



Submitted by email to  
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**15 June 2022**

**East Anglia Green:**

**Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Partnership and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership<sup>1</sup> response to statutory consultation Feb 2022**

**The AONB Partnerships**

This representation is made on behalf of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership. The Partnerships are made up of 20 and 25 organisations respectively who are committed to the purposes of the AONB designation, to conserve and enhance natural beauty and to achieve similar aims in associated project areas. They seek to implement the statutory AONB Management Plans the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2021-26<sup>2</sup> and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2028-2023<sup>3</sup>.

For the avoidance of any doubt, some individual members of the Partnership are public bodies or statutory undertakers who have duties to conserve and enhance natural beauty and it is anticipated these members will provide separate representations reflecting their complete interests and responsibilities. Other Partnership members are likely to make their own representations reflecting their purposes.

**Scope of response**

This AONB Partnerships response seeks to address issues in a level of detail that all partners can support in its aspiration to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONBs.

This includes the AONB, AONB setting and will provide some comment on wider areas of community interest. The AONB Partnerships recognise the significant community and political concern about the project, in particular the concerns raised relating to options (or lack of) put forward in this consultation, and reach of consultation to all stakeholders.

The AONB Partnerships will comment on proposals where they impact on:

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1 for list of Partnership organisations

<sup>2</sup> Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2021-26 at <https://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/managing/management-plan/>

<sup>3</sup> Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2023-28 at <https://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/managing/management-plan/>

- the nationally designated landscapes
- the setting of the AONBs
- communities-in respect to individual and collective concerns

Many partners are custodians of Natural Beauty and Special Qualities indicators of the AONBs. This Partnerships response should be seen as complementary to those responses, rather than the only response addressing AONB issues.

The AONB Partnerships consider that policy and the principles of a mitigation hierarchy should be a guiding principle of the project development. Proposals should seek to avoid, minimise, mitigate and finally compensate any negative impacts.

Where there is significant adverse impact (residual or temporary during construction) on the AONBs the Partnerships consider that they should be compensated for.

### **Summary of AONB Partnerships Position:**

- The AONB Partnership recognise the importance of developing greener ways of generating electricity to help deliver aspirations for net zero. It recognises the aspiration to deliver 50GW of offshore wind power by 2030 and that currently 60% of wind energy comes ashore on the east coast
- The AONB Partnerships recognise that there are considerable constraints in bringing energy ashore on the east coast, and onward transmission to where the demand is, not least the AONB designation and the significant number of designated sites
- The AONB Partnerships have concern on the ability of parts of AONB to deliver statutory purpose during construction of underground cabling
- The AONB Partnerships has concern about impacts of Cable Sealing Ends on the AONB statutory purpose
- The AONB Partnerships have concern have about development in the setting of the AONBs, particularly from the Cable Sealing Ends and Overhead Transmission Lines in the vicinity of the AONBs
- The AONB Partnership considers that appropriate compensation and mitigation needs to be made, in addition to proposals for undergrounding in the AONB (as that is a policy requirement).
- The AONB Partnerships consider that National Grid, as sponsor of the proposals, have questions from the wider community to answer on the projects consideration of alternatives, ability to consider options and consultation processes.
- The AONB Partnerships has concern about the cumulative impacts on the AONBs from this National Grid proposal in combination with other major projects impacting the AONBs.

## Understanding of the current position

The AONB Partnerships understanding of the proposals are from:

- Online Topic Working Groups attended by AONB staff
- The National Grid East Anglia Green website and document library at <https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/east-anglia-green> accessed from 9 May 2022
- AONB staff attendance at a drop in session at Holton St Mary on 17 May 2022
- Knowledge from individual partnership members, local authority staff and interested stakeholders

It recognises the scheme as:

- A project to reinforce the high voltage power network in East Anglia between the existing substations at Norwich Main in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk and Tilbury in Essex, as well as connect new offshore wind generation.
- A proposal to underground a section through the Dedham Vale AONB

Given the remit and interest the AONB Partnerships it will limit its response to:

- The geographical areas of interest, ie the AONBs and the settings.
- The reason for designation of the AONB, ie the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, which is defined by the factors listed below:
  - Landscape quality
  - Scenic quality
  - Relative wildness
  - Relative tranquillity
  - Natural heritage features
  - Cultural heritage. Including archaeology

Details of the Dedham Vale AONB defined features are available from the Alison Farmer Associates report<sup>4</sup>

Details of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB defined features are available the LDA Design report<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Natural-Beauty-and-Special-Qualities-and-Perceived-and-Anticipated-Risks-Final-Report-July-2016-1.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Natural-Beauty-and-Special-Qualities-of-the-Suffolk-Coast-and-Heaths-2016.pdf>

## Policy Framework

The AONB Partnerships consider the following policies to be key

- **National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)**  
That states in relation to development proposals in nationally designated landscapes (para 5.9.9):

*National Parks, the Broads and AONBs have been confirmed by the Government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Each of these designated areas has specific statutory purposes which help ensure their continued protection and which the IPC should have regard to in its decisions. The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should be given substantial weight by the IPC in deciding on applications for development consent in these areas.*

The AONB Partnerships consider that decision makers should reflect this policy and give great weight to the statutory purpose of the AONB. They consider any new lines through the AONB should go underground. Furthermore, it considers that due weight should be given to the AONBs statutory purpose when siting any infrastructure associated with taking transmission routes underground (Cable Sealing Ends) and where the transmission route is visible from the AONB, similar to the parameters of National Grid's Visual Impact provision and the Landscape Enhancement Initiative.

The AONB Partnerships note that the current (as at 27 May 2022) review of National Policy Statements make the following statement in the draft EN-5<sup>6</sup>

*Whilst pylon-supported overhead conductors should be the strong starting presumption for new electricity lines generally, this situation is reversed in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In these areas, the strong starting presumption will be that new lines should be undergrounded, unless the harm of doing so outweighs the landscape and visual benefit. We expect this change to bring welcome clarity to communities and stakeholders, and to streamline the consultation process for infrastructure crossing these important landscapes.*

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<sup>6</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1015302/nps-consultation-document.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1015302/nps-consultation-document.pdf)

The AONB Partnerships consider the impact of undergrounding the transmission route through the AONB would lead to less harm than if an overhead line were to form part of the project. It considers undergrounding should include measures to minimise damage to the defined AONB qualities such as natural heritage features and cultural heritage. This should include the treatment of hedgerows and other wildlife habitats and seek to route the corridor through arable and pasture land.

The Partnerships considers this approach should be adopted should the project be consented. The ecological mitigation hierarchy principles (avoid, mitigate and compensate as a last resort) should be applied Where loss is unavoidable, losses should be kept to an absolute minimum and mitigated in advance. The scheme should seek to achieve a Biodiversity Net Gain of at least 10% for all habitats using DEFRA's Biodiversity Metric and following CIEEM's good practice principles.

- **National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5)**  
That states in relation to undergrounding (para 1.7.5):

*the range of factors to be taken into account means that decisions on undergrounding are best taken within a more flexible policy framework using case by case evaluation.*

The AONB Partnerships note that the applicant has proposed undergrounding in the AONB but there is an opportunity to secure less impact by undergrounding more of the transmission lines, particularly in sensitive locations such as the setting of the AONB and where overhead lines would cause significant negative impact to people and landscape.

- **The draft National Policy Statement EN-5 on Electricity Networks Infrastructure**  
States:

*2.11.13 Although it is the government's position that overhead lines should be the strong starting presumption for electricity networks developments in general, this presumption is reversed when proposed developments will cross part of a nationally designated landscape (i.e. National Park, Broads, or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). In these areas, and where harm to the landscape cannot feasibly be avoided by mitigation or re-routing, the strong starting presumption will be that the developer should underground the relevant Section of the line. Note however that undergrounding will not be required where it is*

*infeasible in engineering terms, or where the harm that it causes is not outweighed by its corresponding landscape and/or visual benefits.*

*2.11.14 Additionally, cases will arise where – though no part of the proposed development crosses a designated landscape – a high potential for widespread and significant adverse landscape and/or visual impacts along certain sections of its route may nonetheless recommend undergrounding the relevant segments of the line. In these cases, and taking account of the fact that the government has not laid down any further rule on the circumstances requiring undergrounding, the Secretary of State must weigh the feasibility, cost, and any harm of the undergrounding option against:*

- i) the adverse implications of the overhead line proposal*
- ii) the cost and feasibility of re-routing the relevant line section*
- iii) the cost and feasibility of the reconfiguration, rationalisation, and/or undergrounding of proximate existing or proposed electricity*

The AONB Partnerships note that the applicant has proposed undergrounding in the AONB but there is an opportunity to reduce the projects impact by undergrounding more of the proposed transmission route, particularly but not limited to, sensitive locations such as the setting of the AONB and where overhead lines would cause significant negative impact to people and landscape.

- **The Holford Rules**

The AONB Partnerships recognise these rules apply to decisions relating to new overhead lines, that include:

*Rule 1: Avoid altogether, if possible, the major areas of highest amenity value, by so planning the general route of the first line in the first place, even if the total mileage is somewhat increased in consequence.*

*Rule 2: Avoid smaller areas of high amenity value, or scientific interests by deviation; provided this can be done without using too many angle towers, ie the more massive structures which are used when lines change direction.*

- **The Electricity Act (1989)**

Requires National Grid, when formulating proposals for new lines and other works, to:

*have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna, and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest; and shall do what [it] reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have*

*on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects.*

The AONB Partnerships notes that the desirability of conserving 'natural beauty' is not confined to nationally designated landscapes.

The AONB Partnerships consider that the applicant should conserve the natural beauty of the nationally designated AONB, its setting and other areas of high value landscape and nature conservation land. This should include paying due regard to sites, ecological, geological, architectural, historic and archaeological features during planning and constructional phases of the project.

- **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)**

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) notes:

*General duty of public bodies etc.*

*(1) In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.*

*(2) The following are relevant authorities for the purposes of this section—*

*(a) any Minister of the Crown,*

*(b) any public body,*

*(c) any statutory undertaker,*

*(d) any person holding public office.*

National Grid Electricity Transmission (National Grid) are recognised as a statutory undertaker and are therefore subject to Section 85 responsibilities as outlined in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The AONB Partnerships consider that the applicant is required to pay regard to the purpose of the AONB when developing its proposals. Furthermore, the applicant should provide evidence demonstrating how the Duty of Regard has been met.

- **National Planning Policy Framework**

The application for the East Anglia Green project will be determined by the Planning Inspectorate but it is worth noting what the National Planning Policy Framework (para 177), which should be a material consideration in Development Consent Order process, has to say on development impacting on nationally designated landscapes and their setting:

*When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional*



*circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:*

*a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*

*b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*

*c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated*

The AONB Partnerships recognise that the applicant has considered different route corridors through the Dedham Vale AONB. However, there will be inevitable negative impacts from the undergrounding process. When developing detailed proposals, including for Cable Sealing Ends and development in the setting the project proposer should seek to ensure that any detrimental impact on the AONB and its setting is kept to a minimum.

- During construction for AONB designation characteristics including:
  - Natural heritage features
  - Cultural heritage
  - Relative tranquillity

Due to operations such as trenching

- During operation for AONB designation characteristics including:
  - Landscape quality
  - Scenic quality
  - Relative wildness
  - Relative tranquillity

Due to significant development in the setting of the AONB

By having a preferred route through the AONB which will damage the defined natural beauty, the project will cause harm to features such as wildlife habitats that help deliver the statutory AONB purpose.

It considers that if the applicant secures approval for its preferred option it should compensate for damage caused to the nationally significant landscape given other options are available that would have less impact on the AONB and deliver the scheme purpose.

**Paragraph 176 states:**

Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

The AONB Partnerships consider that the applicant should reduce to as near to zero as possible any negative impacts on the AONBs and their settings.

- **The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2021-26<sup>7</sup>**  
The AONB Management Plan is a statutory document and a material planning consideration which should be given significant weight in decision making.

The Statement of Significance relating to the AONB in this management plan includes:

*The area remains mostly free on incongruous development and large scale industrial developments*

The Countryside section includes the following objectives:

- *Land use management decisions pay regard to the purpose of the AONB, to conserve and enhance its natural beauty*
- *Decision makers consider the purposes of the AONB when working on development proposals*
- *The natural features, of the AONB and Stour Valley project area, including its wildlife, are conserved and enhanced*

The AONB Partnerships consider that the applicant should give great weight to the objectives of the management plan.

- **The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2018-23<sup>8</sup>**  
The AONB Management Plan is a statutory document and a material planning consideration which should be given significant weight in decision making.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/managing/management-plan/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/managing/management-plan/>

The Land Use and Wildlife objectives in this management plan include:

- LUW1 The AONB landscape and the factors contributing to its natural beauty and special qualities are conserved and better understood
- LUW4 Development decisions have regard to the purposes of the AONB and scenic beauty is given great weight in the determination process
- LUW5 Major infrastructure projects avoid, mitigate and offset negative impacts on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB

The AONB Partnerships consider that the applicant should give great weight to the objectives of the management plan.

**The AONB Partnerships make the following comment and requests relating to elements of the proposals:**

### **Impacts on the Dedham Vale AONB**

The AONB Partnerships consider that there will be significant impacts on the Dedham Vale AONB and its ability to deliver statutory purpose during the construction phase. It recognises that during the operation phase impacts are unlikely to be significant.

The AONB Partnerships consider that the scheme is likely to have a negative impact on the AONB's tourism industry during the construction phase which was worth over £68,000,000 and supported nearly 1,500 jobs in 2019.

The AONB Partnerships consider that these significant impacts should be minimised by careful routing of the cable corridor, to avoid important nature conservation habitats, known archaeology sites, public rights of way and dwellings. Consideration should be given to route the corridor through arable and pasture land. Impacts during the construction phase should be compensated for.

### **Cable Sealing Ends**

The AONB Partnerships consider that Cable Sealing Ends should be designed to cause the minimum possible impacts and be sited well away from the AONB, although not to the significant detriment of other important landscapes, wildlife sites or dwellings.

The AONB Partnerships consider that National Grid should site Cable Sealing Ends outside the AONB and its setting.

### **Impact on Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB**

The AONB Partnerships note that the corridor runs to within 800m of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.

The AONB Partnerships consider that National Grid should seek to minimise the impacts of the proposed project on the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. Where any residual impacts are identified they should compensate.

### **Development in the setting of the Dedham Vale AONB**

The AONB Partnerships have significant concern that as the proposals as presented have the potential to significantly impact the statutory purpose of the AONB. The corridor to the south of the AONB has the potential to significantly negatively impact views from and to the AONB.

The route in and out of the substation will lead to a doubling of the impact with the addition impacts of lines not being parallel causing significant impacts in that area.

The corridor appears to touch, or come very close, to the AONB in the Great Horkesley area. This will mean that the project has significant impacts on the statutory purpose of the AONB during operation.

The AONB Partnerships consider that National Grid should consider undergrounding the transmission line to the south of the AONB, including the route to and from the substation site and as it runs east to west to the south of the Dedham Vale AONB. This would have the added benefit of reducing the potential for Cable Sealing Ends impacting the AONB

### **Community Concerns**

The AONB Partnerships are aware of significant community concerns and questions about the proposed project.

The AONB Partnerships calls on National Grid to address those concerns and questions, which include those relating to:

- The need case
- Consideration of alternatives
- Consideration of an undersea route
- Consultation processes
- Route selection

### **Compensation and Mitigation**

The AONB Partnerships recognise the embedded mitigation in the project to underground the line through the Dedham Vale AONB but note that this is a policy requirement. The scheme as proposed will cause significant impacts on the Dedham Vale AONB and as yet unknown impact on the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB as outlined in the paragraphs above.

The AONB Partnerships consider that National Grid should avoid, minimise and mitigate impacts that could accrue if the project is delivered as currently proposed. It considers that this could include:

- Financial and habitat compensation for impacts resulting from undergrounding in the AONB
- Site Cable Sealing End compounds outside the AONB setting and minimise any negative impacts in chosen location
- Underground additional stretches of transmission route from south of Dedham Vale AONB to the substation site at Lawford, from substation site at Lawford to Great Horkesley and to an appropriate distance south of the AONB
- Financially compensate the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB for any residual impacts
- Work with Distribution Network Operators to rationalise the 132kV network, eg the Bramford to Lawford in a similar way to National Grid's work to remove sections of the 132kV network that forms part of the Bramford to Twinstead proposals, currently being consulted on.

### **Cumulative impacts on the Dedham Vale AONB**

The AONB Partnerships have concern about the impacts of this proposal in combination with the National Grid Bramford to Twinstead project<sup>9</sup> and the Anglian Water Bury St Edmunds to Colchester pipeline project<sup>10</sup>. These three projects, if consented, would see trenching across the east of the AONB, the west of the AONB and through the centre of the AONB.

The AONB Partnerships calls on National Grid to access the cumulative impacts of its projects on the AONB and its defined natural beauty qualities as referenced elsewhere in this response

### **Cumulative impacts on the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB**

The AONB Partnerships note that the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is subject for proposals and projects that have secured consent for several Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects including:

- Sizewell C New Nuclear
- East Anglia One North (Underground cabling through AONB, Offshore infrastructure visible from AONB)
- East Anglia Two (Underground cabling through AONB, Offshore infrastructure visible from AONB)
- Five Estuaries (Underground cabling through AONB, Offshore infrastructure visible from AONB)
- Sea Link (Undersea cable from Suffolk to Kent)
- Nautilus Interconnector (Underground cabling through AONB, Offshore infrastructure visible from AONB)
- EuroLink (Underground cabling through AONB, Offshore infrastructure visible from AONB)
- North Falls (Offshore infrastructure visible from AONB)

There may be other similar projects coming forward during the development of the East Anglia Green scheme.

The AONB Partnerships calls on National Grid to access the cumulative impacts of its projects on the AONB and its defined natural beauty qualities as referenced elsewhere in this response

**The AONB Partnerships ask that National Grid respond to the points raised in this response and in particular the points made in shaded boxes.**

For and on behalf of the AONB Partnerships.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/bramford-twinstead>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/about-us/our-strategies-and-plans/new-water-pipelines/bury-st-edmunds-to-colchester/>

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership member organisations**

Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council\*  
Braintree District Council  
Campaign for Protection of Rural England (Essex)  
Colchester Borough Council\*  
Colne Stour Countryside Association  
Country Land and Business Association  
Dedham Vale Society  
Environment Agency  
Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust  
Essex County Council\*  
Essex Wildlife Trust  
National Farmers' Union  
National Trust  
Natural England  
RSPB  
Stour Valley Farmer Cluster  
Suffolk County Council\*  
Suffolk Preservation Society  
Tendring District Council\*  
West Suffolk District Council

### **Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership organisations**

Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council\*  
Country Land and Business Association  
The Crown Estate  
Defra  
East Suffolk Council\*  
Environment Agency  
Essex County Council\*  
Forestry England  
Historic England  
Ipswich Borough Council\*  
National Farmers' Union (NFU)  
National Trust  
Natural England  
RSPB  
Suffolk ACRE – part of Community Action Suffolk  
Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC)  
The Suffolk Coast Ltd  
Suffolk Coast Acting for Resilience  
Suffolk County Council\*  
Suffolk Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group  
Suffolk Preservation Society  
Suffolk Wildlife Trust  
Tendring District Council\*

\* AONB Authorities