

1st November 2020

## **WRITTEN REPRESENTATION: EA1N, EA2 and NATIONAL GRID PROPOSALS**

I support the Representations of SASES and of our MP, Dr Therese Coffey. These set out my objections to the proposals in more detail and more eloquently than I am able to do here.

However, my particular concerns include the following:

### **1 THE SELECTION OF FRISTON AS THE SITE FOR THE SUBSTATIONS REQUIRED FOR CONNECTION TO THE GRID IS MISCONCEIVED**

#### **1.1 Damage to the environment and local economy**

The Friston Grove Wood site is a rural, greenfield, site of great natural beauty. Construction of the substations will destroy the rural character of the area by causing major disruption both during construction and by the visual damage to the landscape subsequently. The mitigation measures proposed by SPR inspire little confidence and will not be even partially effective during the lifetimes of many local residents.

Construction of the cable route will be highly damaging and disruptive to hedgerows and woodland, and to the lives of those who live near the route or who travel across it.

The many visitors to the area come because East Suffolk offers lovely countryside and coast that restore mind and body. Few are likely to want to stay in a construction site that is miles in length and will be operational for years. Consequently, tourism-based businesses and jobs will suffer and many will cease altogether.

Even once construction is completed (if it ever is) the ongoing cost to the area will continue to accumulate with every visitor who says the area has lost its former charm: "Perhaps we'll go somewhere else next year..."

The United Kingdom scored the lowest of any G7 country for biodiversity, according to a recent survey by the Natural History Museum, and the third-worst of any EU country:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/09/25/britain-bottom-g7-biodiversity-league-table-natural-history/>

*"The Industrial Revolution and later agricultural revolution transformed the UK's landscape. The result of these combined immense destructive forces meant the UK's biodiversity was some of the most degraded in the world for a long time.*

*In 2020, over two thirds of the UK is still used for agriculture and another 8 per cent has been built on – leaving little room for nature.*

*Over 40 million birds have disappeared from our skies since 1970, and this crisis is showing no signs of slowing."*

Hedgerows are a vital part of the natural habitat. For example, on a recent walk (October 2020) on footpaths over the proposed Grove Wood site, my wife and I saw a flock of over 50 mistle thrushes feeding on sloes in about 100 yards of hedgerow. Construction will entail the destruction of miles of hedgerow at the Grove Wood site alone, with further loss on the cable route.

SPR's selection of the Grove Wood site and the necessary long cable route could almost have been designed to inflict the maximum possible environmental damage and adverse effects on the local economy.

## **1.2 Major project overlapping with Sizewell C**

The piecemeal nature of the UK planning process takes no account of other current or future projects. The SPR substation proposal, with the Friston site and the cable route, will be a major construction project, taking place at the same time as the likely construction of Sizewell C nuclear power station, an even larger project.

This small, rural area will have an influx of thousands of construction workers and almost innumerable vehicle movements for personnel and materials for many years.

While we are fortunate to live in a democracy and few would prefer to live under a system with a command economy such as the former Soviet Union, I suspect that state planners would have had more sense than to try to have two such large projects in progress simultaneously in the same small region. It is illogical.

The planning process needs to take into account the interactions and cumulative impact of these projects on the local area. Construction of Sizewell C may be controversial but is probably inevitable. However, there can be more flexibility over where to connect offshore power to the national grid; Grove Wood at Friston is not the only possible location.

## **1.3 Major impact on Friston**

The probable effects on Friston and its residents have been described in detail in the SASES Representation and elsewhere.

I emphasise the effects of noise and disruption on the residents during the years of construction. This project is very close to the village; arguably in the village, since some houses along Church Road have had letters concerning compulsory purchase.

Friston has a generally elderly population. The proposals by SPR have caused much anxiety and distress locally, especially to those least able to cope. This could be life-shortening for some.

Friston is susceptible to flooding. A concrete surface will render acres of former fields impermeable to water and the proposal by SPR for soakaways, with the drain running through the village as a fallback, is risible. Whatever predicted rainfall events the design is intended to cope with are likely to be exceeded, and the drain is poorly maintained. Friston is almost certain to flood more regularly and severely.

A civilised society should not inflict this suffering on a centre of population, especially if there are better alternatives available.

## **2 SPR AND ITS DEALINGS WITH EAST SUFFOLK RESIDENTS**

From the beginning, the attitude of SPR to the residents of Friston and East Suffolk generally has been characterised by arrogance. Their communications have been poor and they have taken little notice of any of the comments that we have submitted to them during their "consultations".

While we engaged with their consultation process in good faith, it was essentially a box-ticking exercise for SPR. In as much as they responded to matters raised, their replies could be summarised as: "we're going to do what we want because we can."

## **3 NATIONAL GRID NOT ACCOUNTABLE**

In a democracy, the planning process is supposed to be transparent. One part of this process, however, has been completely opaque, the role of National Grid (NG).

No-one from NG attended any of the relevant public meetings that I have been to, and I have been to most of them.

SPR representatives at the meetings said, slightly paraphrased, that they were here because NG told them they had to connect to the grid near Sizewell.

I believe that there has not been any scrutiny of this decision by NG and that the connection was initially to be made via the Bawdsey-Bramford connection. Why was that changed?

Our MP, Dr Coffey, stated in a public meeting at Leiston last year that even she had been unable to get a meeting to discuss this with NG. She made the eminently sensible suggestion that connection be made at Bradwell. Why could this not be done?

Why can connection not be made at Sizewell itself, where the pylon route terminates?

There has been much talk of an "offshore ring main". This also seems eminently sensible and likely to happen sometime. Why not now?

Developers always prefer greenfield sites because they offer greater freedom compared with brownfield sites, with fewer constraints of space and other issues such as contamination. SPR wants a large slice of greenbelt because it is more convenient.

Engineers are intelligent and resourceful; if they are told they can't have their ideal site and must use a brownfield site instead, they will, despite their objections, find a way of making it work.

Other sites or technical approaches are therefore potentially available and suitable; Grove Wood at Friston is not the only option, and certainly not a good option.

The country needs offshore wind power to be connected to the grid. The country generally does not much care how this is done but we in East Suffolk care very much indeed; it makes a huge difference to our lives and environment over the next decade and beyond.

#### **4 PROPOSAL CENTRAL TO BEIS REVIEW OF OFFSHORE TRANSMISSION POLICY**

The ExA decided, for reasons it summarised and which I appreciate, that it would not defer the start date for the Examination.

Nevertheless, the current SPR proposal entails precisely the issues that I believe the BEIS review will address.

Supposing that SPR were given permission to proceed with their proposals, but then the BEIS review were conclude that, for example, offshore ring mains were preferable in order to minimise onshore infrastructure, there would be good grounds for requesting that the SPR project approval be reconsidered.

I think this application should therefore not be approved pending the outcome of the BEIS review.

#### **5 SUMMARY**

In summary, in my view the proposals for EA1N, EA2 and the NG substations should be rejected because they will cause great environmental damage and consequent damage to the local economy, especially to tourism, and because they will cause distress and suffering to those affected.

They should also be rejected because there are better alternatives that have not been considered properly, or at least they have not been considered in the public domain.