

Representation: National Grid Norwich to Tilbury Project

This representation concerns the proposed impacts of the National Grid Norwich to Tilbury project on mature trees, hedgerows and associated habitats in and around Ardleigh and Little Bromley. The national need for electricity reinforcement and low-carbon energy is recognised, but this must be balanced against avoidable ecological harm, particularly where mature trees and established hedgerows are affected.

1. Key concerns

In Ardleigh and Little Bromley there are understood to be approximately 95 oak trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders, alongside extensive mature hedgerows. National Grid's proposals indicate the removal of approximately **197** mature trees, with partial impacts on a further **154**. The full species, age class, condition, ecological function and cumulative impact of these losses remain unclear.

Mature oaks, hedgerows, hedge bases, ditches and field margins operate as a connected ecological network. Their loss or fragmentation can reduce habitat continuity and harm nesting, foraging and breeding opportunities for species already under pressure.

2. Planning policy position

Mature oak trees and long-established hedgerows are of exceptional ecological importance because they support complex communities built up over decades or centuries. Their habitat structures, continuity, soils, root systems, dead wood, seed banks and associated species cannot be recreated quickly once lost.

The Examining Authority should therefore test whether the scheme has genuinely followed the mitigation hierarchy: first avoiding harm, then minimising unavoidable harm, then restoring affected habitats, and only as a last resort compensating for residual impacts. Replacement planting should not be assumed to compensate for the loss of mature trees or established hedgerows within any meaningful timescale.

3. Evidence and safeguards requested

National Grid should provide a transparent schedule of all affected trees and hedgerows in Ardleigh, Little Bromley and the wider route, identifying species, age class, condition, Tree Preservation Order status, ecological value, nature of impact and whether each loss is temporary, partial or permanent.

National Grid should also explain, site by site, how the mitigation hierarchy has been applied and why lower-impact alternatives have not been selected where they would avoid or reduce harm to mature trees, hedgerows, ecological networks and rural landscape character.

The following safeguards are requested before any consent is granted:

- A full alternatives assessment, including offshore coordination, brownfield or previously developed land, alternative routeing, adjusted working areas and existing infrastructure corridors.
- Rigorous application of the mitigation hierarchy, with avoidance of harm to TPO trees, mature oaks, veteran or near-veteran trees, important hedgerows, hedge banks and root protection areas.

- Clear arboricultural and ecological justification for every mature tree removal or significant pruning.
- Assessment of hedgerow impacts by ecological function, connectivity and fragmentation, not only by length removed.
- Recognition that mature trees and established hedgerows are effectively irreplaceable where their ecological functions cannot be recreated within a meaningful timescale, with any residual compensation local, additional, measurable, enforceable and secured for long-term management.

The Examining Authority is respectfully asked to give significant weight to the loss and fragmentation of mature trees and hedgerows, require fuller evidence where impacts and alternatives remain uncertain, and secure robust avoidance, minimisation, restoration, compensation and monitoring requirements before any consent is granted.

Ardleigh Parish Council

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