

STRATEGY COMMITTEE 11 FEBRUARY 2010

Agenda Item 7 – Paper J178 (Bramford to Twinstead Overhead Line Project: Route Corridor Consultation Study (Stage one) – Response to National Grid

1. **Paragraph 5.2 refers – amended recommendation considered and agreed by Suffolk County Council Cabinet at its meeting on 2 February 2010.**

(NOTE – This decision is subject to the normal call-in procedures of the County Council).

Bramford-Twinstead 400kV consultation

Suffolk County Council

- a) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the alternative corridors identified by National Grid for reinforcement of the existing Bramford-Twinstead 400 kV overhead link; but believes that the consultation is inadequate in failing to present a full range of options for consideration, including alternatives to overhead transmission lines;
- b) encourages National Grid to pay full regard to the views of local people and their elected representatives in deciding how to meet the need for system reinforcement;
- c) expresses its disappointment that National Grid has not followed good practice by publishing responses to the consultation on its website;
- d) reserves the right to add to this submission when the full set of responses to the consultation is available, the detailed drafting of any such additions to be delegated to the Director of Environment and Transport in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Creating the Greenest County;
- e) believes that all of the proposed corridors would cause severe damage to the environment of South Suffolk and considers that National Grid has not yet demonstrated conclusively that a scheme such as that proposed is the most appropriate means of achieving the network enhancements the company believes are required;
- f) considers that National Grid must take a more strategic, long-term perspective on national transmission requirements, paying full regard to the environmental implications of alternative approaches to network development and the costs and benefits likely to arise over the lifetime of any investment project, rather than just its initial construction costs;

- g) requests the company to further investigate alternative solutions, including a connection to an undersea grid around the coast and across the North Sea which could link planned and any future tranches of nuclear, offshore wind energy and other renewable energy projects, as set out in the European Wind Energy Association's 20-year Masterplan, and to explore the potential of developing the North Sea Countries' Offshore Grid Initiative as an alternative means of meeting the additional transmission requirements, bringing the cables ashore much closer to the main concentrations of demand in and around London;
- h) urges National Grid to review its plans after giving due consideration to the issues raised in (f) and (g) above; and likewise urges the Infrastructure Planning Commission to request National Grid to undertake such a review;
- i) believes that there is more than adequate time to undertake such a review before the company needs to commit to a particular reinforcement solution, given the anticipated completion dates for committed generation projects and the uncertainty over nuclear and renewable generation proposals not yet committed;
- j) considers that if, after completion of a further full review of alternatives by National Grid, the Infrastructure Planning Commission ultimately accepts the case for a new overhead line in this area, routes 3 and 4 should be ruled out as they would traverse extensive areas of countryside currently free from pylon intrusion (see paragraph 35) and that there is insufficient justification for the installation of a third line of pylons as proposed in option 1 (see paragraph 34)
- k) considers that corridor 2b would cause the least environmental damage, but that any parts of a new line running through the sensitive Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the crossing of the Stour Valley south of Sudbury and the immediate setting of these areas should be undergrounded; and that, to compensate at least in part for adverse environmental impact elsewhere and to maximise the environmental benefit, lengths of the existing 400kV line within these areas and their settings should also be undergrounded.

2. Paragraph 5.23 – Appendix 2 refers. Summary of further responses received since Paper J178 was printed.

Overleaf.

Name/Organisation	Town/Parish	Summary of comments
Monks Eleigh Parish Council	Monks Eleigh	Strongly Objects to Corridor 4. Acknowledges the need for the efficient delivery of electricity but consider the selection of Corridor 4 in particular would be visually intrusive, have an adverse impact upon the character of the landscape, affect the setting of listed buildings, have an adverse impact upon SSSI's County Wildlife Sites and other nature conservation interests, have an impact upon the local economy, and cause health risks. Consider that similar issues would arise if Corridor 3 were selected and point out that Corridor 2 already contains existing overhead lines.
Dedham Vale Society	-	Objects to all of the selected corridors. Does not consider placing the route partially underground is a satisfactory solution. Consider the entire route should either be placed underground or that an off-shore link should be established. Are of the view that National Grid should be required to consider other options. Express concern that if support is given to the use of Corridors 1 to 4 they will not consider alternatives.
Yvonne Martin	Kersey	Objects to Corridor 3. Considers the use of this route would disfigure the landscape and the setting of historical villages. Acknowledges the need to maintain electricity supplies but considers any lines should be placed beneath ground. Points out that there are already 420 miles of high voltage cables underground and it should not therefore be difficult to place a further 15 miles beneath the surface. Supports the views of the Groton Pylon Alliance that the selection of Corridor 2 would be the least worst option.

3. **The Planning Committee of Mid Suffolk District Council** considered its response to the consultation on 3 February 2010 and resolved that the matter be referred to its Environment and Policy Panel on 16 February 2010. In resolving to refer the matter to the Panel the Planning Committee in summary:
- welcomed the opportunity to comment on the proposals but expressed considerable concern about the likely position of the overhead lines within the broad corridors proposed,
 - strongly encouraged that consideration be given to placing of any new cabling underground, especially in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where this would be feasible having regard to the lifetime costs of the project,
 - questioned the necessity of the project given the national policy encouragement given to produce power at a local level,
 - expects the potential impact of the proposed overhead lines upon health to be properly evaluated and considered in relation to each corridor option, and,
 - strongly opposes Corridor options 3 and 4 which will have a serious adverse impact upon generally undeveloped ancient countryside landscape, the historic built environment and the settings of listed buildings.