landscape and heritage conclusions should be given correspondingly limited weight because the evidential basis upon which those conclusions rest remains incomplete.

76. Ardleigh is an historic settlement whose significance cannot adequately be understood by considering individual listed buildings in isolation. There are 17 listed buildings within Ardleigh Conservation Area together with numerous important non-designated heritage assets. The Parish Councils have emphasised their aggregate value and their relationship with the surrounding rural landscape [AS-065; REP4-319; REP6-133].
77. The Applicant's Figure 11.2, Historic Environment: Designated Heritage Assets Assessed in the ES Chapter [REP4-145], shows only St Mary's Church amongst the listed buildings within Ardleigh Conservation Area for the relevant assessment exercise. The Parish Councils remain concerned that the collective historic environment and its relationship with the surrounding landscape have not adequately been captured.
78. That concern overlaps directly with the limitations in the visual evidence. Where important views have not been illustrated, confidence in conclusions concerning effects upon setting must necessarily be reduced.
79. The Secretary of State should therefore consider not merely effects upon individual designated assets but the effect of the proposed infrastructure upon the collective significance, setting and experience of Ardleigh's historic environment.

Landscape Compensation and ISH2 Action Point 27

80. There has been an important development during the latter stages of the Examination. Following ISH2 Action Point 27, the Applicant produced Constraints and Opportunities Plans. The Parish Councils responded that these did not amount to the coordinated masterplanning exercise which they understood the Action Point to contemplate [REP6-133].

81. Their concern was that the proposals were illustrative, substantially dependent upon land outside the Applicant's control and lacked a clear delivery programme, secured funding, implementation strategy or measurable environmental outcomes [REP6-133].
82. The Parish Councils also identified a series of practical deficiencies in the Ardleigh and Little Bromley Opportunities Plan [REP6-133], including proposals affecting a commercial greenhouse site, planting adjacent to an area previously identified as having high archaeological potential, omission of important local water bodies, treatment of land at Glebe Corner and mapping which did not reflect the current route of Footpath 27.
83. Those examples were important not merely as individual errors or omissions. They supported the Parish Councils' wider concern that what had been produced was an illustrative desktop exercise rather than a coordinated and deliverable masterplanning exercise.
84. More fundamentally, the Parish Councils pointed out that, although neighbouring NSIPs appeared on the Constraints Plan, the Opportunities Plan contained no integrated strategy for addressing their combined effects. Their submission was that a genuine landscape response needed to address the landscape as a whole rather than treating the individual projects separately [REP6-133].
85. The position subsequently moved on. At Deadline 7, following the Parish Councils' criticisms at Deadline 6, the Applicant submitted Landscape compensation, offsetting and enhancement area plans [REP7-535]. That was a late Deadline 7 submission accepted at the discretion of the ExA.

86. The Parish Councils welcome the recognition that residual landscape effects require a response going beyond ordinary embedded mitigation.
87. The evolution of the Applicant's position is nevertheless relevant. The issue at the close of the Examination is no longer whether the Applicant has done nothing in response to the identified residual harm. It is whether what is now proposed and secured adequately addresses the deficiencies previously identified and provides compensation which is sufficiently certain, proportionate, local and deliverable, rather than simply whether some response has now been provided.
88. Compensation must not be confused with mitigation. A compensation mechanism does not remove the underlying effect. Its relevance arises precisely because residual harm remains. Nor can new planting immediately reproduce a mature rural landscape containing established trees, hedgerows, habitats and historic landscape features.
89. In particular, compensation for harm concentrated upon Ardleigh and Little Bromley should principally benefit those communities. A general mechanism capable of being dissipated across a substantially wider area would not adequately respond to the particular burden which they are being required to accommodate.
90. Any compensation mechanism should therefore provide identifiable funding, a clear delivery mechanism, appropriate geographical connection, long-term management and measurable environmental outcomes capable of independent monitoring and enforcement.

Trees, Hedgerows and Ecological Networks

91. The affected landscape is not simply open agricultural land. The Parish Councils' Deadline 6 evidence identified approximately 95 TPO-protected oak trees within Ardleigh and Little Bromley and recorded the proposed removal of approximately 197 mature trees, with partial impacts upon a further 154 [REP6-133].
92. The significance of those figures is not simply numerical. Trees, hedgerows, hedge bases, ditches and field margins operate together as an ecological and landscape network. Their removal or fragmentation can sever established habitat connections.
93. Nor is replacement planting equivalent to avoidance of loss. Newly planted vegetation cannot immediately reproduce the structure, habitat and ecological functions associated with mature trees and established hedgerows. Time itself is therefore an environmental consequence.
94. This is consistent with the concern expressed by the Parish Councils at ExQ2 that replacement planting, habitat restoration and BNG arrangements required greater certainty as to local delivery, long-term management and successful ecological recovery [REP5-227].
95. The Parish Councils therefore invite the ExA to distinguish carefully between avoidance, mitigation and compensation and, where mature habitat loss remains proposed, to ask whether the Applicant has demonstrated why less harmful alternatives are not reasonably available.

Public Rights of Way ("PRoWs") and Recreational Amenity

96. The Parish Councils have addressed the effects upon PRoWs and recreational access throughout the Examination, including in their Deadline 5 material [REP5-227].

97. Tendring's evidence provides independent support for the importance of considering cumulative effects across the relevant NSIPs [REP3-094], a position which the Parish Councils expressly supported [REP5-227].
98. PRowS in these rural communities are not merely transport corridors. They are one of the principal means by which residents experience the surrounding countryside. This Project's effects upon them therefore extend beyond temporary closures or diversions. The permanent presence of pylons, substations and associated infrastructure changes the character of that recreational experience after construction has ended.
99. Those effects should be considered together with the landscape and cumulative effects described above rather than solely as questions of maintaining physical connectivity.

Construction, Traffic, Agricultural Land and Rural Businesses

100. The Parish Councils have throughout the Examination drawn attention to the limitations of the local rural highway network and the consequences of major construction activity. Those concerns again have a cumulative dimension. The cumulative issue is not whether each project can individually be accommodated, but whether all of them can reasonably be accommodated within the same communities.
101. Similar considerations apply to agricultural land. The cumulative effects include permanent land take, temporary disturbance, field severance and interference with agricultural operations. The Parish Councils have particularly emphasised the quality and productivity of agricultural land in this locality [REP5-227].
102. At Deadline 5, they also drew the ExA's attention to issues arising from the interaction between major transmission infrastructure and modern agricultural

operations, including worker safety, machinery clearances and irrigation equipment [REP5-227].

103. These effects form part of the environmental cost of the particular solution selected at Ardleigh and Little Bromley. CNP does not remove them from the planning balance.

Safety and Resilience

104. The Parish Councils have also raised safety and resilience, including in their response to ExQ2 [REP5-227]. Their concern is not that electricity infrastructure is inherently unsafe. It concerns the consequences of the scale and clustering of electricity infrastructure around the proposed substations within an open rural location, together with the practical characteristics of the surrounding road network and emergency access.
105. The existence of specialist regulatory regimes is relevant but does not remove the need to understand the consequences of the particular configuration proposed.

The Position at Deadline 7

106. The continuing production, revision and refinement of material at the later stages of the Examination illustrates the concern identified above. The Parish Councils' Deadline 7 submission [REP7-540] responded to further information and submissions received only at Deadline 6, including the Applicant's comments on Deadline 6 submissions and the further landscape compensation proposals. The Applicant itself continued to develop important aspects of its case at Deadline 7, including its approach to landscape compensation [REP7-535].
107. There is nothing inherently objectionable in an Applicant refining its case in response to the examination process. The concern is cumulative: when

important technical evidence, design justification, mitigation and compensation measures continue materially to evolve towards the end of a six-month examination, Interested Parties have progressively less opportunity to understand, test and respond to them.

108. The volume of material submitted during an Examination does not itself answer whether a particular choice has been justified, even at the close of the Examination. The question is whether the evidence and reasoning enable the ExA safely to conclude that acknowledged harm is unavoidable or justified. That is particularly pertinent where:

- a. substantial cumulative effects arise from the concentration of infrastructure around the EACN;
- b. alternative means of delivery have been identified;
- c. the Applicant has itself demonstrated that undergrounding is justified nearby;
- d. requested visual evidence has not been provided notwithstanding acknowledged significant effects; and
- e. the Applicant's landscape compensation position has continued to evolve during the closing stages of the Examination [REP7-535].

109. The Parish Councils invite the ExA to approach the remaining disagreements on that basis.

The Planning Balance

110. The Parish Councils return finally to CNP because it provides the proper context in which their case should be understood. They do not invite the ExA to discount the urgent national need for this infrastructure. They accept it.

111. Nor do they contend that local environmental harm automatically outweighs that national need. Their submission is instead that the powerful policy weight attaching to CNP must not answer a logically separate question: has the

Applicant adequately justified the particular means by which it proposes to meet that need? That distinction accords with the analysis advanced by Lord Banner KC and consistently adopted by the Parish Councils throughout the Examination. Nothing in the Applicant's Deadline 7 responses persuades the Parish Councils that this distinction has been adequately answered.

112. In Ardleigh and Little Bromley that question has particular force because the selected solution:

- a. establishes the EACN within two rural communities;
- b. facilitates an exceptional concentration of nationally significant energy infrastructure;
- c. gives rise to substantial residual and cumulative landscape and community effects, concerns independently raised by Tendring District Council [REP3-094];
- d. returns the transmission line above ground in a landscape where the Applicant has itself accepted that undergrounding is justified nearby;
- e. affects an historic settlement and the setting of Dedham Vale National Landscape;
- f. entails loss and fragmentation of mature landscape and ecological features;
- g. affects PRoWs, agricultural operations, rural businesses and the local road network; and
- h. has ultimately required the development of a specific landscape compensation response [REP7-535].

113. The Parish Councils therefore maintain the proposition expressly advanced at Deadline 5: recognition of the need for the infrastructure does not predetermine the acceptability of the particular means by which it is delivered [REP3-133; REP5-227].

114. It is the Parish Councils' submissions that the principal unresolved questions at the close of the Examination are accordingly:
- a. whether the cumulative consequences of concentrating infrastructure around the EACN have been adequately assessed and weighed;
 - b. whether the Applicant has adequately justified selection of the EACN location against reasonable alternatives;
 - c. whether the termination of undergrounding and return to overhead transmission at Ardleigh has been sufficiently justified;
 - d. whether the available landscape, visual and heritage evidence captures the full effects of the Project;
 - e. whether the effects upon mature trees, hedgerows, PRowS, agriculture, rural businesses and community amenity have adequately been avoided or mitigated; and
 - f. whether the landscape compensation now proposed is sufficiently certain, local, proportionate and deliverable.

Conclusion

115. The Parish Councils have sought throughout the six-month Examination to engage constructively at every stage of the Examination. They have provided extensive local evidence, participated in hearings and site inspections, identified additional viewpoints, responded to written questions and action points and sought practical mitigation and compensation where impacts cannot be avoided [REP3-097; REP4-319; REP5-227; REP6-133; REP7-540]. Their central concern nevertheless remains unresolved.
116. Ardleigh and Little Bromley are being asked to accommodate not simply part of a transmission line but a permanent strategic concentration of nationally significant electricity infrastructure.

117. Importantly, those concerns are not confined to the Parish Councils. Tendring District Council has independently raised material concerns about the cumulative effects of the NSIPs affecting this locality [REP3-094]. The Parish Councils expressly supported Tendring on that issue at Deadline 5 [REP5-227].
118. CNP explains why new infrastructure must urgently be delivered. It does not, without further analysis, explain why this particular concentration, at this particular location, by these particular means, represents an acceptable way of delivering it.
119. The Parish Councils remain concerned that, on a number of the principal issues examined, the Applicant has largely maintained the correctness of its original conclusions without sufficiently demonstrating why the substantial body of evidence produced during the Examination does not justify a different outcome.
120. That concern is compounded by the extent to which the evidential and mitigation case advanced in support of the Project has itself developed during the Examination. The Parish Councils submit that the need for that degree of continuing development is relevant both to the maturity of the application when submitted and to the weight which can safely be placed in conclusions which Interested Parties have had progressively less opportunity to scrutinise.
121. The Applicant's development of a more substantive landscape compensation mechanism is welcome [REP7-535], but it does not alter the existence of the underlying residual harm. The need for compensation reflects the existence of residual effects requiring a response.
122. The Parish Councils therefore invite the ExA to give full weight to those residual and cumulative effects and not to treat CNP as foreclosing scrutiny of the EACN location, route, alternatives or means of transmission.

123. If development consent is recommended, the Parish Councils ask that the strongest reasonably available measures be recommended to:
- a. reduce further the landscape and visual effects around Ardleigh, including further consideration of the extent of undergrounding;
 - b. minimise the loss of mature trees and hedgerows;
 - c. protect the significance and setting of heritage assets, Ardleigh Conservation Area and the setting of Dedham Vale National Landscape;
 - d. minimise disruption to PRowS, agricultural holdings, rural businesses and the rural highway network; and
 - e. secure a defined and enforceable package of landscape and environmental compensation which is proportionate to the particular residual and cumulative effects experienced by Ardleigh and Little Bromley and delivers enduring benefits within those communities.
124. These submissions are not an invitation to discount the compelling national need for reinforcement of the electricity transmission network. They are an invitation to distinguish, as national policy itself requires, between the need for the infrastructure and the means by which it is delivered. The Parish Councils respectfully submit that the Applicant has not demonstrated why the exceptional concentration of nationally significant electricity infrastructure at Ardleigh and Little Bromley represents the least harmful or otherwise most appropriate means of meeting that need, nor why the resulting residual environmental burden should be accepted without further avoidance, mitigation and locally secured compensation.
125. The Parish Councils invite the ExA, when undertaking the overall planning balance, to stand back from the individual technical disciplines and consider the Project as it would be experienced by those living and working in Ardleigh and Little Bromley. Throughout the Examination the evidence has necessarily been presented in separate chapters dealing with landscape, heritage, ecology,

highways, agriculture, public rights of way and other topics. The cumulative effect of those matters, however, is greater than the sum of its individual parts.

126. To assist in that exercise, the Parish Councils have appended to these submissions a document entitled “Ardleigh and Little Bromley Overview Maps”. That document brings together, in a single geographical context, the principal constraints and receptors discussed throughout the Examination. The Parish Councils also respectfully invite the Examining Authority to revisit the drone footage submitted at the outset of the Examination. Taken together, those materials provide an important visual context for understanding the relationship between the proposed EACN, the overhead line, the surrounding settlements and the wider concentration of existing and proposed nationally significant energy infrastructure.
127. Finally, the Parish Councils invite the ExA,, when undertaking the overall planning balance, to revisit the drone footage submitted at the outset of the Examination. Whilst the Examination has necessarily concentrated on technical reports, plans and photomontages, the footage remains a useful reminder of the landscape context within which the Project would sit and the cumulative relationship between the EACN, the proposed overhead line, the surrounding settlements and the other major energy infrastructure proposed in this locality. It provides a valuable perspective when considering whether the environmental burden placed upon Ardleigh and Little Bromley has been shown to be justified.

Simon Bell
Cornerstone Barristers
4 August 2026

Ardleigh and Little Bromley Overview Maps

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Key to the Maps.....	3
Map 1	4
Comments relating to Map 1	5
Map 2	7
Comments relating to Map 2.....	8
Map 3	11
Comments relating to Map 3.....	12

Introduction

The overview maps in this document have been prepared to assist the Examining Authority by bringing together, in their geographical context, a number of the principal landscape, heritage, environmental, community and infrastructure issues discussed in detail throughout the Examination. They are intended to complement, rather than replace, the Parish Councils' previous written submissions and oral evidence.

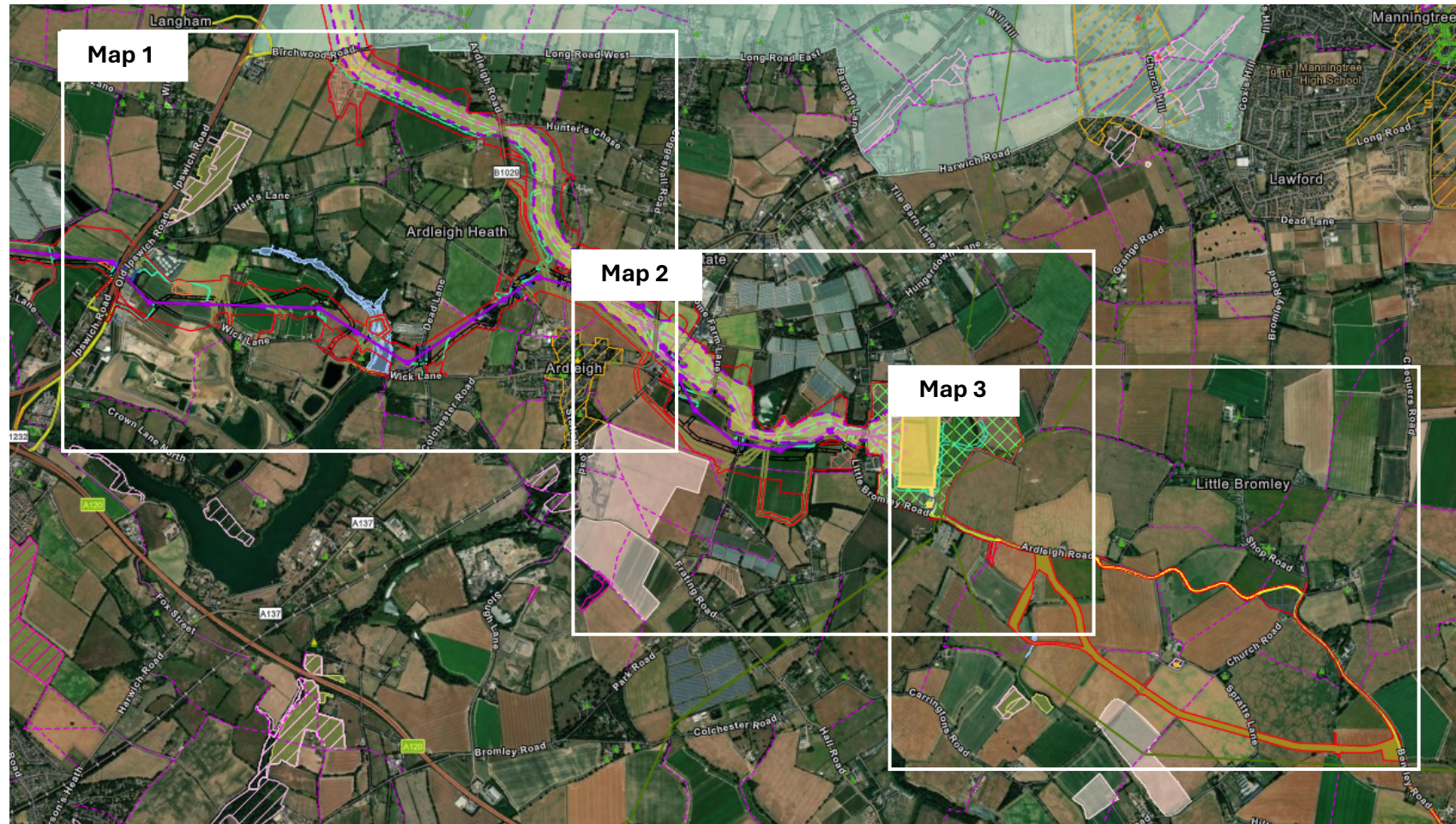
The purpose of the maps is not to advance new arguments, but to illustrate the exceptional concentration of constraints surrounding the proposed East Anglia Connection Node (EACN) and the proposed overhead line through the rural communities of Ardleigh and Little Bromley. During the Examination these matters have necessarily been considered under separate technical disciplines. Viewed collectively, however, they demonstrate the extent to which nationally designated assets, heritage interests, environmental constraints, businesses, community facilities and other planned infrastructure converge within a relatively small geographical area.

The scope of these maps is confined to the Norwich to Tilbury project. They do not attempt to illustrate the additional cumulative effects arising from the proposed North Falls and Five Estuaries offshore wind farm substations or the proposed Tarchon Interconnector converter station. Those projects would further increase the concentration of nationally significant energy infrastructure in this locality and have been addressed separately in the Parish Councils' submissions on cumulative effects.

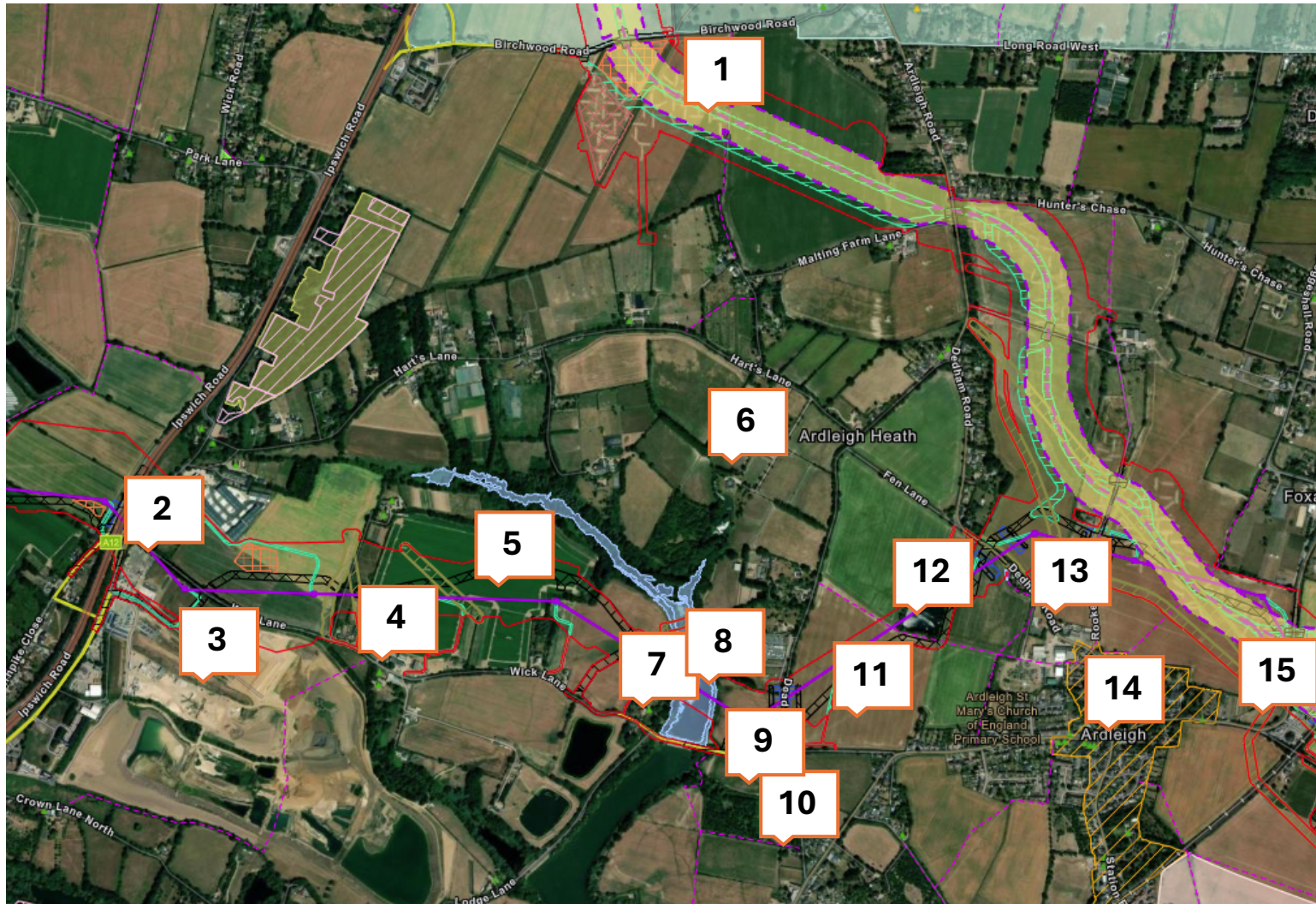
The maps were derived from images copied from the Applicants “2025 interactive map”:

<https://norwichtotilburymap.nationalgrid.com/2025>

Key to the Maps



Map 1



Comments relating to Map 1

The numbers below correspond with the callouts on the map

1. The proposed infrastructure would enter Ardleigh from the Dedham Vale National Landscape, shown in green at the top of the image. This requires a significant diversion from the main Norwich to Tilbury route alignment. ALBA submission [AS-065] ¹ discusses how this would result in an additional Lifetime Power Transfer cost of at least £154 million for the cable infrastructure, effectively doubling the cost of this section of the route.
2. Conflict between consented plans for a food storage warehouse (Flying Trade Group Ltd) and the Applicant's proposals.
3. Site of Ardleigh Reservoir extension and proposed Country Park (formerly Crown Quarry). The intention is for the Country Park to provide much wider public access than currently exists with Ardleigh Reservoir. This site would be dominated by pylons TB18 to TB20, adversely affecting the amenity and creating a serious risk to the bird life attracted to the water.
4. Grade II Listed Buildings: "Wick Farmhouse" and "Barn Adjacent to Road at Wick Farm". Ancient hedgerow and trees with TPO status are at risk of being destroyed in this section.
5. Proposals for Crown extension minerals extraction conflict with the Applicant's proposals. Planning Applications: ESS/14/26/TEN/SPO and ESS/13/26/TEN/SO
6. Benson Stud. Provides recuperation for high value racehorses. Viability would be severely impacted by construction noise and vibration.
7. Grade II Listed Building: "Fountain Farmhouse".
8. The proposed overhead line would span Ardleigh Reservoir. Ardleigh Reservoir is identified on the Cornell "ebird" portal as a "bird hot spot". 129 different species ² have been recorded there, a significant number of these are either UK Red List or UK Amber List. The views of the reservoir from this point are also highly valued.

¹ "Report on Proposed Route Alignment and EACN Substation Siting in Ardleigh"

² <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L16696008/bird-list>

9. Three independent rural enterprises are located here: Skylark – a very popular social venue, Prettyfields Vineyard and the JackRabbit Brewing Co. (a small brewery). All three would be severely impacted.
10. Proposed Anglian Water Strategic Pipeline project. This involves a major upgrade to an existing pipeline from Great Horkesley to Ardleigh Reservoir, which overlaps with the Applicant’s proposals. Work is due to be carried out in 2028.
11. These fields are a regular nesting site for Skylarks. Geese and swans also graze here in significant numbers. A critical pitstop beneath the UNESCO nominated East Atlantic Flyway for migratory birds.
12. Fishing Lake “Local Green Space 1”, as identified in the “Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan 2020 – 2033” ³ . In the proposals the overhead line between TB13 and TB14 would span the lake.
13. Numerous PRowS intersected by the proposals.
14. Encirclement of Grade II* St Mary’s Church, Ardleigh (1112060) and Ardleigh Conservation Area (CA26). The church tower is the dominant structure from viewpoints all around the village. The proposal would result in ring of pylons and overhead lines becoming the dominant structures. In the parish of Ardleigh there are 71 listed buildings: 47 within 1km of the proposed infrastructure and 20 of within 500m. There are 17 listed buildings in the Conservation Area alone. There are also many highly valued non-designated heritage assets: Ardleigh Parish Council has proposed 19 buildings in the Conservation Area for Local List assessment, following a request for nominations from Tendring District Council.
15. Glebe Corner “Local Green Space 6”, as identified in the “Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan 2020 – 2033”. This land has historic links to Grade II* St Mary’s Church, Ardleigh (1112060). The consultants who advised on the Neighbourhood Plan stated: <i>“it retains many of the undeveloped qualities that is would historically have held as glebe land and it continues to form part of the church’s heritage setting”</i> . The nearest pylon, TB9 is planned to have an extended height of 59.8m, to enable the cables to span the railway. As it would be located only 82m away it would dominate this Local Green Space.

³ https://legacy.tendringdc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/planning/Planning_Policy/Ardleigh/Ardleigh%20Neighbourhood%20Plan.pdf

Map 2



Comments relating to Map 2

The numbers below correspond with the callouts on the map

- | |
|---|
| <p>16. The impact on Ardleigh is significantly increased by the proposed alignment of the overhead lines. Only 6 of proposed pylons TB1 to TB21 are the standard suspension type with a height of approximately 50m. 2 would be extended height suspension pylons with a height of approximately 60m. 10 would be angle pylons, which are widely acknowledged to be much more visually intrusive. The remaining towers, situated at the proposed EACN substation site, would be a terminal pylon and 2 gantries. Therefore, 15 of the 21 pylons, i.e. 71% of the tall infrastructure proposed for the Parish, would require tower designs with the highest visual impact. The visual impact is discussed in “Viewpoints and Visualisations in the Ardleigh and Little Bromley area” [REP4-319] and “Response to the Applicant's deadline 5 submissions relating to visualisations” [REP6-133] (page11/18 onwards).</p> |
| <p>17. Extended height pylons TB8 & TB9 (approx. 60m high) where OHL would cross the railway.</p> |
| <p>18. Scheduled Monument (1002146). The proposal to locate tall infrastructure adjacent to this site would cause significant harm to its setting⁴. Please refer to report “Impact on the archaeology of Scheduled Monument (1002146) and the Ardleigh Cropmark Complex” [REP7-540] p12/62 onwards.</p> |
| <p>19. The Ardleigh Cropmark Complex. Due to the association with the scheduled monument site and based on information from credible archaeological reports, the section of the Ardleigh Cropmark Complex intersected by the proposed project is considered to have the archaeological potential to demonstrate equivalent significance to the adjacent scheduled monument⁵. Please refer to report “Impact on the archaeology of Scheduled Monument (1002146) and the Ardleigh Cropmark Complex” [REP7-540] p12/62 onwards.</p> |
| <p>20. Spindles Farm – Loss of 80% of the farmland, which is all Grade 1 BMV. The remaining small parcels of land would be uneconomical to farm. Unmanaged land over the long construction period will create a build-up of weeds and brambles, making it awkward and costly to reinstate. Loss of a significant ancient hedgerows (including trees subject to TPO'S) which provide boundary security and ecological benefits - flora and fauna (barn owl, buzzards, red kites and badgers set rely on these). Many</p> |

⁴ “Impact on the archaeology of Scheduled Monument (1002146) and the Ardleigh Cropmark Complex”

⁵ “Impact on the archaeology of Scheduled Monument (1002146) and the Ardleigh Cropmark Complex”

migratory birds fly along the proposed pylons route over the farm. Dust implications on existing apple orchard during construction. Concerns that land disruption may cause a reduction in groundwater levels and affect the operation of the jet wells. Concern that polymer materials may be injected into the land to provide a firm surface for proposed haul roads. A reversed operation, after completion, will downgrade the land from its original status.

21. Peake Fruit – risk to extremely valuable blueberry production. As stated in “Transcript of Compulsory Acquisition Hearing 2 (CAH2) - Day 1 - Part 1” [EV10-002] the proposal would “in practical terms lead to the loss of the blueberry plantation within the affected area, some £26 million worth of loss over the over the lifetime of that plantation”. This loss cannot be easily mitigated due to factors such as the scarcity of suitable soils, the capital intensive nature of blueberry production and the lack of available replacement land. The blueberry crop is a crucial part of supply contracts and supports employment and packhouse throughput.

22. Reservoir for Peake Fruit and fishing lake. The fishing lake attracts migratory birds.

23. The DEFRA Agriculture Land Classification maps for England show how the infrastructure proposed for ALBA would be located on very scarce Grade 1 Best and Most Versatile agricultural land⁶. This is discussed in ALBA submission [AS-065]⁷. Natural England states: “*The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) provides a method for assessing the quality of farmland to enable informed choices to be made about its future use within the planning system. It helps underpin the principles of sustainable development*”⁸. The use of this strategic scale mapping “*as an aid in the planning process and for decision making*” is discussed in the Energy National Policy Statements: Appraisal of Sustainability - Appendices Supporting Evidence Volume I (November 2023)⁹, “*to ensure scarce, high quality land could be protected from loss to development through the planning system.*”

24. Little Bromley Rd area – trees, hedges and natural beauty at risk. These lanes appear on the “Map of the County of Essex 1777” by John Chapman & Peter André, as discussed in [AS-065].

⁶ [https://magic.defra.gov.uk/StaticMaps/Agricultural%20Land%20Classification%20-%20Provisional%20\(England\).pdf](https://magic.defra.gov.uk/StaticMaps/Agricultural%20Land%20Classification%20-%20Provisional%20(England).pdf)

⁷ “Report on Proposed Route Alignment and EACN Substation Siting in Ardleigh”

⁸ <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra::provisional-agricultural-land-classification-alc-england/about>

⁹ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/655df597d03a8d000d07fe7c/appraisal-sustainability-appendices-vol-1.pdf>

25. Risk of sterilisation of very high value silica sand (SRC Group – Martells Quarry). Resolution could further impact Peake Fruit. Movement of pylons and underground could cause further impact elsewhere – e.g. scheduled monument site or adjacent site of high archaeological potential. Re: [REP7-486] and SoCG [REP6-099].
26. Grade II Listed Buildings: Bounds Farmhouse and Hungerdowns Farmhouse
27. EACN site. The routes of two Roman roads intersect this site plus there is a lot of evidence of early settlements.

Map 3



Comments relating to Map 3

The numbers below correspond with the callouts on the map

- 28. St Mary's Church, Little Bromley – A Heritage Building at Risk:** St Mary's Church stands as one of the most important historic landmarks in Little Bromley. This ancient church, dating back to the eleventh century, has stood in the countryside for centuries and remains a place of worship, remembrance, community and quiet reflection. Its setting is an essential part of its character and significance. It is therefore deeply troubling that this peaceful historic church is now proposed to be surrounded by major construction infrastructure, including haul roads and access roads carrying heavy traffic. The concern is not simply about inconvenience or changes to the view. Heavy construction vehicles, repeated movements, vibration, noise, dust and the alteration of the surrounding land could have a profound effect on a fragile historic structure and its churchyard. The Parish Council has already raised concerns that the proximity of the proposed haul road could result in structural damage to the church and has called for a comprehensive survey to establish and protect its condition. We must ask whether it is reasonable to place an ancient and irreplaceable heritage building in such close proximity to major construction traffic when the consequences of damage could be permanent. St Mary's has survived for hundreds of years. It has witnessed generations of villagers come and go, wars and peace, celebrations and mourning. It should not become collateral damage in a modern infrastructure project. If these works proceed, the church deserves the highest level of protection, including a thorough independent structural survey before construction, continuous monitoring during the works, strict controls on vehicle movements and vibration, and a legally enforceable commitment to repair any damage caused. St Mary's Church cannot be moved, replaced or rebuilt in its historic setting. Once its fabric or character is damaged, something irreplaceable will have been lost. The need for new infrastructure must be balanced against the duty to protect the heritage that gives Little Bromley its identity. St Mary's should be protected for future generations, not placed at unnecessary risk from haul roads, access roads and heavy construction traffic.
- 29. War Memorial:** Little Bromley War Memorial is designated by Historic England as a Grade II listed structure, recognising its special architectural and historic interest. It is situated on a sharp 90-degree bend immediately before the proposed junction for the permanent private access road to the site. LBPC are concerned that the War Memorial could be at risk of both direct damage from vehicles using the permanent access road and indirect damage caused by vibration from increased traffic. It also remains unclear whether the permanent access road will be used by construction traffic associated with the EACN during the

construction phase. LBPC believe there are viable alternatives to situate the permanent access road outside the village and have raised this numerous times with NG. A sensible alternative is to construct a permanent road off the A120 bypassing the village entirely.

30. Bentley Road (PAR30): Uncertainty in relation to proposed permanent changes - no visualisations, vague areas shown on maps about vegetation removal and lack of clarity around what is happening about cyclist/pedestrian protection measures. No concrete assurances that the FE/NF haul road will be used by Applicant instead of the village-centre permanent access road either. Assume Applicant will use the route through the village to the EACN for construction traffic and that the village route would be used to construct the permanent access road as no alternative has been outlined.