National Grid Targeted Consultation Norfolk 3

Bunwell Parish Council objects to National Grid’s proposals for the Norwich to Tilbury scheme, both those presented in the Statutory Consultation of July 2024 and the amendments affecting our parish as outlined in Targeted Consultation Norfolk 3, 2025.

Bunwell Parish Council states that the consultation process remains legally deficient. Alternatives to overhead lines along this route have never been presented to us.

In relation to the new routing outlined in Norfolk 3, we note that these amendments have not been formally notified to our Parish Council, despite them affecting pylon positioning in our parish.  We have only been made aware of them by concerned parishioners.  Some parishioners living within a short distance of the relevant pylons (less than 1 km) have not been formally notified of this consultation nor of their opportunity to give feedback. This Targeted Consultation is deficient.

Norfolk 3 proposes that ‘pylons RG48 and RG49 would be relocated roughly 60 m to the west of the location presented at statutory consultation in 2024, and associated pylons to the north and south would also be slightly adjusted’
It states that: ‘This change is being proposed in response to consultation feedback which asked us to consider:

* avoiding a veteran tree and active Honey Bee population
* using existing tracks for access to reduce impact on arable land
* reducing effects on an area of grassland considered particularly important to farm activities.’

In fact, the veteran ‘Bee Tree’ in question is not avoided by Norfolk 3’s proposals.  It remains well within the permitted development zone and is therefore still at risk.  To claim that under the new routing this locally renowned tree is to be saved is a serious misrepresentation.

The area of grassland in question - adjacent to the ‘Bee Tree’ - also remains largely within the permitted development zone and is therefore still at risk.

It is claimed in Norfolk 3 that the revised proposals ‘would limit the amount of tree removal required’.  This is categorically not the case. Both proposals involve the removal of veteran and mature trees in significant numbers. In fact Norfolk 3 is likely to require the removal of a higher number of trees than the 2024 proposal. Neither of these proposals are acceptable.

Norfolk 3’s proposal states that ‘The haul road alongside RG48 and RG49 would be repositioned west to an area of the woodland which was previously cleared’. This is another misrepresentation. The woodland area in question has not been cleared. There are a number of mature trees, old oak pollards, remnants of old hazel coppice and flora associated with ancient woodland. Note that this route was originally proposed in the 2022 non statutory consultation but was changed to the 2024 route to avoid this area, after an arboriculture surveyor contracted by National Grid classed this woodland as class 'A3', meaning it has significant cultural, conservation and historical value.

Furthermore, Bunwell Parish Council are extremely concerned by the proposal to use Brick Kiln Lane for vehicular access for pylon maintenance. Brick Kiln Lane is a narrow, single track residential road which becomes an unmade track after its last dwelling, later becoming a footpath.  As such it is not suitable for frequent vehicular use. This part of the lane is classified as a R.U.P.P (road used as public path). It has been a footpath between the communities of Bunwell Hill and Low Common for centuries. If this track is upgraded for more regular use by service vehicles the lane will lose its exceptional and irreplaceable historic character. This would be a huge and unacceptable loss.

As stated in our feedback submission to the 2024 consultation, there is no suitable route for pylons through this unique and ecologically valuable location in the Tas River Valley

-The Tas River is a rare example of a natural chalk stream.

- This area is a very rare remnant of the medieval small field system of agriculture.

- There are multiple veteran and mature trees which will inevitably be lost, plus potentially an area believed to be a remnant of Ancient Woodland.

- As there is no vehicular access to this area other than by the small track described above, used only for care of livestock and by walkers, this stretch of land remains virtually untouched and is a haven for wildlife.

- This whole area is ecologically rich and subject to multiple formal protections, including a County Wildlife Site, as described in our feedback submission to the 2024 consultation.

As we stated in our 2024 submission, the issue of this area’s clear unsuitability for development cannot be solved by moving the pylons left or right.  An alternative solution must be found.

In conclusion, Bunwell Parish Council **does not consider the 2024 route to be preferable to the 2025 route. Nor does it consider the 2025 route to be preferable to the 2024 route.  Neither of these routes are acceptable.**  Both do huge and unacceptable harm to this historic, ecologically sensitive and environmentally important area.

We seek alternatives such as upgrading the existing grid using up-to-date technology, a cheaper & better offshore grid or HVDC under grounding.

Bunwell Parish Council, March 2025