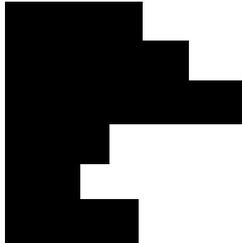


Mr Adrian Hunter  
Lead Member of the Examining Authority  
National Infrastructure Planning  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Bristol BS1 6PN

Mr and Mrs Cathcart



Your ref: PINS ref TR010060  
Our ref: Interested Party number 20033024  
Served via portal

Dear Sirs

Submission to the Planning Inspectorate in respect of the proposed Cadent gas pipeline diversion near Witham (TR010060 A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening Scheme – Gas Pipeline Diversion)

Procedural Deadline 1 – Written Submission – 30 January 2023

Please find following a written submission of the oral representation made at the afternoon Open Floor hearing of 12 January 2023.

**The proposed re-routing of the Cadent gas pipeline will cut straight across the Blue Mills nature reserve and lead to the following negative ecological impacts:**

- The destruction of a number of ancient and historic trees, some of which are the tallest in the area and visible from a considerable distance.
- Two 300-year-old female black poplars will be at risk. These are the only two of their kind in Essex, out of a population of just 600 female black poplars in the country. One of the Blue Mills black poplars is an otter holt – this fact has been confirmed by the Essex Wildlife Trust.
- A boundary line of ancient oaks will be cut through. These oaks have been the breeding site for a pair of red kites for the last few years.

- The loss of the rare habitat of wet woodland and inland reedbeds. This will lead to the necessary dislocation and further diminishment of habitat for the European Protected Species on the site including otters, bats and water voles.
- Damage to the amenity value to the local community of the Ishams Chase footpath. This looks directly onto the magnificent line of ancient oaks on the Blue Mills nature reserve - this will be replaced by a direct view straight across to the A12.

**The route has, we believe, been chosen without proper understanding of the ecological value of the Blue Mills nature reserve:**

- The route was chosen before any surveys had been conducted by Ardent.
- We wish to underline that, subsequent to the route being chosen and the DCO application being made, the Blue Mills nature reserve has been granted a Tree Preservation Order. This reflects both the local and national significance of the trees on the site. The Blue Mills nature reserve has also since been recommended for designation as a Local Wildlife Site in recognition of the ecological richness of the site.
- Our nature conservation efforts had 18 years earlier been recognised by a Commendation in the 2004 Maldon District Council Conservation and Design awards - Nature Conservation/Landscape category. The commendation stated: ‘The judges were impressed by the restoration of this natural English environment attracting native species and wildlife to the area..’
- We are not aware of any tree survey being conducted by Ardent despite our repeated prompting for them to do so. No habitat survey (national vegetation classification) has been conducted either, on our understanding.
- To properly appreciate the ecological value of the site, we believe an accompanied Planning Inspectorate site visit to the Blue Mills nature reserve is warranted. (The site is not accessible to the public).

**Our recommendations:**

- We recommend that the gas pipe route passes to the north of the Blue Mills reserve at the confluence of the Blackwater and Brain, through a strip of land where there are no ancient or veteran trees.
- Cadent, in an email to one of Cadent’s core shareholders, has assured their ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) investment department that trenching will be avoided over any ecologically sensitive areas such as the Blue Mills nature reserve.

- We ask the Inspectorate to thereby ensure that Cadent employ tunnelling in the vicinity of the nature reserve and that they give sufficient clearance in their tunnelling to avoid the roots of any historic trees, notably the female black poplar.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Cathcart MA(Cantab)

Anne Cathcart-Taylor BA(Hons), FCA

30 January 2023