

PLANNING POLICY AND LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

27 JULY 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (PLANNING)

A.2 NORWICH - TILBURY – SECOND NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATION

(Report prepared by Gary Guiver)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee's comments on revised proposals from the National Grid for the 'Norwich to Tilbury' (formerly East Anglia GREEN) and a draft response from Tendring District Council to the current, second non-statutory consultation exercise.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UK government is committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Consequently, the way electricity is generated in the UK is changing rapidly. New offshore windfarms have a key part to play in the transition to cheaper, greener more secure sources of energy. This is the second round of non-statutory consultation on the proposed upgrade to the transmission network between Norwich and Tilbury. The purpose of this consultation is to present revised proposals having assessed feedback received at the initial consultation in spring 2022, and to seek comments on these revisions.

To ensure the power network has the capacity to accommodate a projected increase in demand for electricity generated from renewable means, National Grid is proposing the 'Norwich to Tilbury' project. This involves:

- A new 400kV powerline between Norwich and Bramford (near Ipswich);
- A new 400kV powerline between Bramford and Tilbury; and
- A new 400kV substation the East Anglian Connection Node (EACN) in the Tendring area to facilitate the connection to the proposed North Falls Offshore Windfarm, Five Estuaries Offshore Windfarm – both of which are to be located off the Tendring coast, and a 1400MW interconnector between the UK and Germany being developed by Tarchon Energy

As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), the planning process will be overseen by central government and a specialist unit within the Planning Inspectorate. National Grid will be seeking a 'Development Consent Order' (DCO) from government, as opposed to planning permission from the local authority – however local authorities like Tendring District Council will be consultees in the process.

The project is currently at its second, non-statutory consultation where National Grid are inviting comments on its revised proposals. It commenced on Tuesday 27th June 2023 and closes on Monday 21st August 2023. National Grid have a programme of briefing sessions for stakeholders, communities and other interested parties – some of which have already taken place. The intention is to proceed to a statutory consultation in 2024, the submission of the DCO application in 2025, an examination and decision process over the course of 2025 to 2026. Construction would commence in 2027 and the project would be fully operational from 2031.

In anticipation that the North Falls and Five Estuaries Offshore Windfarms (which will be the subject of their own DCO process) will connect to the grid in Tendring, it is proposed that there will be a large electricity substation (EACN) in the Tendring District. This will enable connection of the windfarms and the proposed 1400MW Tarchon Energy interconnector to the new 400kV Norwich to Tilbury powerline.

The preferred location of the EACN substation is close to the existing 132kV substation south of Lawford and west of Little Bromley. The land-take will be around 20hectares (taking into account the need for landscaping). It is also anticipated that two additional 132kV ‘customer’ substations serving each of the two separate windfarms could be located in and around the same area.

The preferred route for the 400kV powerline would enter Tendring to the north of Ardleigh, coming in through the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and joining the EACN. Overhead pylons would then run out of the EACN substation passing further north of Ardleigh than previously proposed. As part of the revised proposals the undergrounding of the cables will run continuously through the AONB to the substation at Lawford.

Essex County Council is working on behalf of all affected local authorities to coordinate a technical response to each stage of the DCO project however Tendring District Council can provide its own response and may wish to do so from a community perspective.

Informed by initial feedback from communities and informal discussion with TDC Members, Officers have prepared a draft response to the non-statutory consultation on which comments are invited from the Planning Policy and Local Planning Committee. With the agreement of the Leader of the Council and Planning Portfolio Holder, it is intended that a final version of the response is submitted to National Grid before the consultation period closes on 21st August.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee considers and comments on the draft response to the non-statutory consultation on the Norwich to Tilbury project outlined in Appendix 1 and that, with the agreement of the Leader of the Council and the Housing & Planning Portfolio Holder, a final version of the response is submitted to National Grid.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Tendring District Council has declared a climate emergency and the Norwich to Tilbury project is designed to assist in achieving the national target of net zero emissions by 2050. Whilst the planning process for this project is to be administered at central government level, the Council has a role as a consultee in representing its communities to influence the process as best as it can to achieve the best outcome for the District and its residents.

RESOURCES AND RISK

The Council's role is that of a consultee on this project as it is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) for which a Development Consent Order (DCO) will be sought from central government.

Essex County Council is working with all affected local authorities in Essex to coordinate a technical response at the various stages of the DCO project which may or may not require additional support from the local authorities as the project progresses – particularly if external consultancy support or independent professional advice is required.

There is a risk that development will be allowed to proceed without addressing local concerns, however there could also be opportunities arising from the development that could be maximised to benefit local communities – and these are open for discussion.

LEGAL

As stated above, the proposed development is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) for which the planning process is administered by central government. The Council's role in the process is therefore that of a consultee.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Area or Ward affected: Ardleigh and Little Bromley, Lawford. The location of the substation could have implications for the route through the district taken in connecting to the North Falls and Five Estuaries Wind Farms, and the Tarchon Energy Interconnector.

Consultation/Public Engagement: The current, second non-statutory consultation exercise ends on 21st August and to date has included a variety of briefings and community events. On Saturday 8th July 2023, the project team will be at Lawford Venture Centre between 10am and 4pm to discuss the project and answer any questions.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

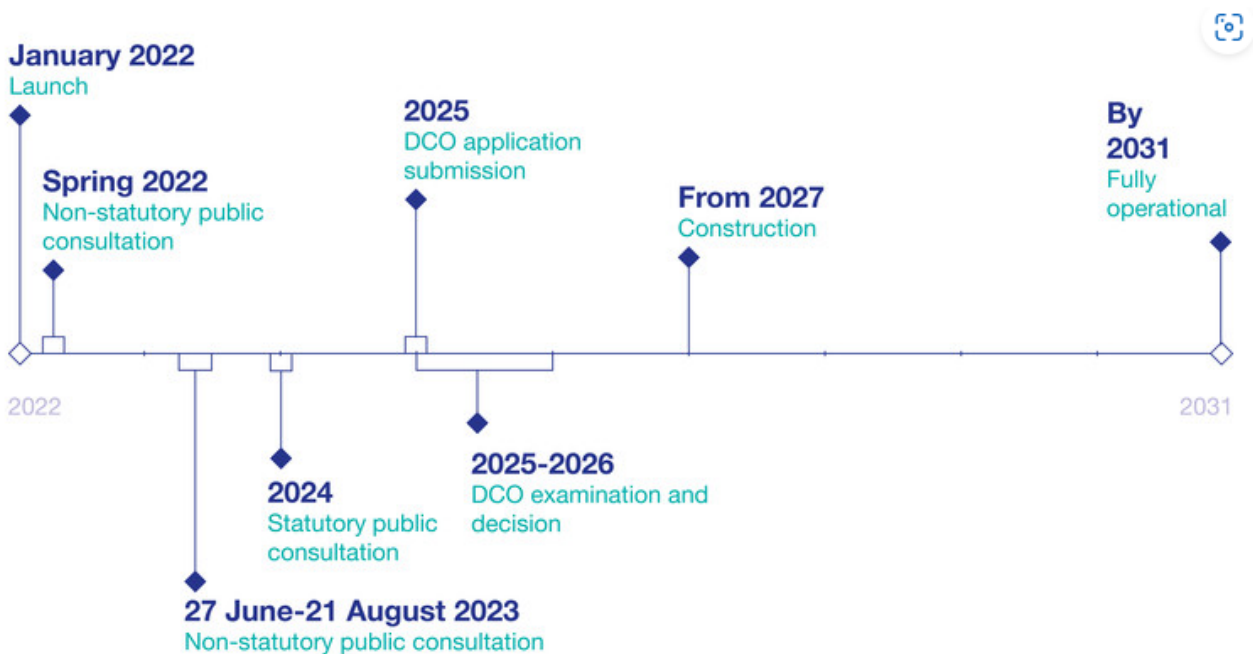
Full details of the East Anglia Green project can be found on the following link: [National Grid Norwich to Tilbury](#) however a summary of the project (as far as it affects Tendring) and the consultation process is set out below.

The proposal from National Grid is aimed at helping the country achieve net zero by 2050. It involves:

- A new 400kV powerline between Norwich and Bramford;
- A new 400kV powerline between Bramford and Tilbury; and
- A new 400kV substation East Anglian Connection Node (EACN) in the Tendring area to facilitate the connection of the [North Falls Offshore Wind Farm](#), [Five Estuaries – Offshore wind farm](#) and a 1400MW interconnector between the UK and Germany being developed by Tarchon Energy.

The planning application for this major project would be determined by government as ‘Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP)’ which would result in the granting of a ‘Development Consent Order’. However local authorities are consultees and Essex County Council is working with Essex Districts to provide a coordinated technical response.

The revised timetable is set out below:



The eight week non-statutory consultation commenced on 27th June and closes on 21st August 2023. The purpose of this second non-statutory consultation is to:

- Give an overview of the whole project
- Introduce the changes that are being presented for feedback
- Explain the development journey that has refined the proposals to date;
- Outline the alterations made based on the first round of feedback received
- Present and explain the alterations to the preferred route corridor and substation site;
- Gather feedback on the work to date and the future consultation proposals; and
- Outline next steps.

The consultation has involved newsletters and other on-line material, information provided to libraries and village halls, face-to-face and virtual public events and briefings for MPs, Councillors and affected Town/Parish Councils. On Saturday 8th July 2023, the project team will be at Lawford Venture Centre between 10am and 4pm to discuss the project and answer any questions.

As a result of the spring 2022 non-statutory consultation, changes have been made outside and within the preferred draft corridor. This consultation exercise provides explanation for the thought-process and the different factors that have been taken into account into identifying options, and the preferred options.

Tendring substation – East Anglian Connection Node EACN

North Falls and Five Estuaries windfarms expected to make landfall in Tendring, between Holland on Sea and Frinton. These are the subject of separate NSIP and DCO processes. We are awaiting further details of the newly signed agreement with Tarchon Energy.

National Grid have considered various locations for a substation through the centre of Tendring, the preference would be for the substation to be as close to the new 400kV powerlines as possible.

Having refined the potential locations for the substation on the Tendring peninsular, the National Grid proposal is for the site close to the existing substation near Ardleigh / Little Bromley / Lawford, as shown in Figure 2 overleaf. This substation is now being referred to as East Anglian Connection Node (EACN).

Figure 2

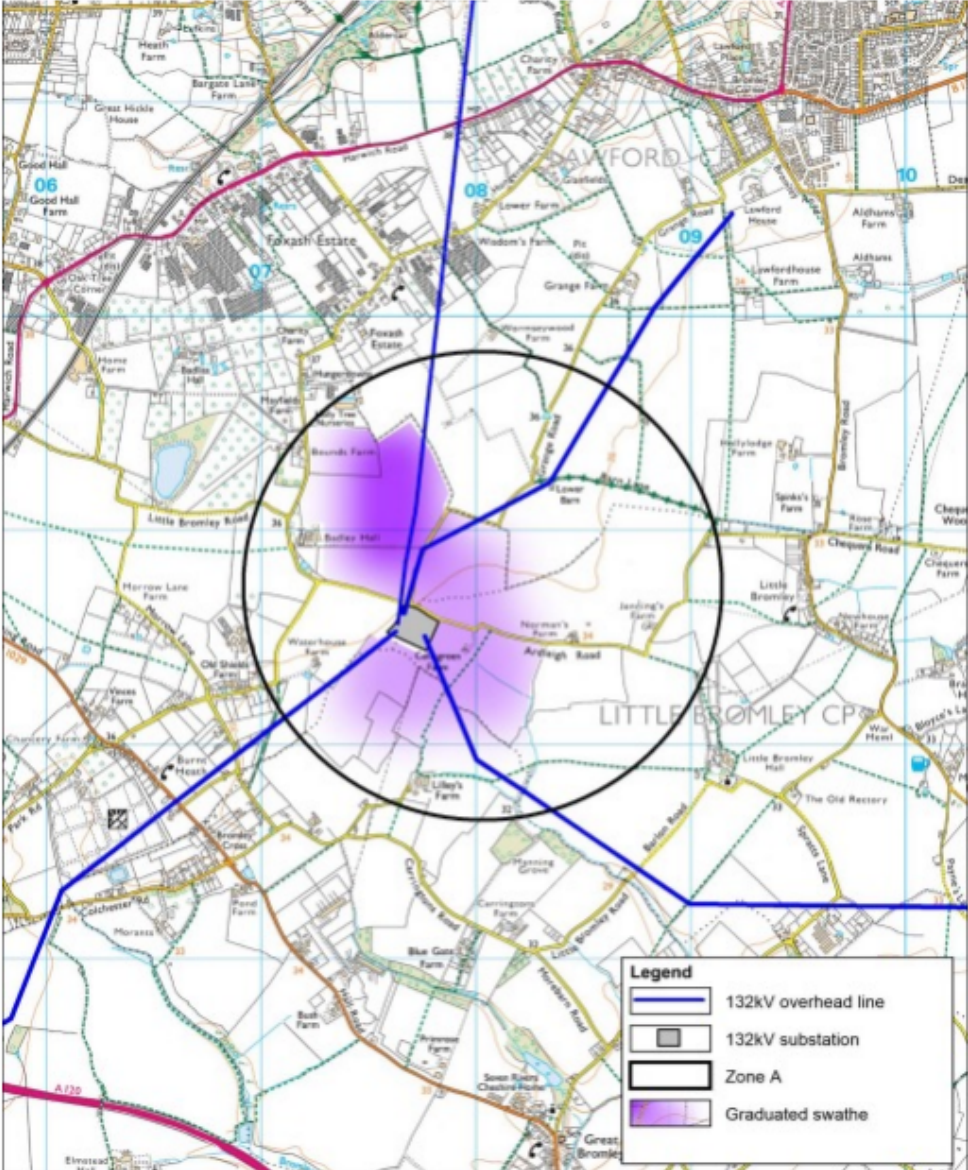


Figure 2 EACN Graduated Swathe

Credit National Grid : [Project Background Document](#) June 2023

Figure 3 below gives an overview of the proposed routing for the both the underground cables to the EACN (dotted black line) and the overhead pylons (solid black line) as they leave the EACN. The interactive map from which they are taken is linked below.

Fig 3

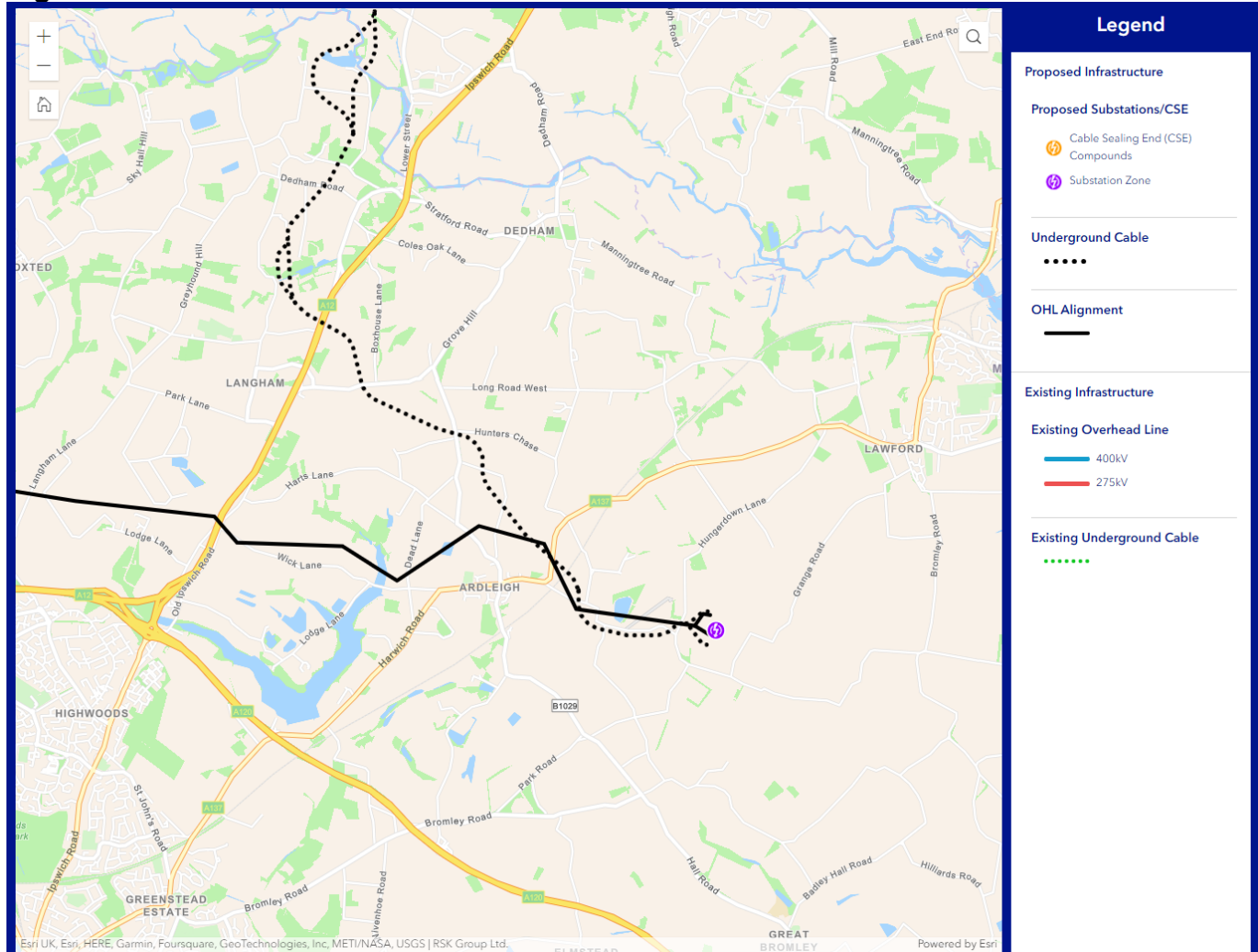


Fig 3 section of the [National Grid Interactive Map](#)

Figure 4 is also taken from the [National Grid Interactive Map](#) and gives a closer look at the proposed locations for the infrastructure.

Fig 4

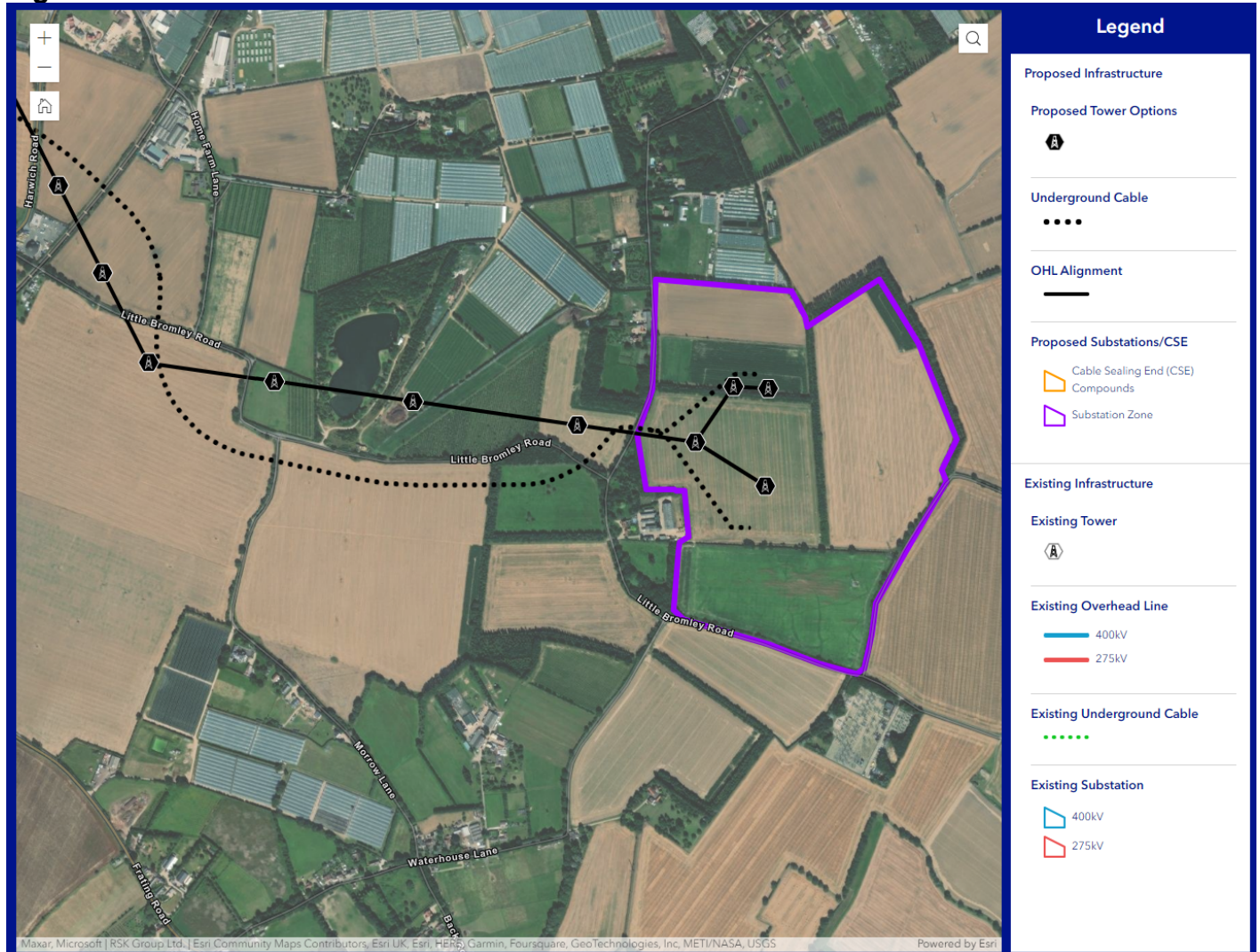


Fig 4 zoomed in on proposed [EACN location](#)

Several route options were considered for the Bramford to Tilbury 400kV Powerline. They involved different approaches to connecting with the Tendring substation – including a ‘coastal route’ to the east of Colchester and a more ‘inland route’ going around the north of Colchester and through the middle part of Essex.

The preferred route is that extending north and west of Colchester – thus avoiding impact on the sensitive internationally important wildlife sites along the coast, and the Garden Community site. It would however pass through the parish of Ardleigh and would consist of a large overhead cable and pylons. In this revised version, as a result of feedback received the proposals take the pylons further north of Ardleigh than previously indicated.

Whilst Essex County Council is leading on a coordinated technical response to the consultation, Officers have been asked to prepare a separate Tendring District Council response that reflects community considerations.

From informal feedback from Councillors and communities, it is suggested that the response makes the following points and observations:

- The Council recognises that this proposal will be determined through the NSIP process by central government, supports the comments submitted via Essex County Council but wishes to make a number of comments on behalf of its communities.
- Concern that alternative routes, including a potential underground route for powerlines beneath the seabed around the coast have been discounted and suggest that such options are considered further.
- Lack of information on the Tarchon Energy Interconnector means a further consultation will be required as we are at present unable to comment.
- Concern about the landscape, visual and potential health impact of giant overhead pylons, particularly where they run close to existing communities such as Ardleigh.
- Concern that overhead powerlines are a technology that has been in place for some 100 years and are known to lose a considerable amount of power along the length of their route and are considered an inefficient and outdated means of transporting energy.
- Suggest that more of the powerline route is underground – particularly the relatively short stretches between the EACN, Ardleigh and out towards Colchester.
- Concern about the scale and height of the substation in the preferred location and the impact on rural lanes during the construction period – particularly if two customer substations are likely to be sited in a similar location.
- The Tendring District is a key contributor to national renewable energy generation with a large proportion of wind and solar farms being located both within the District and off its coast – however, the communities in Tendring affected by these developments receive all the impacts with little or no tangible benefits.
- The benefits to the affected communities must be maximised through either some form of planning gain to protection of the local environment, upholding the integrity of the coastline, support for local projects, a focus on providing training and job opportunities and local discounts on energy bills.

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the draft response prepared by Officers in Appendix 1 to ensure it captures the main messages the Council wants to put forward to National Grid.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft response from Tendring District Council to the non-statutory consultation on the Norwich to Tilbury project.
