



Ardleigh Parish Council

Response to Summer 2026 Tarchon Interconnector Non-Statutory Consultation

1. Introduction

Ardleigh Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this non Statutory consultation. The effort made by the project team to provide information in various formats and engagements has been welcome, and has significantly assisted the Council in preparing its response. This response builds upon materials submitted by the Council to the project during pre application scoping.

The council continues to object to this proposed scheme and other energy infrastructure schemes proposed in the Ardleigh and Little Bromley area, centred upon the proposed but not yet approved EACN.

We note that a great many issues have not been assessed in the required depth for meaningful consultation. Also that the cumulative impact of this and the associated EACN fundamentally changes the character of the parish, and such cumulative analysis of the proposed schemes is absent from each and every consultation put forward so far.

2. General comments

Ardleigh is defined as a rural parish. It currently has <10% of land area built upon. As such, this project, as part of the proposed EACN, represents a strategic industrialisation of a foundationally rural community. A community that has roots dating to the Bronze age. The proposals fundamentally undermine the unique reason why thousands of people, along with numerous rural businesses, chose to live or locate in Ardleigh. Preserving this way of life is a key purpose of the Parish Council, and is firmly demanded of us by our residents. For this reason, the project operators cannot expect to receive support from the council at any stage of the approval process.

3. Need Case

We do not accept that Tarchon will meaningfully strengthen energy security in either UK or Germany, nor that it will reduce costs. The considerable costs of “one of the longest interconnectors in the world” will be borne by energy consumers, with Tarchon being shielded from economic failure by Cap & Floor subsidy regimes. Why do the UK and Germany need such an interconnector when shorter

more effective interconnectors already exist or are in development between UK and France, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway and indeed Germany via the NeuConnect line?

Any analysis of likely volumes of imports and exports of power are conspicuously absent at this stage, and so we consider the need case for the project unproven when judged against its significant and largely already quantifiable cost to consumers. It seems likely that Tarchon may become a stranded asset, used primarily to export surplus energy from East Anglia due to UK grid constraints and not due to any structural surplus of electricity in UK. As such, it would serve the interests of private generators, their shareholders and German power consumers, rather than being in the strategic interests of the UK energy consumer.

The scheme also creates significant health and safety risks. The concentration risk of multiple projects in such a concentrated geography clearly represents a security risk as well as a site of multiple sources of fire or explosion risk in a naturally dry and vulnerable area.

As part of any statutory consultation we would expect to see much more robust justification for the project provided, along with scenario analysis to lay out a range of likely operating scenarios.

4. Lack of defined Site location or Design

The absence of a defined site location does not allow the Council to make any detailed comments on the scheme at this stage. Nonetheless, it is clear that construction of a converter station covering 7.5ha with buildings up to 26m high, along with kilometres of associated trenching and underground cabling and access compounds will have an enormous catastrophic effect on the unspoiled agricultural landscape of Ardleigh parish.

In preparing such plans, we highlight our main areas of concern relating, but not limited, to:

- Loss of agricultural land. The scoping boundary laid out in this consultation encompasses an area of substantially high grade farmland. Ardleigh parish (2040ha) is ~75% covered in grade 1-3 farmland, with around 1/3 of that land designated BMV1 land. As such, it should not be considered for development of any sort
- Socio Economic impact. The area around EACN supports a huge amount of local business activity and recreational amenity for local residents. Some 250 jobs are at risk at Peake Fruit and Elm Park nursing home as a consequence of the proposed project(s). In this respect we view adherence to Treasury Green Book as representing best practice
- Damage to the water and drainage environment. The development directly threatens the irrigation lake for Peake Fruit, which also has a licensed airplane landing strip in its property. The lake is also a source of huge biodiversity and recreational value
- Damage to the considerable biodiversity of the area
- Impacts on traffic and roads in a rural area
- Damage to unique historical sites which form an essential part of the heritage of the parish. The identified Scheduled Monument, with potentially significant unexplored archaeological value, is in close proximity to the project. We believe further discoveries are possible in the area as it is the known route of an ancient roman road, as demonstrated by the cropmark complex adjacent to the Monument.

Undoubtedly, more detailed feedback from the council will be provided when details of the scheme are better understood. At this stage we are most concerned that permissions might be sought on the basis of either uncertain or maximalist design principles, both of which we strongly object to.

5. Consideration of alternative locations

Whilst we understand Tarchon is acting in accordance with National Grid instruction at this stage, we seen no evidence of alternative options for the scheme, or alternative onshore options having been considered.

We note that each of North Falls and Five Estuaries have deliberately preserved their options for offshore routing to other connection locations apart from EACN within their planning applications. We wonder why Tarchon is failing to do this even at such an early stage, given that planning permission for N2T is not yet granted and likely to be substantially delayed even if permissioned.

Tarchon should lay out for consultees the alternatives that have been considered. In particular, with regard to Tarchon specifically, we challenge why a site close to the already permissioned developments at Horsley Cross should not be considered. Regarding the wider EACN, we continue to believe that Boxted Airfield area was mistakenly excluded from consideration and would be a more suitable location brownfield location than on greenfield prime farm land as proposed.

Without this, we are wholly unable to respond to our residents' challenges to the Council as to why Ardleigh has been selected as the most suitable site for such development.

6. Cumulative impact of Tarchon along with other schemes

As part of any statutory consultation, we would expect all the matters raised in section 4 above to be considered in their proper context as a concentrated group of functionally interdependent projects. No assessment of their likely impact can be made without considering their cumulative impact all together:

- EACN
- Norwich to Tilbury Substation and transmission
- North Falls Substation and associated Transmission
- Five Estuaries Substation and associated Transmission
- Tarchon Converter Station and associated Transmission
- BESS facility
- Solar Farm
- Existing overhead lines and substation in Laford

In totality, our preliminary analysis shows that substation areas could take 4% of total undeveloped land area in the parish (and/or Little Bromley Parish) and up to 12% of BMV1 land area.

In addition to the proposed energy infrastructure, the Council is also aware that elements of these schemes interact, and potentially conflict, with elements of the proposed Colchester Borders Garden Community and sites selected by Essex County Council for consideration for minerals extraction.

We are extremely concerned about the lack of alignment, or even engagement, between the respective parties in all of these schemes, and the total absence of accountability for their overall impact.

7. Conclusion

For all the reasons set out above, the Parish Council objects to the proposal to site an interconnector converter station in the proposed area.

We believe it is the wrong scheme in the wrong place, and as a consequence does not serve the interest of UK residents. The need case for such a long and complex scheme is unproven. The unanimity of opposition to the suite of projects, including all relevant County, District and Parish councils speaks to the strength of local feeling and the unsuitability of the schemes in this area.

We believe that proper consideration of alternative sites has not been provided. We request that Tarchon pushes back on National Grid regarding siting in this rural area of high grade farmland. National Grid's own insistence on limiting site analysis to the EACN area belies its own fundamentally absent analysis of alternatives. This is a matter being considered by the Examining Authority for Norwich to Tilbury at the moment. We believe this is good cause for N2T to be rejected by the Examiners, and should it not be, will almost certainly become an issue for judicial review of the scheme. Thus, we believe it is in Tarchon's own interest to pursue alternatives, since its intended scheme will almost certainly be delayed by legal proceedings.

We look forward to engaging further with this consultation process in future, when we hope that significantly greater clarity will be available to interested parties around detailed site plans, cumulative impacts of all EACN projects, alternatives and assessed impacts and mitigations will be available.