

Application by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement (Case Reference: EN020002)

Examination Authority's note of Unaccompanied Site Inspection 4 undertaken on 13 September 2023

Andrew Mahon of the Examining Authority (ExA) undertook an Unaccompanied Site Inspection on 13 September 2023 for the Examination of the application by National Grid Electricity Transmission for the proposed Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement project. The inspection was undertaken by car where public roads were available, and on foot using public rights of way (PRoW) where a public road was not available.

The route was planned around the visual impact assessment locations suggested by Suffolk County Council in its Procedural Deadline A submission [PDA-007]. Not all the Council's suggestions were included as a number had been visited in earlier unaccompanied site inspections, and some were sufficiently similar to locations previously visited. Those visited were:

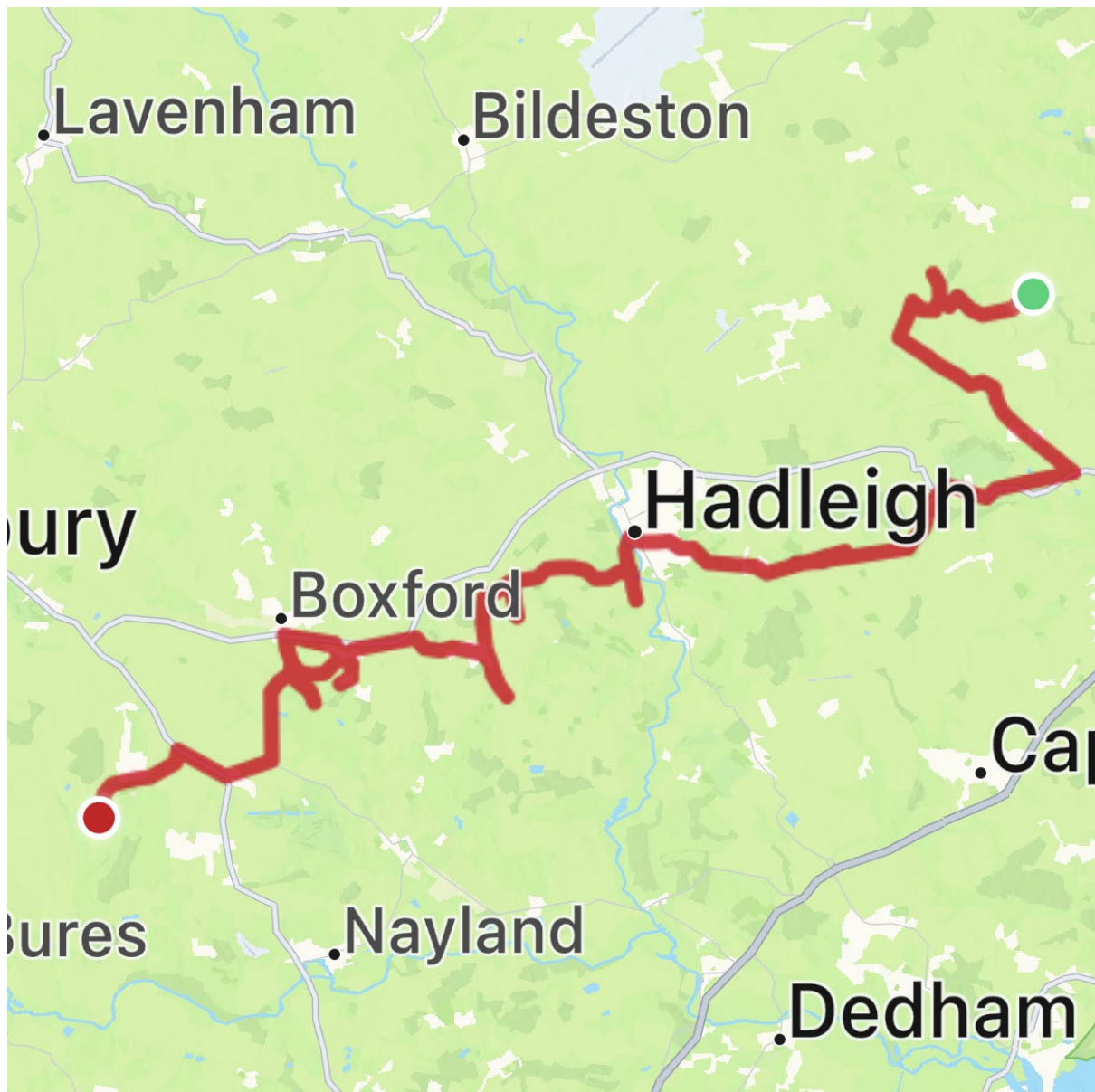
- Viewpoint AB2.11
- Viewpoint AB2.17
- Viewpoint AB19
- Viewpoint AB2.18
- Viewpoint AB03
- Viewpoint AB23a
- Viewpoint C01
- Viewpoint D02
- Viewpoint D04
- Viewpoint E07
- Viewpoint E06
- Viewpoint F10

The locations of these viewpoints can be seen in the Applicant's viewpoint assessment document, which is Appendix 6.4 to the Environmental Statement [APP-101] to [APP-107].

The full route of the inspection is shown on Figure 1. The weather was warm and dry with a partially cloudy sky, with light, variable winds and good long-range visibility.

Further USIs may be undertaken by the ExA. A summary note will be published following any inspection.

Figure 1: route taken for Unaccompanied Site Inspection 4



Viewpoint AB2.11

To examine the potential impact of the proposed new pylons at and close to Bramford Substation on the landscape and views, both in terms of the Proposed Development alone and the likely cumulative effect with other proposals. Considered the character of the landscape and the visual clutter and the level of domination of the view by pylons, lines and other man-made features.

Viewpoint AB2.17

Similar approach as with AB2.11 above, noting the degree of clutter and domination of the view by man-made features from this point.

Viewpoint AB19

From outside the church in Flowton, a close viewpoint to AB2.17 and with similar characteristics.

Viewpoint AB2.18

To examine the potential impact of the proposed new pylons at and close to Bramford Substation on the landscape and views, both in terms of the Proposed Development alone and the likely cumulative effect with other proposals. Considered landscape character, visual clutter and the level of domination of the view by pylons, lines and other man-made features, noting that the substation itself is not apparent from this view, though lines approaching it and a large telecoms tower are very apparent in the right quarter of the view.

Viewpoint AB03

Noting the line of pylons running from the right into the centre view, before the line turns to run straight away from viewpoint. Considered potential cumulative effects with other proposals, and whether some additional mitigation might be possible and materially beneficial. This was noted as a good example of a marked difference between field observation and the baseline photography in relation to the visual sharpness of the pylon structures in relief and depending on orientation - a reminder that the visual impact is to a degree dependent on lighting and time of day.

Viewpoint AB23a

The viewpoint and nearby area were inspected. Scattered residential properties such as Hadleigh Bee Farm and Primrose Farm were noted, alongside the Primrose Workshops, which appear to be a collection of small industrial units: the degree of visual sensitivity was considered for each. Hintlesham Wood, the existing line through the wood, and the prominence of the route where the proposed line would divert around the wood and converge again near this rural location were all considered in the context of local topography, character and vegetation coverage.

Viewpoint C01

The rural landscape, views of listed buildings and the area's heritage association with Suffolk artists were considered in relation to this viewpoint. The two existing lines were inspected, including their routes and the impact of them backdropping sensitive features as the lines run up and away over the hill to the right of the view.

Viewpoint D02

The viewpoint on the PRow and the view from the nearby byway were inspected. The proximity to Polstead Heath and the rural nature of the landscape were observed, along with the visual influence of the existing pylons to the right-hand side of the view, running away into the right distance. The proposed location of the cable sealing end compound was identified and its likely visual effect from this viewpoint assessed.

Viewpoint D04

The proximity to Polstead Heath and the largely rural nature of the landscape were noted, along with the clear views of existing pylons. The location of the proposed cable sealing end compound was identified and its likely visual effect from this viewpoint assessed, taking into account existing woodland and other intervening vegetation and the degree to which this might provide screening (taking into account seasonal conditions).

Viewpoint E07

This viewpoint provided a good example of the character and sensitivity of the landscape of the Box Valley, with rolling landform set around the valley in the mid ground. The existing pylon lines were noted on the far side of valley, along with other features such as modern agricultural buildings. The lines were noted to be generally following a contour on the far side of valley, though the mid-view pylon was noted to appear slightly elevated above the rest.

Viewpoint E06

This viewpoint provided further evidence of the character and sensitivity of the landscape of the Box Valley in the context of a foreground parkland landscape. The existing lines were noted coming down the hill from the right and away to the left of the view.

Viewpoint F10

Suffolk County Council advised that this location requires additional mitigation, specifically the vegetation along the footpath could be strengthened to filter the views.

The existing lines were noted along with their varying prominence in various sections of the view. Sensitive receptors were noted, including residents of scattered residential properties, road users and users of the public right of way. Woods, hedgerows with trees and other established vegetation were seen to provide some screening in the mid ground to the left and right of the view along the road but the prominence of the existing pylons and the likely effect of the proposed new line in the very open visual context along and either side of the road in the mid view was noted. Potential mitigation, as suggested by Suffolk County Council, was considered.