

Interested Party Reference Number NTOT- AFP932

Representation by Mike Lambert, on behalf of Aldham Parish Council

This written representation expands and builds on the oral Statement made at the First Open Hearing on Thursday 12th February. Aldham Parish Council objects to the application by National Grid because of the unacceptable impact on the heritage and landscape assets caused by the pylons and wire-scape across the Parish, and the loss of residential amenity during construction and in the longer term by reason of noise and general disturbance and visual intrusion.

In preparing this representation Aldham Parish Council has regard to the Colchester City Council's Local Impact Report and generally supports and endorses its conclusions except where identified below.

Aldham is a small village, 4.5 miles west of Colchester, with a stable population of 490, meaning residents have strong connections to their local environment.

25% of Aldham's population is over 65, compared to a national average of 16% (2011 Census). Older residents spend more time in their village and will be more adversely affected, particularly by the construction phase, impacting on a significant proportion of their remaining time with us.

Aldham would host 4.7km of OH line (2.61 % of the total), and 12 pylons, which would dissect the Parish. Pylons will encircle our village, and with OH lines, cause substantial harm to the historic environment and natural landscape of the village.

A detailed assessment and commentary on the impact on our Parish of these damaging proposals is set out in appendix A.

Summary of Detailed Commentary at Appendix A:

Of the 225 listed buildings identified in the Scoping Report, Aldham has a disproportionate 19 or 8 per cent. There are a further 20 listed buildings just outside the scoping corridor, but in the Parish, and within Ford Street Conservation Area.

Our Grade II* Listed Church is the tallest building in the village at 30m, including the weather cock. The 12 pylons will all be 50% taller, dwarfing the spire and adversely affecting the setting of the building. The church and surrounding trees have been in place since 1855, but the trees still do not 'screen' it. No mitigation could be expected to hide 50m pylons. The impact on the Grade II* listed buildings at Aldham Hall is also noted and this is particularly so where the Line crosses Brook Road between Pylons 55 and 57. Notwithstanding the conclusions of the ES the Parish Council would argue that the impact on the setting of these two buildings is at the upper level of 'less than substantial harm' and under normal circumstances would require mitigation.

The proximity of pylons TB055 to residential properties in Hines Close is unacceptable given the 50m limit of deviation sought under the Order

The village sits on prominent higher land between the Colne Valley and Roman River Valley. The Colne Valley is considered a Valued Landscape within North Essex by the local community and was formerly designated a Special Landscape Area in earlier Development Plans. As such it should be protected from inappropriate development. The Roman River Valley to the south is less prominent in topography but when viewed looking south from PRowS crossing the Marks Tey-Sudbury Branch Line it is a predominantly natural landscape with no significant buildings or structures in view, an unusual feature in North Essex and one

that should be protected. Without prejudice to the Parish Council's objection, in the event the Order is confirmed formal Requirements (Conditions) should be imposed to give much more protection to these landscapes, replacing lost trees and hedging at a much higher than one for one ratio.

The impact on habitat, landscape, biodiversity and residential amenity will be devastating both during the 4-5 years of construction, and in the longer term, from the visual intrusion.

Construction will close 8 of our 19 Public Rights of Way (PRoW), equating to 7000m of ProW. Pylons will be visible from EVERY one of the 19 PRoWs and all will be harmed and suffer loss of amenity.

Several businesses in the village rely on tourism, leisure and the character of the village, eg. the Shoulder of Mutton Tea Room, the 100 year old Crapes Fruit Farm, and other rural enterprises. All are predicated on the natural beauty and special character of the area and all will be harmed by the proposed pylons, especially during construction.

An examination of the Outline Code of Construction Practice - reference to be provided, (ENO20027-000187-7.2) indicates that working hours will be 10-12 hours a day, 7 days a week with scope for a wide range of activity outside these hours, which will cause unacceptable disturbance. GG30 in Table 6.1 gives insufficient guarantee of a proactive dialogue between contractors and residents or the Parish Council. Without prejudice to the Council's objection, in the event the Order is confirmed the Code should include a Requirement to establish a formal Liaison Forum with each Parish affected by the development and a requirement to have regular dialogue and up to date information on construction progress and timetable. An obligation to provide funding to the LPAs should also be included to ensure sufficient resources for adequate monitoring and enforcement.

Summary of Parish Council's Representations:

Consultation fatigue has inevitably affected our residents, who are worn down by the sheer volume of material and technicalities being presented. Despite all the consultation engagement residents have spent time on, there has been little change achieved. National Grid has now ruled out alternative pylon designs leaving no meaningful mitigation measure available, and the consequential impact on, and harm to, Aldham Parish and its community remains substantial. Even where 'substantial harm' can be demonstrated meaningful mitigation cannot be achieved by simple realignment of the pylon route as this will only shift the problem/impact elsewhere, indicative of the fact that pylons are the wrong solution for the 21st century. The cumulative impact of this proposal across its whole length needs to be assessed rather than a series of individual assessments of particular buildings or landscapes. A holistic view of the scheme would conclude it will create substantial harm that could be avoided by full consideration of alternative options for achieving NG's objectives.

Community benefits have not been defined and discounts to energy bills cannot compensate for either the short term or long term physical impacts.

Under separate cover the Parish Council will be requesting an accompanied site visit to view the most significant impacts.

Aldham Parish Council and our community hereby support, endorse and adopt *mutatis mutandis* the submissions made by the Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons Action Group, especially regarding flawed consultation and inadequate consideration of alternative options.

Aldham Parish Council 25th February 2026

Appendix A:

Examination Document references:

APP-012 EN020027-000244-2.2 Sheets 6-8

APP-020 EN020027– 00252–2.3 Sheets 6-8

Detailed Assessment of Route through Aldham Parish

Sheet 6:

The pylons enter the Parish at its northernmost boundary with the River Colne (Priority Habitat – Deciduous Woodland) and the adjoining parish of Fordham. Pylon TB049 (situated in Fordham Parish) is sited just 40m from the river bank and the OH line will cross the Essex Way, an important long-distance footpath traversing the whole County from the west to the coast in the east. TB049 sits in a prominent location within the well-used community woodland abutting the junction of the Essex Way with other PRoW and permissive routes through the community woodland.

TB049 and TB050 are sited just below the 20m contour (using OS 1:25000 maps), slightly above the river which is about 15m above sea level (asl). This is similar to most of the buildings in Ford Street Conservation Area, making the pylons prominent in views out of the Conservation Area. Between TB049 and TB050 the OH line passes across a small plantation adjoining the south bank of the river, requiring the removal of a significant amount of habitat. Further habitat will be lost under the OH lines between TB050 and TB051 which sits on slightly higher land (nearer 25m asl) that forms part of Ford Street Hill. TB051 is approximately 120m east of the A1124 Ford Street Hill and 200m from the edge of the Conservation Area, which sits below the 20m contour line. TB051 will be prominent in views up the hill and out of the Conservation Area and will cause demonstrable harm to the setting of Ford Street Conservation Area. Furthermore, a construction laydown area (CLA) is shown to the north of TB051 even closer to the Conservation Area boundary (approx. 30m). TB051 and the CLA will also adversely affect the amenity of FP3 (PRoW123_3) which runs east-west passing across the haul road between TB050 and TB051 to the edge of Fiddlers Wood on the Parish boundary, requiring closure or diversion.

The impact of the pylons and OH lines in the longer term will be increased in the short to medium term by the proposed haul road which connects to Mill Lane, Fordham, at the lowest point by Fordham Bridge and Fiddlers Wood on the boundary of the Parish. The proposed junction with the haul road would have an adverse impact on highway safety by reason of the steep incline either side of Fordham Bridge and restricted visibility on the west side as you descend from the south. Fiddlers Wood goes right up to the highway boundary and any improvement to visibility would require wholesale removal of trees and hedging to the detriment of the character of this rural area. Traffic speeds and volumes are high on this section of Mill Road, as it serves as a short cut around the north side of Colchester, and gives access to major industrial and commercial enterprises on the north side of Fordham village.

The haul road itself passes through a recognised flood plain, which is subject to frequent fluvial flooding of the River Colne, providing important flood storage capacity. The haul road would be an intrusive and unwelcome feature, even for a short period close to where the Essex Way crosses the River Colne again and would require temporary closure/diversion of FP3 that passes north-south along the western boundary of Fiddlers Wood. The haul road then crosses the path of the OH line between TB050 and TB051 passing closer to the river and Conservation Area increasing the detrimental impact on both.

The junction of the haul road with the A1124 on Ford Street Hill will be even more dangerous than the junction with Mill Lane Fordham. The A1124 carries a significant volume of traffic, often leading to queuing at the light-controlled bridge over the River Colne at Ford Street. NG's own Traffic Assessment estimates there will be nearly 500 lorry movements a day. Speeds are often in excess of the 40mph limit on the hill and the Parish Council have secured ECC Highways permission to erect a temporary Speed Indicator Device at the entrance to the 30mph limit. Significant removal of trees and hedging and lowering of the banks to create adequate visibility splays would have a significant and permanent impact on the setting of, and approach to, the Ford Street Conservation Area from the south. The hill is on a slight bend and drops nearly 25m in 400m from the junction with Green Lane at the top, to where it enters the Conservation Area and the 30mph limit at the bottom.

TB052 on the west side of the A1124 would be at least 40m asl (15m above TB051) and especially prominent in views out of the Conservation Area from New Road and from FP5 (PRoW 123_5) which runs north from New Lane, only about 100m west of TB052.

Sheet 7:

TB052 and TB053 marks the start of what in effect becomes the encirclement of the main built-up part of the village, which has at its heart the Church of St Margaret's, a Grade II* listed building, with its spire of 30m. The church is the dominant landmark on what is close to the highest point in the village. TB052 and TB053 will be prominent in views from Green Lane and New Road on the approach to the village and will diminish the importance of the church spire in the surrounding landscape. They will adversely affect the amenity of PRoW FP5 and 7, which are effectively the only safe pedestrian routes connecting the church and village hall with Ford Street hamlet. TB053 is sited only 30m from Green Lane, emphasising its dominance at a key entry to the village.

The junction of the haul road with Green Lane is on a sharp bend immediately west of the proposed junction and the plan suggests extensive works to ensure highway safety with a corresponding adverse impact on the amenity of the Parish, with TB053 and TB054 effectively forming the gateway to the village in the same way as TB051 and TB052 will form a gateway to the conservation area.

The overall impact will be to create an intrusive and alien urban feature in what is essentially a rural area well outside the urban area of the city of Colchester.

TB054 will be 140m from the back of the nearest houses in Green Lane and will adversely affect the outlook from 20 properties on the south east side of the Lane and Church Grove, creating an intrusive feature in uninterrupted views across open countryside. From Green Lane to a mid-point between TB054 and TB055 the haul road is sited to the west of the pylons and OH lines meaning it will be less than 90m from the nearest property on Green Lane. This is likely to cause a loss of amenity through noise and disturbance for an extended period during construction.

The OH line continues to pass close to residential properties in Hines Close and TB055 is also only 140m from the rear of the nearest properties on the southside of Hines Close, adversely affecting residential amenity during and after construction.

Pylons TB054 to TB057 form a line angling away from Brook Road when approached from the south, creating a solid wall of lines and latticework that will harm the setting of St Margaret's and views of the spire. Furthermore, there will be serious detriment to the setting of the Grade II* listed buildings at Aldham Hall, from the proximity and impact of TB057 and in the short term from the proposed haul road crossing Brook Road between Aldham Hall and Brick Cottages. In particular, TB057 is only 100m south east of Brick Cottages and both properties will be affected by noise and general

disturbance from the haul road and its crossing of Brook Road at a dangerous bend adjacent the entrance to Aldham Hall. Mature chestnut trees on the west side of Brook Road will reduce visibility but their removal would cause unacceptable harm.

The OH lines between TB056 and TB057 and the route of the haul road will cross FP15 (PRoW 123_15) that links to Aldham Hall Wood creating further loss of amenity.

Sheet 8:

TB058 is situated 150m north of Brook House and close to PRoW FP12 (PRoW 123_12), that runs from Brook Road adjoining Brook House, west towards Church House Wood (see below). To the north of TB058 lies Crape Fruit Farm, This is a unique, 15 acre, Traditional Orchard (Priority Habitat) with some trees planted as long ago as 1922. It specialises in heritage fruit, and lesser-known varieties of: apples, medlars, cherries, quince and plums. With unchanged land-use over such a long period, it has also become a haven for much wildlife, including newts, slow worms and grass snakes.

Between TB058 and TB059 the OH lines and haul road will cross FP12 causing a detrimental effect on the amenity of the PRoW for walkers. TB059 is sited within 30m of the point where FP12 turns north, adversely affecting views across to Church House Wood.

Church House Wood is a Priority Habitat - Ancient Woodland, renowned for becoming carpeted with bluebells in Spring, with sweet chestnut, cherry and mature elms surviving in the southeast corner closest to the line of the pylons. The haul road is insensitively routed only 20-30m from the edge of the wood, affecting the margins and the Draft Order Limit almost touches the outer edge of the wood. This will inevitably cause lasting damage to flora and fauna in this locality. Furthermore, the DOL and haul road between TB059 and the Marks Tey to Sudbury Branch Line appears to require the removal of two significant and ancient oaks immediately SE of Church House Wood that stand in open fields on the line of former field boundaries.

TB060 is situated within a gently sloping pasture that falls towards the Roman River, adversely affecting the amenity of the Gatehouse, adjoining the level crossing on FP20 (PRoW 123_20) a Bridleway Way linking to the A120 at Marks Tey and a well-used recreational route. The section of OH line and proposed routing of the haul road between TB060 and TB061, is one of the most damaging to the landscape and environment within the whole Parish.

Between 2009 and 2019, Colchester Natural History Society and Essex Wildlife Trust carried out an extensive study of the Roman River. The final report, "The Roman River Valley Living Landscape report" [<https://www.cnhs.uk/roman-river-report>] found that:

The Roman River Valley Living Landscape contains one of the densest concentrations of designated sites in Essex and encompasses most of the original Roman River Conservation Zone. Rich in wildlife, it supports a variety of nationally threatened habitats which are in turn home to numerous species, both common and rare."

The Roman River Corridor is currently in consideration by Colchester City Council for the Local Plan, under the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Environment Act 2021).

The gentle slopes of the Roman River Valley stretching from Great Tey to Marks Tey are not only an attractive and unusual landscape in this part of North Essex but at most times of the year have few if any buildings or modern incursions (apart from the railway line) to interrupt the view.

When viewed from the bridges and level crossings on PRow (FP8 and FP12) the intrusion caused by Pylons TB060 to TB064 will be detrimental to the visual amenity and cause significant harm to this important piece of open countryside.

In particular, from the south side of the bridge immediately west of Church House Farm on FP8, which sits at about 42-43m asl, and looking south/south east across the valley the unspoilt view will be interrupted by no less than five pylons. [This was verified using the National Grid digitised visualisation at the Consultation events held in May 2024].

The section of haul road between TB060 and TB061 will destroy the Bridleway (FP20 ProW 123_17) at a particularly sensitive point where it drops down to the bridge that crosses the Roman River, taking out extensive vegetation and mature trees, including wild hops and spindleberry. Immediately south of this point the Bridleway becomes a green lane with a plantation on its east side that provides another habitat for bluebells in the spring, with only limited access for farm traffic.

The last pylon in the Parish is TB061 which is situated on rising ground from the river, making it prominent in views across the Roman River Valley from the north.