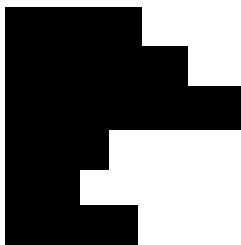


Mr Adrian Hunter  
Lead Member of the Examining Authority  
National Infrastructure Planning  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Bristol BS1 6PN

Mr and Mrs Cathcart



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

Dear Sirs

Cadent gas pipeline diversion near Witham (TR010060 A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening Scheme – Gas Pipeline Diversion)

Deadline 7 - Written submission of oral representations made at Issue Specific Hearing 5 on 27 June 2023

Speaker: Mark Cathcart (owner of the Blue Mills nature reserve/local wildlife site)

**‘No-dig’ commitment in relation to the Blue Mills nature reserve**

At the hearing I queried whether the ‘no-dig’ (ie tunnelling) protection afforded by the Tree Preservation Order extended over the entirety of the Blue Mills Local Wildlife Site. The Applicant’s response by email on 29 June 2023 confirmed that it does. We consider this to be satisfactory.

**Incorrect National Vegetation Classification – ‘sedge-bed’ described as ‘nettle-bed’**

At the hearing I queried the Applicant’s description of our sedge-bed (commonly known as reed-bed) in the nature reserve as ‘nettle-bed’ (Supplementary Botanical Report [REP2-027] Table 1).

We have corresponded with the Applicant on this issue. The area in question (f2f) is currently classified as ‘other swamp’ but we consider it to be more accurately described as sedge-bed because the greater part of it is dominated by Lesser Pond Sedge (see photographs in Appendix A). (Sedges are closely related to reeds, and frequently co-exist with these in the

same wetland habitat, as is the case in the Blue Mills nature reserve). The Applicant acknowledges in his email that the area does in fact include part of the central area of sedge-bed and that nettles only dominate on the fringes of the wet woodland.

We therefore maintain that the description of the whole area as ‘nettle-bed’ is inaccurate and misleading.

In further support of the existence of our sedge-bed and the inclusion of part of it within the DCO order limits, we refer the Planning Inspectorate to the Essex Wildlife Trust’s Local Wildlife Trust citation for Blue Mills which refers to ‘a central area of reedbed’, and also to the observation of it during the Accompanied Site Inspection, during which it was clearly visible, as it is still by a simple examination of Google Earth pictures.

**The wetland basin in the Blue Mills nature reserve *to the south of the order limits* includes an area of reed and sedge-bed, wet woodland, and importantly the second, nationally important, veteran female Black Poplar, but this several acre site is currently being discounted by the Applicant even though it may be affected if the route passes through any part of the wetland area *within* the order limits.**

The Applicant has not carried out any National Vegetation Classification or veteran tree surveys for this area and we note with concern the statement in the Applicant’s email of 29 June 2023 that the ‘other area of ‘swamp habitat’.. south of the order limits.. *would not be affected by the gas main diversion.*’ This is incorrect - as this area is part of the same wetland basin as the wet woodland and sedge-bed within the border limits, it *would* be directly affected by hydrological changes such as increased drainage caused by any unmitigated tunnelling (or trenching) in any part of the wetland basin, *including* the area within the order limits.

We request that National Vegetation Classification and veteran tree surveys be carried out for this equally affected area and be taken into account in the planning and design process.

Wet woodland is of national importance as it is one of the rarest habitats in the UK and its creation requires unique geological conditions which are difficult to reproduce elsewhere. The Blue Mills site benefits from water flowing from the elevated ground on the eastern side which is then trapped by the Anglo-Saxon river embankment.

**The Applicant has not yet presented the Planning Inspectorate with any route or design details.**

We wish to express our concern that the information presented to the Inspectorate to date is limited to the drawing of a wide DCO corridor across our land. While we appreciate the ‘no-dig’ assurance from the Applicant, we have no confirmation of the exact line of the route or of numerous other safeguards that we consider important to protect the ecological value of our nature reserve, such as:

- whether the ‘no-dig’ assurance applies to the operational as well as the construction phase

- the depth of tunnelling and root protection measures
- measures to prevent water draining from the wetland area into or through the tunnel
- an assurance that, in order to minimise disturbance to wildlife, no overground access is required during the construction and operational phases.

We believe these issues should be decided with the benefit of Planning Inspectorate oversight.

**We wish to re-affirm to the Planning Inspectorate that the route described in our deadline 5 submission [REP5-048] was indeed the preferred route presented by the Cadent Team during their site visit on 22 March 2023, as the Applicant has since stated to us (via email dated 14 June 2023) that no particular route was put forward by the Cadent Team during that visit and that instead ‘numerous routes were considered’ and visually surveyed.**

We are unable to understand how this misunderstanding has come about. We can confirm that we both attended the meeting, that we accompanied the Cadent team throughout the entire visit, that we were shown the preferred route marked on Cadent’s planning map which was described as the route that had been independently selected as the preferred route, and we can confirm that this was the only route that was visually surveyed or discussed during the visit.

The route passes to the north of the Blue Mills nature reserve between the northern sited Black Poplar and the confluence of the Brain and the Blackwater and has our full support because it avoids the veteran and potential veteran trees and avoids crossing any part of the strip of mature oak woodland.

Finally, we wish to express our full support for the comments made by Maldon District Council during the examination process in relation to the Blue Mills nature reserve.

Yours sincerely,  
Mark Cathcart MA(Cantab)  
Anne Cathcart-Taylor BA(Hons), FCA  
3 July 2023

## Appendix A

The sedge-bed (clearly not a 'nettle bed') photographed in April and June 2023

