



LITTLE CORNARD PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Martin Quinton Oak Lodge, Upper Road, Little Cornard, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 0NZ
Tel: 07872930544 email: mquintonclerk@gmail.com

National Grid

11 March 2022

By email only: contact@bramford-tinstead.nationalgrid.com

Dear Sir or Madam

Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement

Little Cornard Parish Council is also a signatory to a joint response by a number of local Parish Councils but has chosen to provide more detailed information relating to Little Cornard.

Introduction:

The Little Cornard Parish Council LCPC response will be focussed on the area within the Parish of Little Cornard but also on the wider Stour Valley Project Area. In preparing this response, LCPC has taken into account recent views expressed by residents, together with the results of a Parish Questionnaire completed in preparation for the production of the LCPC Neighbourhood Plan. LCPC has also reviewed its response to the earlier proposals which were put on hold.

LCPC understands and accepts the national requirement for additional electricity. It is disappointed that national infrastructure planning for transmission of this electricity has been slow and has not taken account of public concerns regarding an over-reliance on overland routes through East Anglia.

In the current situation, LCPC accepts that there is a need for additional transmission routes and that the proposed, 'Bramford to Twinstead,' route is probably the best option in this region. LCPC would also like to put on record that any further transmission through the Stour Valley would be unacceptable and the appropriate authorities must plan, at an early stage, to use undersea grids to reduce the reliance on overland routes.

Undergrounding:

LCPC are very pleased that National Grid NG has stated the route through Little Cornard and the wider Stour Valley Project Area has been confirmed as **underground**. The addition of additional pylons and cables would have had a very negative impact both for residents and visitors to the area. Visitor numbers have been increasing, evidenced by 'wear and tear' on our popular footpaths, and it is disappointing that the value of tourism was screened out of the 'impact assessment.' In particular, the route through Little Cornard lies close to the important footpath linking Essex to Suffolk across the River Stour which takes advantage of the extremely high landscape value and views. It is worth remembering that this is a relatively unspoilt landscape which has changed very little since world famous painters including Constable and Gainsborough created masterpieces.

It is also important to recognise that undergrounding will eliminate further deaths of birds striking cables in the air. The data from the NG bird surveys was somewhat incomplete so it should be stressed that the Stour Valley has a significant population of birds of prey, for instance, buzzards, red kites, kestrels and owls can be seen daily. The river is also a flight path for swans and migrating geese. It is sad that a number of deaths have been observed under the existing 400,000 volt lines.



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LCPC are satisfied that the suggested undergrounding route through Little Cornard and across the river is probably the best option. LCPC is not qualified to comment on the route on the Essex side of the river, although it would appear to take advantage of the topography. LCPC is also aware that Stour Valley Underground have been considering modifications to the route on the Essex side which may be advantageous.

While LCPC is pleased that money has been committed for undergrounding in the Stour Valley Project Area, it would strongly support further undergrounding to the east of Little Cornard; with one caveat which is covered in the next section on Sealing End Compounds.

LCPC is delighted that at least the proposal is for the existing pylons carrying 132,000 volts to be removed. LCPC would also strongly support the future removal of the existing 400,000 volt cables/pylons to be replaced by further undergrounding.

Stour Valley East Sealing End Compound:

LCPC believes the proposed position of the Sealing End Compound takes advantage of the topography and will be reasonably well screened from the majority of residents on the north side of the structure. It is to be hoped that the last pylon before the compound is also carefully positioned with regard to its visual impact. In discussion with a senior engineer at the Twinstead 'ask an expert' session, we were pleased an engineering solution would mean pylon RB49, next to the Sealing End Compound, would be moved approximately 400 metres east. This would also provide a reduction of one pylon across this valued landscape.

The construction of a permanent access road needs to be carefully planned to avoid visual intrusion. It is important that it runs from the B 1508 to eliminate the need for maintenance traffic on lanes in Little Cornard. (see below).

LCPC would strongly support additional undergrounding to the east if extra funding was available. If this happens, and a new Sealing End Compound location is required, it is important this should be in a visually unobtrusive location and ideally positioned close to a main road to minimise permanent access problems. It is hoped this will run up an existing track beyond Walnut Tree Cottage, which would result in no need for a permanent road which would be an intrusion in the open countryside to the north along the B1508.

Construction access and traffic:

LCPC believe that it should not be necessary for large construction vehicles to use the Little Cornard lanes. These lanes are very narrow, single-track roads many with banks up to four metres high on each side. Vehicle traffic is already significant, local residents, local businesses including a popular children's nursery plus agricultural traffic. Three stables/equestrian centres in the immediate area mean riders use our lanes regularly and, together with walkers and cyclists, make for a challenging environment where safety is often compromised. Any additional construction traffic would be dangerous. Extra heavy vehicles would also contribute to additional damage to roads and drains and increase the risk to animals, both dogs and horses; and, for example, badgers, deer and otters which are seen in this area.

It is important to note that all the Little Cornard lanes are designated as Quiet Lanes under the Suffolk County Council initiative, providing a safer and more pleasant, environment for residents and visitors. Non-vehicle users will have priority which will mean large vehicles will have to slow down and may have to reverse to allow people/horses to pass safely.



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LCPC believe 'haul roads,' running from either end and along the undergrounding route, will provide a safe and practical option for construction traffic.

A particular concern, which has been reported to NG, is the possible temporary construction road from the top of Spout Lane running southwards close to existing pylon 4YL065. An NG engineer at the Nayland exhibition and Twinstead has told us that it is not required. We are, however, concerned as it would run from a very narrow and steep lane with four-metre-high banks which is an established wildlife corridor.

Environmental mitigation sites:

LCPC believe there is an opportunity to provide an exciting and beneficial site on the east side of the valley and that the suggested position, ENV12, close to the Sealing End Compound is only one option. If funding were available, a site closer to the river could provide several benefits; this is a field with existing pylon 4YL068, a couple of hundred metres to the north where the Essex to Suffolk footpath runs. It would create a wildlife corridor from the river to the existing corridor running up Spout Lane from the B1508. It would also link with Daw's Hall Environmental Centre on the Essex side of the river. Attracting more visitors to the area is important to support the rural economy. The site, close to the river, is low value agricultural land which frequently floods. The benefit to both the environment and residents/visitors would be very positive. The current position of ENV12 is used by the local shoot and already contributes to the local economy and would benefit from wildflower planting. If funding were available, these environmental sites could have a significant positive impact.

Conclusion:

The Little Cornard Neighbourhood Plan, which is undergoing final examination, makes it very clear that residents of Little Cornard do not want any more pylons and if more electricity transmission is required it should be underground. Meetings for residents have strongly endorsed this view.

In the event this NG proposal is taken forward, LCPC would expect to be consulted on any changes and developments. LCPC will work with NG to identify best options but also any mitigation to reduce disruption of a physical nature but also to protect the well-being of a worried community.

Yours faithfully

Martin Quinton
Clerk to Little Cornard Parish Council