

A Landscape Too Sensitive for Pylons: The Case for Protecting Ardleigh

Whilst supporting the need for new energy infrastructure, delivery must properly consider less harmful alternatives to overhead pylons. In sensitive rural locations such as Ardleigh, other options, including continued undergrounding, should be fully and transparently assessed before pylons are imposed on the landscape.

This submission asks the Examining Authority to require the least damaging solution for Ardleigh. National Grid has already accepted that the landscape north of Ardleigh is sufficiently sensitive to justify undergrounding; the same principle should be applied before overhead pylons are imposed on the adjoining rural landscape.

National Grid's proposal to reintroduce overhead pylons shortly after the undergrounded Ardleigh section is **inconsistent and inadequately justified**. The landscape around Ardleigh does not suddenly become less sensitive at the proposed transition point; it remains rural, visually exposed and closely connected to homes, lanes, footpaths, farmland, heritage assets and the wider setting of Dedham Vale National Landscape.

National Grid's own reasoning for undergrounding the Ardleigh–EACN section shows that undergrounding is not limited to nationally designated landscapes. It can be justified where the effects of overhead infrastructure impact the Dedham Vale National Landscape. Reference statement by the Applicant at recent Issue Specific Hearing 4: subject Landscape and Visual Effects. Transcript: 00.55.56.07 – 00.57.27.26

That same reasoning should be applied consistently to the rest of the Ardleigh area affected by the proposed re-emergence of pylons: visible from the Dedham Vale National Landscape (see attached map).

The re-emergence of pylons immediately after the undergrounded section is therefore not a coherent landscape-based decision. National Grid has not shown that landscape or residential harm materially reduces at that point, nor that affected Ardleigh receptors have been assessed against the same threshold that justified the adjacent undergrounding.

National Grid's decision establishes three principles: undergrounding is appropriate where landscape harm is severe; long underground sections are feasible; and undergrounding can be justified outside a designated landscape where the evidence supports it.

Those principles should be applied consistently to the local landscape, homes and heritage assets affected by the reintroduction of overhead infrastructure, rather than ending at an arbitrary transition point near Ardleigh.

Ardleigh meets the threshold for continued protection

Ardleigh is not a blank or low-value corridor. It is a settled ancient rural landscape with residential properties, listed buildings, mature hedgerows, woodland, farm businesses, narrow lanes and public views across open countryside and the

Dedham Vale National Landscape. Pylons will be highly intrusive in this setting, particularly where they would be experienced from homes, local roads, rights of way and heritage assets.

The landscape does not suddenly become less sensitive

EN-5 requires a consistent application of the mitigation hierarchy where significant landscape and visual effects arise. If undergrounding is justified between Birchwood Road and the EACN section, then the transition back to the A12, around the village settlement, requires a clear, evidence-based justification. Different standards appear to be applied to parts of the same rural landscape.

Potential change to the Project plan and insufficient assessment

Ardleigh Parish Council understands that the Applicant is also seeking to re-route pylon(s) north of the consented Flying Trade Group warehouse at the junction of Old Ipswich Road and Wick Lane. However, the information currently available does not provide a sufficiently precise or transparent basis for assessment. The exact alignment between T18 and T20 remains unclear, and there is no confirmed information on individual pylon locations, span lengths, access arrangements, construction compounds, vegetation removal or the relationship of the revised route to nearby receptors.

Without this detail, the Examining Authority, residents and other parties cannot properly understand or assess the revised alignment. Clear distances from the Dedham Vale National Landscape, homes, listed buildings and public rights of way, together with verified visual representations, are needed to compare this potential change with the existing proposal, and to determine whether continued undergrounding is the less damaging and a more consistent solution.

Cumulative impacts on Old Ipswich Road, Wick Lane and Harts Lane

There are also serious cumulative impact concerns. The expected Anglian Water pipe between Great Horkesley and Ardleigh Reservoir would pass through the Flying Trade Group land (Old Ipswich Road) towards Dead Lane and the Ardleigh Reservoir pumping station, interacting with the Applicant's project, existing industrial buildings, the SRC mineral extraction site and the proposed asphalt plant on Old Ipswich Road.

Together, these schemes would place unacceptable pressure on Ardleigh's sensitive landscape. The combined effects on the Dedham Vale National Landscape, homes, farm businesses, hedgerows, woodland, protected trees and rural setting that have not been adequately considered.

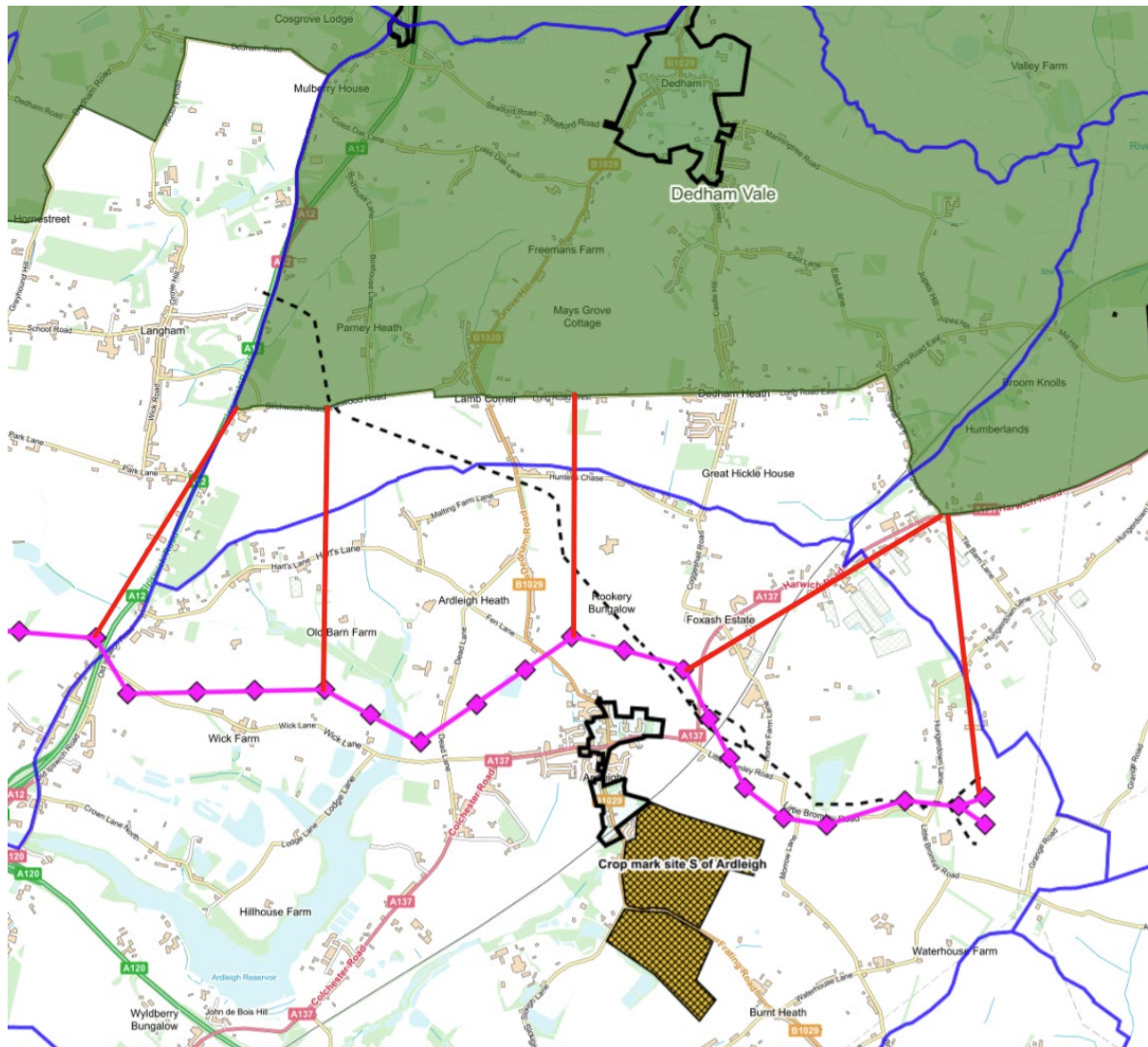
Conclusion and request

National Grid's decision to underground the Ardleigh–EACN section is an implicit, and explicit, admission that this landscape is too sensitive for overhead pylons. The Examining Authority should therefore require National Grid to provide a consistent, policy-compliant approach by avoiding pylons in the Ardleigh area.

In addition, the Examining Authority should require full and transparent assessment of any changes before any reliance is placed upon them, including confirmed pylon

proximity to the Dedham Vale National Landscape, distances to affected homes and heritage assets, updated landscape and visual assessment and a proper cumulative impact assessment alongside other infrastructure and development proposals in the area.

Map showing proximity to Dedham Vale National Landscape. (see below)



Ardleigh Parish Council 29.06.26