



Your ref: TR010039

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21 December 2022

By Email to transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk

Cc:A47WansfordtoSutton@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

Dear Ms Dominey,

**APPLICATION BY NATIONAL HIGHWAYS FOR AN ORDER GRANTING
DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR THE A47 WANSFORD TO SUTTON SCHEME
(TR010039)**

CONSULTATION SEEKING COMMENTS FROM ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

Please find below the response by National Highways (“the Applicant”) to the letter from the Secretary of State dated 12 December 2022. The Applicant has also provided a further update to the Secretary of State.

The Applicant wishes to make the following comments raised in the letter submitted by Wansford Parish Council (WPC) dated 4 December 2022. As a general response, WPC's letter is repetitious of the points raised before the Examining Authority, and the Applicant has responded to each previously. For the convenience of the Secretary of State, the Applicant nevertheless provides detailed comments.

Point 1 from Wansford Parish Council

“The final paragraph of the National Highways letter includes the following statement:-

The findings of the Supplementary GI (2022) did however include recording the presence of possible shear surfaces within the Whitby Mudstone (Lias Group). This was highlighted as a risk at the preliminary design stage of the Scheme, as detailed within the Ground Investigation Report (GIR) submitted during the Examination (REP1-009). The impact of encountering these features will likely result in the design and construction of appropriate mitigation measures which may include reducing the gradient of proposed

earthworks in affected areas, and installation of hard engineering solutions along the toe of proposed earthworks to intersect the shear surfaces to ensure stability of the proposed earthworks.

Wansford Parish Council warned National Highways about this problem at the very start of the project in 2017 but National Highways chose not to make use of this local knowledge during their route selection process. The evidence was clear as the Anglia Water pumping station and the filling station, both on the same strata locally, have a history of land slips. In the area of the recent boreholes, the power poles can be seen leaning over demonstrating that there has been recent ground movement”.

Applicant's Response

While this point has little relevance to the Secretary of State's decision, National Highways was aware of the potential of the land slip risk in the area in 2017. It was considered by the geotechnical engineering team at the time and informed the route selection process.

The Scheme Assessment Report (**AS-30**) details the options selection process that took place in 2017 and 2018. Section 3.8 of that report (Existing Conditions - Geology) sets out the following:

‘Landslide risk data available on HAGDMS identified an area of ground with a significant potential for slope instability approximately 450m east of the current Wansford roundabout. The potential ground instability is associated with the banks of the River Nene and is categorised as a Hazard Class D (“Significant potential for slope instability with relatively small changes in ground conditions”) immediately adjacent to the river and as a Hazard Class C (“Possibility of slope instability problems after major changes in ground conditions”) to the north of the river. The Hazard Class C area covers a section of the current A47 alignment.’

Point 2 from Wansford Parish Council

“The National Highways response states that they will address these soil properties by making the embankment slopes shallower and installing hard engineering solutions (piling) at the toe of the slope. Making the slopes shallower will mean that the construction will encroach further on the County Wildlife Site, including the wildlife corridor along the river. Piling the toe of the embankment will be noisy and expensive. Based on Highways England's own estimates, the route selected is already between 6 and 11 million pounds more than the alternative further north”.

Applicant's Response

Stability analysis is being undertaken during the detailed design to define potential changes to slope gradients. Any slackening of slope gradients shown at preliminary design will be limited wherever possible in order to minimise any encroachment on the County Wildlife Site. Slope gradients will remain within the DCO boundary.

With regard to noise associated with piling, Annex B.3 Construction Noise and Dust Management Plan within the Environmental Management Plan (**REP6-001**) sets out measures to control noise and vibration during the construction phase.

Point 3 3 from Wansford Parish Council

“The issues surrounding slopes in fissured clay (the description used in the geotechnical investigation rather than Whitby Mudstone as used in the National Highways letter) have been well described by Prof R J Chandler who investigated the movement of the Anglia Water pumping station. The problem is that the properties of such soils are very difficult to quantify making slope stability calculations unreliable. At this site, the clay goes very deep so it is not practical to replace it or pin it with piling. Even if a slope is initially stable, it may fail later as the result of drying or wetting of the silt layers which interleave the clay. This problem is responsible for the majority of failures of embankments in the UK. Good engineering practice is to avoid building on this type of slope”.

Applicant’s Response

The Applicant is aware of the ground related challenges and addressed the approach to those issues during the Examination, including at Issue Specific Hearings. There was no evidence before the Examining Authority that the Applicant’s engineering approach was unviable.

The Applicant expects that the use of residual effective shear strength parameters for the weathered Whitby Mudstone within slope stability modelling will be used during the detailed design phase. This will combine data from the 2018 and 2022 GI’s, and may consider Prof. R J Chandler’s analysis. The Applicant remains of the view that the proposed route alignment is appropriate and viable.

Point 4 from Wansford Parish Council

“The reason that this route has been selected is to avoid the area of a Scheduled Monument on the north side of the existing A47. While the Scheduled Monument contains many items of interest, non-intrusive investigations have shown that it is composed of a series of features with large spaces between them. As described in the Parish Council document “Alternative Visions”, attached to our earlier letter of the 28th September 2022, there is a route for the road through the Scheduled Monument that does no substantial damage to the monument. The route that the road would follow is across an area that has been deep ploughed for many years and which has also been disturbed by the installation of field drains. No features show on the non-intrusive survey in this area and repeated surface walks over the years have not recorded any pottery fragments (these are plentiful on other parts of the site). Historic England has stated that they relied on the mapping in “Alternative Visions” instead of doing a full analysis of the site themselves. They therefore have no basis to challenge these findings”.

Applicant's Response

The Applicant has addressed WPC's arguments relating to the location and extent of the Scheduled Monument extensively in previous submissions, including, but not limited to the Applicant's response to Issue Specific Hearing (ISH2) Points 3.1 – 3.3 within the Applicant's Written Summary of Oral Submissions at Hearings (**REP4-018**); the Applicant's Response to Wansford Parish Council (Point 3.1, within the Applicant's Response to Written Representations (**REP3-026**)); and the Applicant's Response to Wansford Parish Council (Point 5 within the Applicant's Comments on Deadline 7 Submissions (**REP8-026**)).

Responses were also provided on this point by Historic England in their submissions into the Examination (**REP2-074**, **REP2-075** and **REP8-037**), concurring with the Applicant's view. There is no merit to WPC's suggestion.

Point 5 from Wansford Parish Council

"In summary, National Highways have chosen a route that will be :-

- 1. Expensive to build*
- 2. Always prone to ground movements whatever measures are put in place during construction*
- 3. Unable to accommodate future widening of the road*
- 4. Makes poor provision for walkers, cyclists and horse rider".*

Applicant's Response

This is an attempt to continue and buttress submissions which have, or should have, been made to the Examining Authority. The Case for the Scheme (**AS-022**) sets out the need for the scheme, how the scheme has been development and an overview of the economic case (Section 5).

The Applicant has considered not only the cost of construction but also the wider benefits of the scheme.

As set out in the Applicant's Comments on Deadline 4 Submissions (which includes a response to Wansford Parish Council's Deadline 4 Submission (ISH 2 Geotechnical Risk Post Hearing Submission (REP4-041) (**REP5-019** (Section 14))), there are no requirements for the design to accommodate future widening. It would be inappropriate and unlawful to significantly impact a Scheduled Monument as a result of an unknown future requirement.

The Scheme provides a number of improvements to WCH provision in the vicinity of the Scheme including a new underpass and new infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. WCH facilities to be provided as part of the Scheme are detailed in Section 7.10 of the Transport Assessment (**REP4-008**) and shown on the Rights of Way and Access Plans (**REP8-004**).

Point 6 from Wansford Parish Council

“This has come about because National Highways is unwilling to challenge Historic England and have a public dialogue about the merits of a route through the Scheduled Monument. While supporting the need for this road upgrade, Wansford Parish Council would ask the Secretary of State to instruct National Highways to look again at the route of the section of road where it goes close to the river Nene”.

Applicant's Response

The Applicant has addressed this comment in the response to Point 4 from WPC above.

FURTHER UPDATE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

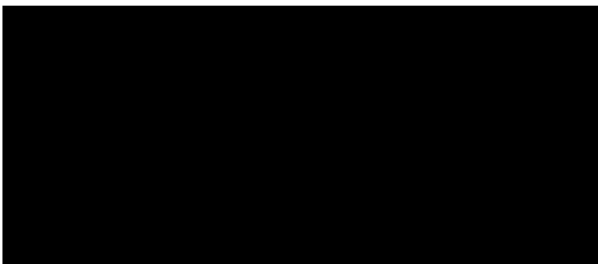
National Grid Distribution (East Midlands) Limited ("NGED") (formerly Western Power Distribution (East Midlands) Limited ("WPD"))

On 20 September 2022, WPD changed its name to National Grid Distribution (East Midlands) Plc (see attached).

National Highways and NGED have reached substantive agreement in respect of protective provisions in favour of NGED. The form of the agreed PPs was included in Part 6 of Schedule 9 of the dDCO submitted at Deadline 11 of the Examination (**REP11-002**).

The Applicant has attached a revised version of the dDCO to reflect WPD's change of name to NGED, amending both Article 10 and Part 6 of Schedule 9 of the dDCO together with a Comparison to the Deadline 11 dDCO and a Validation Report.

Yours sincerely,



Craig Stirzaker
Project Manager
National Highways



**CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION
ON CHANGE OF NAME**

Company Number 2366923

The Registrar of Companies for England and Wales hereby certifies that under the Companies Act 2006:

WESTERN POWER DISTRIBUTION (EAST MIDLANDS) PLC

a company incorporated as public limited by shares, having its registered office situated in England and Wales, has changed its name to:

**NATIONAL GRID ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION (EAST
MIDLANDS) PLC**

Given at Companies House on **20th September 2022**.

The above information was communicated by electronic means and authenticated by
the Registrar of Companies under section 1115 of the Companies Act 2006

