

Template Letter to the National Grid May 2021

Send to the National Grid and their consultants via both email addresses:

bramford-tinstead@brutonknowles.co.uk
contact@bramford-tinstead.nationalgrid.com

Dear Sir,

National Grid proposals for additional power line from Bramford to Tinstead.

I am writing as a concerned stakeholder in response to your request for views on undergrounding power lines through the AONB-designated part of the Stour valley upstream of the existing Dedham Vale AONB.

In a leaflet distributed in the local area in March 2021, you have requested people respond by May 6 with 'further information regarding:

1. The landscape and cultural value of the Stour valley
2. Progress on proposals to extend the Dedham Vale AONB boundary in the Stour valley towards Sudbury'

The landscape and cultural value of this stretch of the Stour valley

This gentle countryside with its winding river, woods, fields, hedges, ancient parish churches, and so many listed properties, is loved by its inhabitants and admired world-wide as typical of the best type of landscape in lowland England. It has been a magnet for artists since time immemorial and was the inspiration for two of our most famous 18th Century landscape painters, Constable and Gainsborough. Moreover, during lockdown it has been a source of much-needed comfort and wellbeing to all who walked through it. East Anglia is known for its wide skies and flat landscape while the Stour valley is unusually undulating and should be treasured in its pristine state.

The case for undergrounding power lines to preserve that natural beauty has always been very strong. We were told that National Grid had committed to undergrounding power lines in 2013 at the last consultation so it seems very surprising and shocking that this issue is being raised again.

Moreover, since National Grid were last here in 2013, recognition of the cultural importance of Gainsborough and the Stour valley has grown hugely. Gainsborough's House in Sudbury has received a lottery grant which together with other funding has enabled a major re-development costing nearly £10 million, which will make it one of the major art centres in East Anglia.

The socio-economic boost that the ancient weaving town of Sudbury and the surrounding area will receive as more visitors come to the area not only to visit the new gallery but also to stay and explore the surrounding landscape is badly needed.

To even think of desecrating the landscape which inspired Gainsborough with a new line of huge pylons just as the new Gainsborough Centre opens is little short of madness. It would be deeply damaging to the aspirations for the area and deleterious to the case for the AONB extension.

Progress on proposals to extend the Dedham Vale AONB boundary in the Stour Valley towards Sudbury.

Timing is everything and there is no doubt the AONB extension approval process for this part of the Stour valley has been severely held up by lack of civil servant manpower at Natural England as they were deployed elsewhere to deal with COVID-19 emergencies.

The AONB extension, some 30km in area, is supported by our three MPs, James Cleverly, James Cartlidge, and Sir Bernard Jenkin, Essex and Suffolk County Councils, Colchester Borough Council, Babergh and Braintree District Councils and all the parish councils in the area.

We do not know of any opposition to this extension and were advised, after exhaustive study by the Landscape Planning specialists Alison Farmer Associates in 2016/17, that the area would meet the demanding criteria required for AONB status.

Natural England is now being urged to speed up the boundary review as recommended in the Glover report, which the government has welcomed.

We understand the need for transmission of green energy proposed for East Anglia but hope the desire for the UK to become “the Saudi Arabia of wind power” does not come at the expense of such beautiful countryside.

The destiny of this beautiful rural area is in your hands. We urge you to confirm that you will honour your 2013 commitment to undergrounding or at least to delay your decision so that we can engage more properly and fully with you.

Yours sincerely,

cc: Lord Gardiner, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Rural Affairs
ps.lord.gardiner@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Your local MP