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Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement

Volume 8: Examination Submissions

Document 8.8.2.1: Statement of Common Ground Dedham Vale and
Stour Valley Project Partnership

Final Issue A
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The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010
Regulation 8(1)(k)

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 This document supports National Grid Electricity Transmission plc's (here on referred to as the Applicant) application for an order granting development consent to reinforce the transmission network between the existing Bramford Substation in Suffolk, and Twinstead Tee in Essex.
- 1.1.2 A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is a written statement produced as part of the application for development consent and is prepared jointly between the Applicant and another party. It sets out matters of agreement between both parties, as well as matters where there is not an agreement. It also details matters that are under discussion.
- 1.1.3 The aim of a SoCG is to help the Examining Authority manage the examination phase of the application. Understanding the status of the matters at hand will allow the Examining Authority to focus their questioning and provide greater predictability for all participants in examination. A SoCG may be submitted prior to the start of, or during examination, and then updated as necessary or as requested during the examination phase.
- 1.1.4 This SoCG is between the Applicant and the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Partnership relating to the application for development consent for the Bramford to Twinstead reinforcement ('the project'). This SoCG has been prepared in accordance with the guidance for the examination of applications for development consent for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) (Planning Act 2008) published by the Department of Communities and Local Government (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015).
- 1.1.5 This SoCG has been prepared to identify matters between the Applicant and the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership in respect to the Bramford to Twinstead reinforcement only.

1.2 Description of the Project

- 1.2.1 This document supports the Applicant's application for an order granting development consent to reinforce the transmission network between the existing Bramford Substation in Suffolk, and Twinstead Tee in Essex. This would be achieved by the construction and operation of a new electricity transmission line over a distance of approximately 29km. The project meets the threshold as a NSIP, as defined under Part 3 of the Planning Act 2008, hence National Grid requires a development consent order (DCO).
- 1.2.2 The reinforcement would comprise approximately 18km of overhead line (consisting of approximately 50 new pylons, and conductors) and 11km of underground cable system (with associated joint bays and above ground link pillars).
- 1.2.3 Four cable sealing end (CSE) compounds would be required to facilitate the transition between the overhead and underground cable technology. The CSE would be within a fenced compound, and contain electrical equipment, support structures, a small control building and a permanent access track.
- 1.2.4 Approximately 27km of existing overhead line and associated pylons would be removed as part of the proposals (25km of existing 132kV overhead line between Burstall Bridge and Twinstead Tee, and 2km of the existing 400kV overhead line to the south of Twinstead Tee). To facilitate the overhead line removal, a new grid supply point (GSP) substation is required at Butler's Wood, east of Wickham St Paul, in Essex. The GSP

substation would include associated works, including replacement pylons and underground cables to tie the substation into the existing 400kV and 132kV networks.

1.2.5 Other ancillary activities would be required to facilitate construction and operation of the project, including (but not limited to):

- Modifications to, and realignment of sections of existing overhead lines, including pylons;
- Temporary land to facilitate construction activities including temporary amendments to the public highway, public rights of way, working areas for construction equipment and machinery, site offices, welfare, storage and access;
- Temporary infrastructure to facilitate construction activities such as amendments to the highway, pylons and overhead line diversions, scaffolding to safeguard existing crossings and watercourse crossings;
- Diversion of third-party assets and land drainage from the construction and operational footprint; and
- Land required for mitigation, compensation and enhancement of the environment as a result of the environmental assessment process, and National Grid's commitments to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

1.3 This Statement of Common Ground

1.3.1 For the purpose of this SoCG, National Grid is referred to as the Applicant. Where the Applicant and the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership are referred to jointly they are referred to as the 'Parties'. When referencing the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership alone, it will be referred to as 'the Consultee'.

1.3.2 For the avoidance of any doubt, some individual members of the Partnership are public bodies or statutory undertakers who have duties to conserve and enhance natural beauty and it is anticipated these members will provide separate representations reflecting their full interests and responsibilities. Other Partnership members, including environmental Non-Government organisations and membership organisations are likely to make their own representations reflecting their purposes.

1.3.3 Throughout the SoCG:

- Where a section begins 'Matters Agreed', this sets out matters that have been agreed between the Parties and where there is no dispute;
- Where a section begins 'Matters Not Agreed', this sets out matters that are not agreed between the Parties and where a difference of opinion remains; and
- Where a section begins 'Matters Under Discussion', this sets out matters that are subject to further negotiation between the Parties;

1.3.4 This SoCG is structured as follows:

- Section 1 provides an introduction to this SoCG and a description of its purpose;
- Section 2 states the role of the Consultee in the DCO application process and details the engagement undertaken between the Parties;
- Section 3 sets out matters agreed between the Parties;
- Section 4 sets out matters not agreed between the Parties;

- Section 5 sets out matters where agreement is currently outstanding between the Parties, but is under discussion; and
- Section 6 includes the signing off sheet.

2. Record of Engagement

2.1 Role of the Consultee in the Process

- 2.1.1 The amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 amended the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (85(1)), imposes a general duty on public bodies and statutory undertakers to *'In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'*. The Consultee works with those bodies in an attempt to ensure those duties are met.
- 2.1.2 The Consultee is an un-constituted body, supported by a staff team hosted at Suffolk County Council and funded by the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) and seven local authorities working together to deliver AONB statutory purpose. It works to ensure coordinated management of the AONB to conserve and enhance the designated landscape. The staff team reports to a Joint Advisory Committee made up of representatives of the Local Authority funding partners.
- 2.1.3 The Consultee has been encouraged to discuss and work with the Applicant to provide a local perspective at the pre-application stage of the application process for the project, particularly in relation to the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project Area (SVPA).

2.2 Summary of Pre-application Discussions

- 2.2.1 Pre-application discussions were held with the Consultee prior to project pause. Due to the lapse in time since these original discussions took place, the SoCG only records the meetings and matters agreed since the project restarted.
- 2.2.2 Table 2.1 summarises the consultation and engagement that has taken place between the Parties prior to submission of the application.

Table 2.1 – Pre-application Discussions

Date	Topic	Discussion points
27 January 2021	Meeting to introduce the project	The Applicant introduced the project and outlined the work previously undertaken (pre-pause in 2013) in relation to the options appraisal process including the extent of undergrounding, and high-level assessment discussions such as viewpoints for winter, zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) and the status of Stour Valley.
23 April 2021	Overview of the proposals	Meeting to provide an overview of the proposals for the AONB and Stour Valley, explaining the need for the network reinforcement and discussing the non-statutory consultation.
6 May 2021	Response to non-statutory consultation	The Consultee provided its response to the non-statutory consultation in letter format.
26 May 2021	Landscape and Visual Thematic Meeting	Meeting to provide an update on the proposed scope and methodology of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (including viewpoints), discuss current assessment work, proposed mitigation and enhancements and SoCG.

Date	Topic	Discussion points
8 June 2021	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Response	The Consultee provided its response to the EIA Scoping Report to the Planning Inspectorate in the form of an appendix to the Suffolk County Council Scoping Report response.
16 September 2021	Landscape and Visual Thematic Meeting	Meeting between the Parties to provide an update on the work progressed on design evolution as a result of feedback and discuss the scope of the landscape and visual assessment, viewpoints, ZTV, photomontages and community areas.
19 January 2022	Launch of the Statutory Consultation	The Applicant wrote to the Consultee, informing them of the start of the statutory consultation and inviting their views. The Statutory Consultation was held for a period of eight weeks between 25 January 2022 and 21 March 2022 and provided the opportunity for the public and stakeholders to see how the project has evolved since the non-statutory consultation, and comment on further detailed engineering design and environmental assessment work.
17 March 2022	Response to Statutory Consultation	The Consultee provided its response to the Statutory Consultation.
29 March 2021	Landscape and Visual Thematic Meeting	Meeting between the Parties to provide an update on the work progressed on design evolution as a result of feedback and discuss the scope of the landscape and visual assessment, viewpoints, ZTV, photomontages and community areas.
22 April 2022	Statutory Consultation Update	Meeting between the Parties to provide an update on the statutory consultation after the end date of 21 March 2022, discussing the events, response and general feedback.
1 September 2022	Launch of the targeted consultation	The Applicant wrote to the Consultee, informing them of the start of the targeted consultation and inviting their views, which ran between 8 September 2022 and 19 October 2022, with a focus on the western part of the Stour Valley.
20 September 2022	AONB setting study	Issue of AONB setting study to the Consultee and Natural England for comment.
29 September 2022	Meeting regarding the AONB setting study	Joint meeting with the Parties and Natural England to review the method and outputs set out within the Dedham Vale AONB Approach and Identification of Setting Study.
03 and 06 October 2022	Email responses on the AONB setting study	Email responses from the Consultee on the Dedham Vale AONB Approach and Identification of Setting Study.
18 October 2022	Response to Targeted Consultation	The Consultee provided its response to the Targeted Consultation.

2.3 Summary of Post-submission Discussions

2.3.1 Table 2.2 summarises the consultation and engagement that has taken place between the Parties post submission of the application.

Table 2.2 – Post-submission Discussions

Date	Topic	Discussion points
4 July 2023	General update	Meeting between the Parties to provide an update on the project including signposting to where key information was in the application.
25 July 2023	Statement of Common Ground (SoCG)	Meeting between the Parties to discuss the application and to progress the SoCG.
21 September 2023	Email response	Email from the Consultee to the Applicant with suggested changes to the SoCG.
5 October 2023	Email response	Email from the Applicant to the Consultee with an SoCG ready to be submitted to the Board for approval.
31 October 2023	Email response	Email from the Consultee to the Applicant with suggested changes to the SoCG from the Board.

3. Matters Agreed

Table 3.1 – Matters Agreed

SoCG ID	Matter	Agreed position	Date agreed
3.1 The Project			
3.1.1	Consultee Engagement	The project's approach to engagement and consultation has been proactive and professional.	5 Dec 2023
3.1.2	Need for the Project	The need for the project has been identified and understood.	5 Dec 2023
3.1.3	Route selection	<p>It is acknowledged that Corridor 2 passes through the Dedham Vale AONB. The Applicant would remove the existing 132kV overhead line and install a new 400kV underground line through the AONB. Alternative corridors, that would have complied with Rule 1 of the Holford Rules and avoided the AONB have been considered and were dismissed by the project following detailed consultation feedback, as they would introduce a new overhead line into an area regarded locally as high-quality landscape albeit not nationally designated, where there is presently no existing 400kV transmission electricity infrastructure.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that Corridor 2 provides an opportunity to remove the 132kV overhead line from within Dedham Vale AONB.</p>	5 Dec 2023
3.1.4	Policies and legislation	That appropriate relevant national policies and legislation have been included within the Environmental Statement and reference has been made to the current Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2021-26.	5 Dec 2023
3.1.5	Trenchless crossings	That trenchless crossings have been proposed at the River Box and to the south of Ansell's Grove which will reduce the landscape and ecological impacts during construction.	5 Dec 2023
3.2 Assessment Approach and Methodologies			
3.2.1	Dedham Vale AONB	<p>The Consultee has held an aspiration since 2009 for an extension of the AONB from its western boundary towards Sudbury but there is no current active process being undertaken by Natural England, that has the power to advise the Secretary of State on AONB boundary variations.</p> <p>The Consultee acknowledges that Natural England have not defined a boundary for the proposed extension of the Dedham Vale AONB, although the Consultee's consultant, Alison Farmer Associates, have identified an area that in its view meets the AONB criteria.</p>	5 Dec 2023
3.2.2	Setting Study – methodology	That the methodology and approach for identifying setting as described in the Dedham Vale AONB Approach and Identification of Setting Study is appropriate for use on the project.	5 Dec 2023
3.3 Environmental Impact Assessment			
3.3.1	Existing baseline	The baseline information presented within the Environmental Statement regarding the Dedham Vale AONB is accurate and sufficient detail for undertaking an assessment of the impacts of the project.	5 Dec 2023

SoCG ID	Matter	Agreed position	Date agreed
3.3.2	Stour Valley	That the assessment presented in ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual [APP-074] includes an assessment of the impacts of the project on the setting of the AONB.	5 Dec 2023
3.3.3	Special Qualities	That the Applicant has submitted Dedham Vale AONB Special Qualities and Statutory Purpose [REP1-032]. This sets out the effects of the project on each of the Natural Beauty and Special Qualities indicators listed within the Alison Farmer Associates Report.	5 Dec 2023

4. Matters Not Agreed

Table 4.1 – Matters not Agreed

SoCG ID	Matter	The Consultee position	The Applicant's position
4.1 The Project			
4.1.1	Cable sealing end (CSE) compounds	<p>The Partnership recognises that the applicant has considered the purpose of the AONB when identifying the location of CSE compounds.</p> <p>However, the Partnership is aware of the very strong objections of residents in the area to the applicant's proposed location of the Dedham Vale East CSE compound in Polstead Heath. It therefore recommends further consideration and ways should be urgently explored by the Applicant to overcome the negative impact it states this would have on its mineral designations and existing planning permission in Layham Quarry.</p>	<p>The Applicant maintains that the location for Dedham Vale East CSE compound is in the right location.</p> <p>Layham Quarry was discounted due to the impact this would have on its mineral designations and existing planning permission. The cost of the additional underground cables would also not be economic and efficient and in line with the Applicant's duties. Further details can be found in Chapter 3 of the Applicant's Comments on Written Representations [REP3-048].</p>
4.1.2	Undergrounding in Section E: Dedham Vale	<p>Undergrounding of the new 400kV line combined with the removal of the 132kV line through the AONB will bring landscape benefits to the AONB, although the continuing presence of the existing 400kV line will be a dominant landscape feature in the AONB.</p> <p>The construction period will see significant adverse landscape impacts on the AONB (paragraph 4.1.1 in ES Appendix 6.2: Assessment of Effects on Designated Landscape).</p>	<p>Undergrounding of the new 400kV line combined with the removal of the 132kV line through the AONB will bring significant landscape benefits to the AONB.</p> <p>The existing 400kV line will remain present in the landscape, noting that this was part of the landscape at the point when the AONB was designated.</p> <p>The construction period will see significant adverse landscape impacts on the AONB (paragraph 4.1.1 in ES Appendix 6.2: Assessment of Effects on Designated Landscape) but that these will be temporary and reversible.</p>
4.2 Assessment Approach and Methodologies			
4.2.1	Setting study – location of setting	<p>That the Partnership has provided comments on the proposed setting in relation to the project, as shown on Figure 10 of the Dedham Vale AONB Approach and Identification of Setting Study. The Partnership agree with the proposed setting in general but has identified two areas where it considers that the setting should be extended as set out in its response to the Examining Authority's First Written Questions WQ1.4 [REP3-065].</p>	<p>That the proposed setting in relation to the project, as shown on Figure 10 of the Dedham Vale AONB Approach and Identification of Setting Study is appropriate for use on the project.</p> <p>The Applicant has responded to the Partnership in the Applicant's Comments on Responses to First Written Questions [REP4-029].</p>
4.2.2	Setting study – impacts on setting	<p>That the Consultee considers that some elements of the setting study have underplayed the impacts of</p>	<p>That the Applicant considers the assessment presented in ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual [APP-074] is sound.</p>

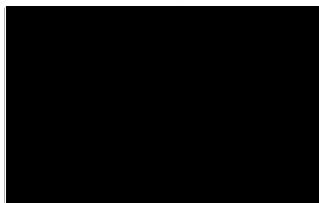
SoCG ID	Matter	The Consultee position	The Applicant's position
		<p>the project on the AONB as outlined in its response to the ExA Q1 LV1.9.1 relating to impacts on part of the AONB should be seen as impacts on the AONB as the nationally designated landscape is a single entity and that the magnitude of change following the removal of 132kV lines has been overstated as the existing 400kV line will remain the dominant feature in the landscape in many locations.</p>	<p>The Applicant disagrees that the AONB should be treated a single entity as set out in its response to Action Point 8 from Issue Specific Hearing 4 [REP4-042].</p>
4.2.3	Undergrounding in Section G: Stour Valley	<p>Undergrounding of the new 400kV line through part of the SVPA combined with the removal of the 132kV line is broadly welcomed and will bring some landscape benefits to the SVPA. Although the continuing presence of the existing 400kV line will be a dominant landscape feature in the SVPA.</p> <p>The construction period will see adverse landscape impacts on the SVPA.</p>	<p>The Applicant has not assessed the SVPA as a receptor in its own right because, as agreed with Natural England (August 2021), it is not a designated landscape. It is considered in the assessment of the AONB as it forms part of the setting and also under the relevant landscape character areas.</p> <p>That undergrounding of the project within parts of Section G: Stour Valley (including a trenchless crossing to the south of Ansell's Grove) and removal of a section of the 132kV overhead line and a section of the 400kV overhead line will result in long term beneficial effects to the Stour Valley during operation.</p>
<h3>4.3 Environmental Impact Assessment</h3>			
4.3.1	Compensation	<p>The Consultee considers there to be a need for compensation payments to be made to the AONB for impacts during construction, as parts of the AONB will not be able to deliver statutory purpose and there will be negative impacts on its defined qualities during construction.</p>	<p>The Applicant does not consider that compensation is required, as the construction effects on the AONB would be temporary and there is a long term benefit to the AONB from the undergrounding of the cables and removal of the 132kV overhead line.</p> <p>The Applicant noted at Issue Specific Hearing 4, that the route selected within the AONB was through primarily arable farmland with very little vegetation affected. These areas can be reinstated quickly following construction. There is also a trenchless crossing through the Box Valley which would further limit the effects on the landscape. The Applicant also notes that for the section within the AONB where the underground cables are to be constructed, there is only one public right of way so public access is limited.</p>

5. Matters Under Discussion

5.1.1 There are no matters under discussion between the Parties.

6. Approvals

Signed



On Behalf of	National Grid
Name	Sally Rotherham
Position	Consents Officer
Date	7 December 2023

Signed

J Finch

On Behalf of	The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership
Name	Cllr James Finch
Position	Partnership Chairman
Date	7 Dec 2023

National Grid plc
National Grid House,
Warwick Technology Park,
Gallows Hill, Warwick.
CV34 6DA United Kingdom

Registered in England and Wales
No. 4031152
nationalgrid.com