

## **Impacts on Public Rights of Way and recreational access in Ardleigh Parish**

### **1. Introduction**

This submission is made to assist the Examining Authority in its consideration of the likely effects of the Norwich–Tilbury 400 kV Project on Public Rights of Way and related recreational use within Ardleigh Parish. It draws together matters arising from hearing discussions, action points, parish representations and personal representations, and focuses on the practical consequences for local access, safety, amenity and enjoyment of the countryside.

In summary, the evidence indicates that the project is likely to cause substantial disruption to key walking routes, reduce the safety and attractiveness of lanes used by cyclists and horse riders, and diminish the wider recreational amenity of Ardleigh's rural landscape unless more specific mitigation is secured.

For the reasons set out below, it is submitted that the effects on Ardleigh's access network and countryside experience are material considerations that should carry substantial weight in the Examination.

### **2. Principal concerns arising from the evidence**

#### **2.1 Disruption to Public Rights of Way and local walking routes**

The material before the Examination indicates that Ardleigh residents rely heavily on footpaths, quiet lanes and other rural routes for both everyday access and recreation. Particular concern is raised in relation to footpaths FP 15827, FP 15828 and FP 28158, which are identified as likely to be closed temporarily during construction. The effect of those closures would be to sever established walking routes and compel users to take longer alternatives on roads that may also be affected by construction traffic. For walkers, however, the issue is not merely one of route continuity. The value of these routes lies also in their relative safety, tranquillity and separation from vehicular traffic. The introduction of heavy plant, large haulage vehicles, construction noise, dust, temporary traffic management and other associated activity would materially diminish the suitability of local routes for walking and, in some cases, expose pedestrians to conditions that are appreciably less safe than those presently enjoyed.

This is not simply a question of temporary inconvenience. The evidence suggests that route closures, together with noise, dust, visual intrusion and the presence of heavy machinery, would materially reduce the enjoyment and tranquillity of the countryside. That concern is reinforced by the Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan, which places clear emphasis on rural character, recreational access and the value of the local path network.

#### **2.2 Effects on cyclists and horse riders**

Although the most direct impacts fall upon walkers, the evidence also supports a stronger concern in relation to horse riders. In Ardleigh, riding depends to a significant extent upon quiet rural lanes, protected lanes and a limited bridleway network whose value lies not only in physical availability but in the relative peace, quiet and predictability of the environment. Horses are highly sensitive to noise, sudden movement and close passing traffic. The introduction of large haulage vehicles, construction plant, temporary traffic management, reversing alarms, engine noise and other construction activity would therefore give rise to materially increased risk to rider safety, as well as rendering routes that are presently suitable

for riding substantially less attractive and, in some cases, unsuitable for that purpose. These effects are not adequately answered by general references to traffic management alone, because the issue is not merely one of access but of whether riders can use those routes in conditions that are reasonably safe and fit for equestrian use.

### **2.3 Lack of detail in the current management approach**

A recurring theme in the hearing material is the absence of sufficiently clear information about when closures will occur, how long they will last, and how access will be maintained safely during the works. Ardleigh Parish Council's concerns were acknowledged in the hearing, but substantive answers were deferred. In addition, both Essex and Suffolk authorities are recorded as seeking a stronger and more detailed Public Rights of Way Management Plan, with firmer commitments on mitigation and recognition of loss of amenity as well as mere functional access.

### **3. Overall assessment**

Taken together, the evidence points to a material degradation of Ardleigh's public access network and countryside experience during construction, with some effects likely to persist thereafter through long-term changes to landscape character. The most serious effects concern the temporary closure of key footpaths and the resulting severance of established routes. In the case of walkers, the concern is not limited to continuity of access: the evidence also indicates that routes and alternatives may become materially less safe and less suitable for pedestrian use by reason of construction traffic, heavy plant, noise, dust and other associated disturbance. The broader diminution of recreational amenity, including for cyclists and horse riders using quiet lanes and bridleways, is likewise significant and should not be understated. In addition, the Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan confirms that Ardleigh Reservoir supports an established fishery, including Ardleigh Fly Fishing Club. To the extent that angling activity or access to fishing locations would be affected by the proposed works or by the presence of overhead electricity infrastructure, this gives rise not only to issues of access and amenity but also to legitimate safety concerns for anglers, including in relation to the risks associated with fishing in proximity to overhead cables.

### **4. Requested action by the Examining Authority**

In light of those matters, the Examining Authority is respectfully invited to require the Applicant to provide clearer and more enforceable mitigation in relation to Ardleigh's Public Rights of Way and recreational access. In particular, the following matters should be secured.

1. A detailed schedule of all proposed closures, restrictions and diversions affecting Ardleigh routes, including dates, likely duration and the reasons for each intervention.
2. Safe, convenient and clearly signed temporary alternatives for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, designed so far as reasonably possible to avoid conflict with construction traffic and to remain reasonably safe and suitable for pedestrian use throughout the construction period.
3. A firm commitment to reinstate affected routes promptly following the completion of works and, where possible, to secure enhancement rather than mere replacement.
4. Additional mitigation for traffic, safety, noise, landscape and amenity impacts on protected lanes, bridleways and other rural routes used for recreation, including specific provision for horse riders where large haulage vehicles, construction noise or other disturbance may make routes unsafe or unsuitable for equestrian use.

5. A specific assessment of any effects on recreational fishing access and safety at Ardleigh Reservoir and associated and other fishing locations, together with appropriate mitigation where angling activity may be affected by construction activity, route restrictions or proximity to overhead electricity infrastructure.
6. Structured engagement with Ardleigh Parish Council and other persons with a legitimate recreational interest in the affected routes and amenities, including anglers where relevant, so that route management and mitigation properly reflect established patterns of local use.

These impacts are **cumulative and long-lasting**, and should be treated as **material considerations** in the Examination.

## **5. Conclusion**

For these reasons, it is submitted that the impacts on Ardleigh's Public Rights of Way and recreational routes are significant and require more detailed scrutiny and stronger mitigation than is presently secured. The Examining Authority is respectfully invited to take these local effects fully into account in its consideration of the application.

Ardleigh and Little Bromley Parish Councils

10 June 2026