

While accepting the need to move power from the North Sea to London, Great & Little Leighs Parish Council objects to the National Grid Norwich to Tilbury pylons proposal. This is on the basis of the arguments set out in consultation responses in 2022 and 2023 by this Parish Council and by the Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons action group, whose submissions, including to this Statutory Consultation, we endorse.

This consultation has been and remains inadequate; valid alternatives have not been presented and the harm of National Grid's preferred solution significantly outweighs the benefits.

Alternatives that we support are:

- HVDC* from Norwich to Tilbury, either underground or subsea. The subsea option includes a platform for Five Estuaries and North Falls, which we welcome.
- Or a fully integrated offshore grid

The public information event on Saturday 27 April 2024 11am-4pm at Chelmsford City Racecourse provided minimal helpful information, the National Grid employees there struggled to answer even basic questions asked and seem to have minimal knowledge of the entire concept apart from some not realistic images and maps. We find it hard to see how this event served any purpose apart from a tick on the National Grid list to try and push through this ill thought out scheme.

The visual impact of the 50m pylons will be detrimental to the area, and the concern of the close proximity to the residential properties in Boreham Road/Cole Hill and Goodmans Lane some of which are Grade 2 listed.

National Grid are contracted to provide green energy by 2030 as told to Chelmsford City Council in a meeting on 22nd April 2024 even though a report from Essex County Council stated 2035 was a more reasonable timeline. The government strategy sets out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet their net zero target by 2050. We believe that this scheme is only being proposed as the quickest solution for NG with no other options being proposed due to the 2030 timeline, this is not creating green energy it is only the distribution of the green energy through areas that will not benefit. We still believe the HVDC or offshore route are the best options for this distribution.

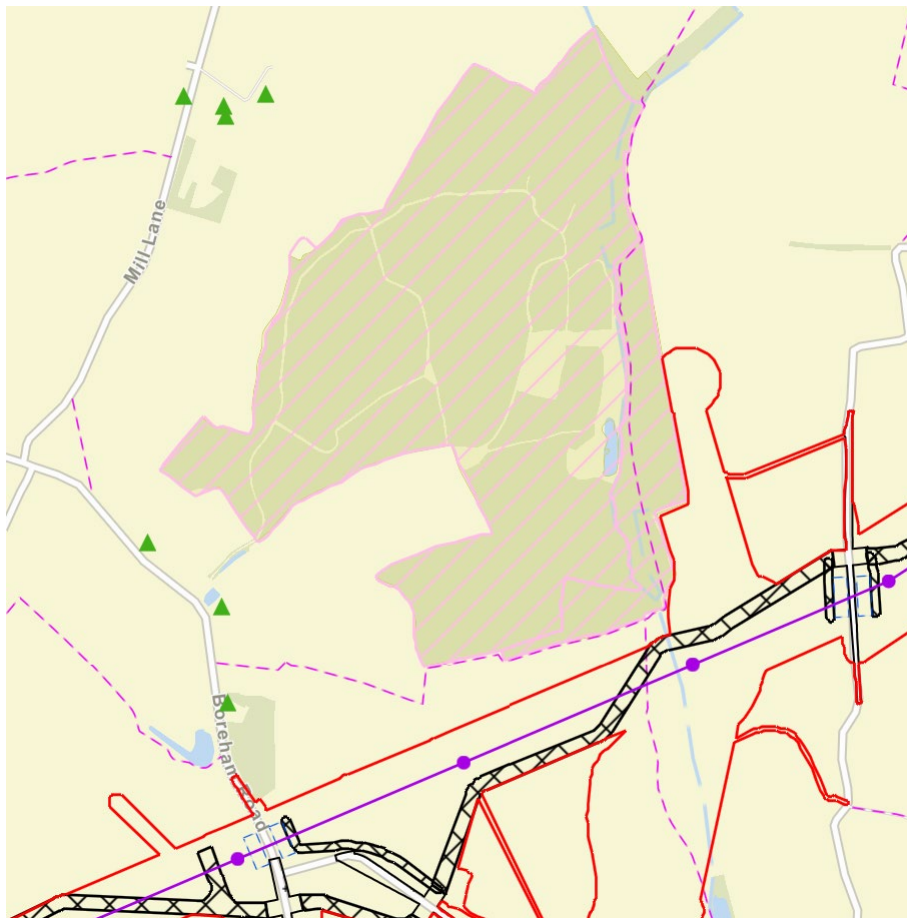
Environmental

The devastating environmental impact on the surrounding area for the wildlife with the construction work is a large concern especially with the same impact and issues from the Longfield solar farm project that is being proposed close by, but at least the area will benefit from green energy with that project.

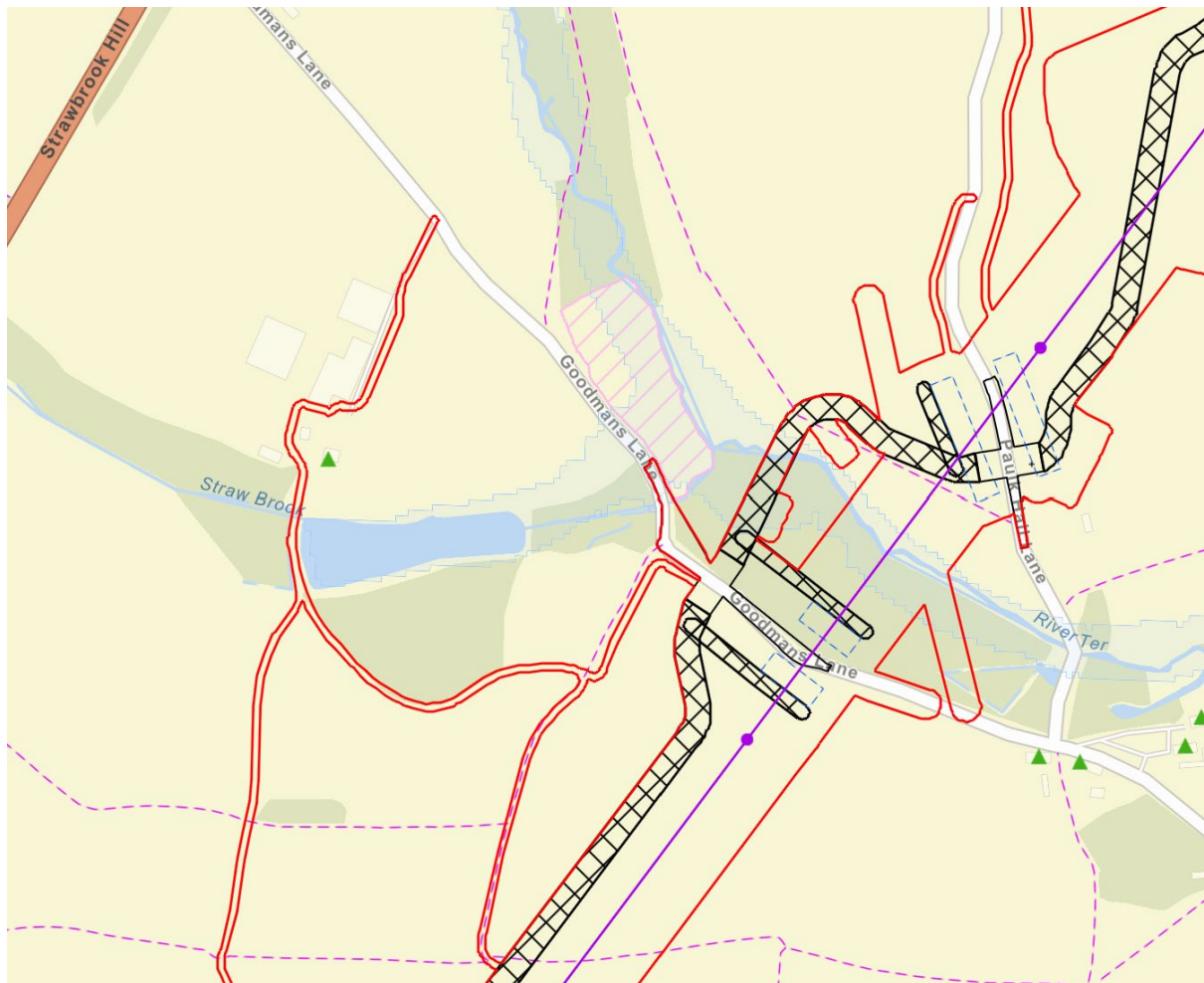
The construction works for these pylons is very close to the River Ter which currently has lost all of its wildlife in the river due to pollution from the Anglia Water treatment works, this is a concern that the Parish Council has been raising for many years along with the local parish councils in the area that have the river running through them. Construction work will only add to this pollution which we are currently fighting to protect and restore. Again, there is no infrastructure benefit to any of this parish or surrounding parishes in the area with this proposal.

TPO's

The area shaded below is covered by a tree preservation order ref TPO/1992/010 this area is abundant with wildlife and the site line runs adjacent to this area which raises concerns of the effect on the wildlife if construction works take place.



There is also multiple TPO's in the area below ref TPO/2008/046



There are now additional TPO's within the parish along this route so an updated check must be done before this consultation proceeds any further.

Home and Businesses

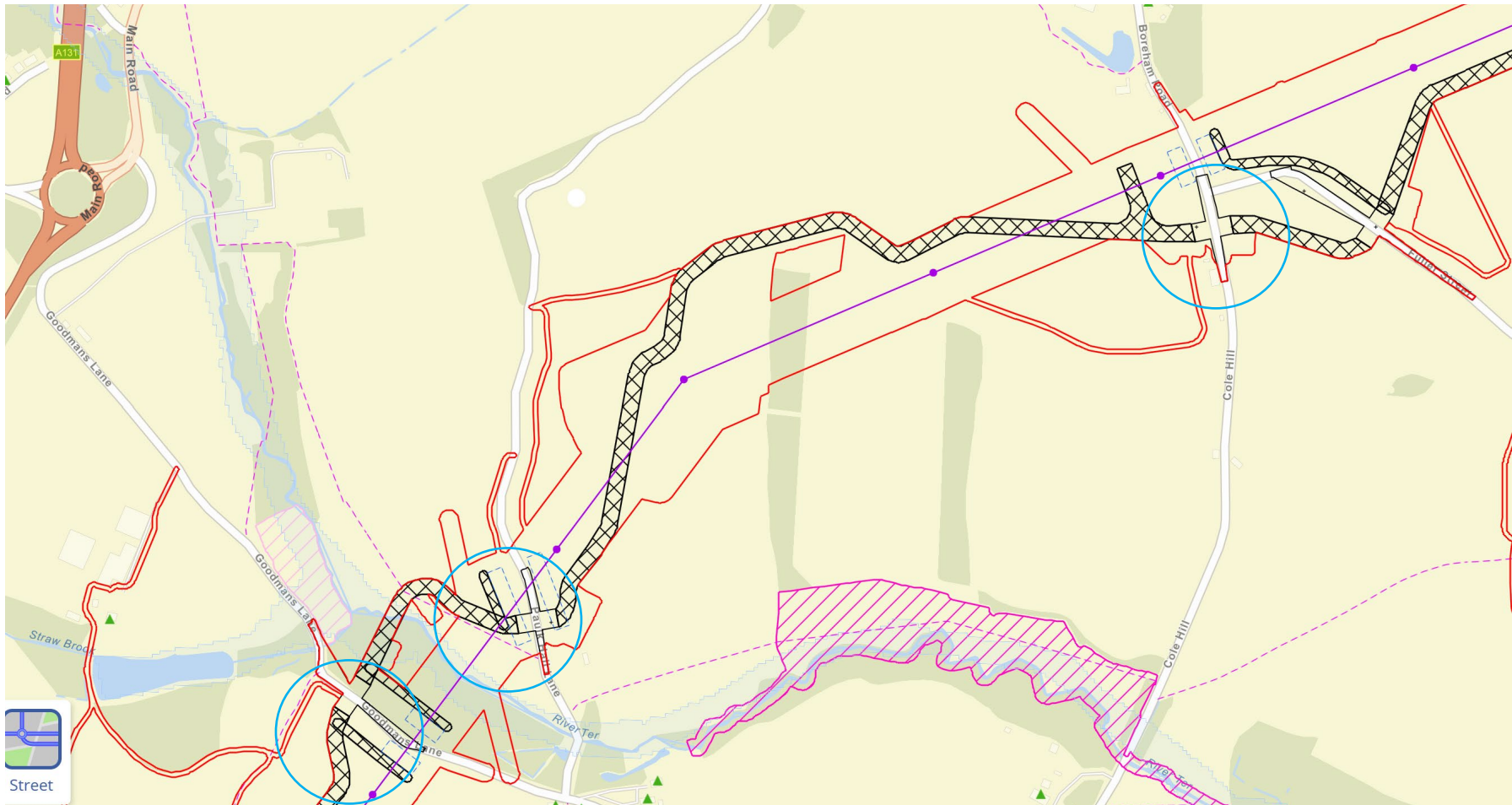
The value of homes in the closer proximity to the pylons in the parish will be negatively affected to a considerable degree, especially as they are rural dwellings which are more impacted by the introduction of industrialisation than those in urban areas. No compensations costs are shown in the figures of the overall costings which questions how accurate the total estimated sum is in this consultation.

Consultation doesn't explain if the costs include the land purchases along the route, we think all relevant costs should be shown in the consultation.

Protected Lanes

Another issue we have is the protected lanes in the Great Leighs area as the report states from Essex County Council report for Chelmsford City Council <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/media/hmal4vel/eb-086-protected-lanes-study-summary-report.pdf>

The lanes in this Report are Boreham Road/Cole Hill, Paulk Hall Lane and Goodmans Lane, and believe fall within Chelmsford City Council Policy DM14 and . Section 16 of the NPPF, specifically para 209. The focus of the policy is based on the protection and retention of non-designated heritage assets, as identified on the Council's Buildings of Local Value List, Inventory of Landscape of Local Interest and Protected Lanes Studies.



The Boreham Road / Cole Hill / Waltham Road stretch of road is used as a rat run for the A12 and potentially the new train station when that is completed in 2025, the works shown on the interactive map show construction works on the Cole Hill part of this road, this road is hard to police and there have been many near misses, minor accidents and 2 serious accidents on the Cole Hill stretch of road in the last year. This stretch of road has many pinch points that slow the traffic down so any alterations we would only believe would cause additional accidents if drivers feel they can pass more quickly if any of this road was widened.

Agricultural Land

The land that is required to host pylons is on arable land and so with the Longfield solar farm that has been agreed to be installed in close proximity to the pylons the loss of agricultural land is huge within the local area which means jobs will potentially be lost due to large areas not being able to be farmed and with this the relevant farming skills will potentially be lost.

Placement of pylons as planned will harm their ability to farm the land effectively, the land used for haul roads will take decades to fully recover - it will no longer drain naturally.

Farmers are concerned that proximity of pylons will affect use of GPS systems on farm machinery.

Other Issues

The Strategic Option Back check and Review June 2023 and the consultation of 2024 (which was the exact same information) detailed the cost of the offshore option but since NG profits surged providing power to the mainland Europe wouldn't the offshore option help provide green energy to Europe as well.

The impact of the proposals on property prices has not been assessed. This is an important omission in the process.

National Grid has made no attempt to assess the impact of the proposals on mental health and wellbeing. This is an important omission in the process.

National Grid appear to have made their own subjective decisions not to pursue pylon types other than 50m lattice towers.

The parish council notes from NG's supporting documents that for Tacolneston to Shelfhanger, T-pylons are potentially suitable and would reduce pylon heights by 15m. It is stated that 'the reduction in height would be beneficial in helping to screen and filter views of the T-pylons'. It appears, however, that this option has been discounted by NG without the potential for further consultation. It is also noted that lower height lattice pylons could be an option. Great and Little Leighs Parish Council requests the opportunity for consultation on these alternative pylon types.

Conclusion

Great & Little Leighs Parish Council believes that the magnitude of harm to the parish and parishioners as described above is not acceptable and an alternative solution must be found.

Great & Little Leighs Parish Council notes that National Grid have themselves referred to the harms to its landscape, views etc as 'significant (negative)' and 'significant negative effect'.

1. Great & Little Leighs Parish Council first preference is for a fully integrated offshore grid. This would avoid all the above harm to the parish, its residents and its wildlife.

2. Great & Little Leighs Parish Council second preference is for HDVC from Norwich to Tilbury, either underground or subsea. This would avoid much of the longer-term harms to the parish and its residents.

In the event that the Norwich to Tilbury project gains approval without either of the above,

Great & Little Leighs Parish Council seeks:

HDVC Undergrounding for that part of the route which passes through Great Leighs based on its character landscape features - proximity to dwellings and the damage to the setting of area and the arable farmland.

In the event that no undergrounding can be achieved Great & Little Leighs Parish Council seeks mitigation as follows:

1. Lower height pylons - to reduce adverse effects on landscape features and the settings of other residential dwellings close to the pylon run.

2. Minimising ecological damage to the route especially by the River Ter, by adjustments/alterations to pylon siting.