

ECC Report:

East Anglia GREEN – from Norwich to Tilbury - UPDATE

Joint news release: Essex County Council, Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council

County councils unanimously agree “no” to damaging pylons proposal

Authorities in Essex and Suffolk have united to condemn the current proposals for a 180km network of 50m tall electricity pylons between Norwich, Bramford and Tilbury. Essex County Council and Suffolk County Council have passed motions at their full council meetings in July, to oppose the East Anglia GREEN proposal put forward by National Grid.

Norfolk County Council is expected to consider the motion at its next full council meeting, following a planned debate yesterday (19 July 2022) being postponed. The councils agree that the plan for pylons is destructive and out-dated, and will cause irreversible damage to the countryside, wildlife habitats and local communities.

A new electricity network is needed to transmit the ambitious 50 GW of offshore wind that the Government aims to be delivered by 2030, and to connect new projects like Sizewell C. So much of this ambition falls on East Anglia, to provide energy for much of the country.

The councils fully support the need to generate this renewable and low carbon electricity, to meet local and national Net Zero ambitions. However, they believe that more suitable, sustainable and modern alternatives for the network have not been properly investigated and presented, such as undersea cable routes around the coastline of East Anglia.

Formalising their long-standing positions on the East Anglia GREEN proposal, the two councils join a group of 13 MPs who recently signed a letter criticising the consultation, along with a growing public petition with thousands of signatures.

Councillor Kevin Bentley, Leader of Essex County Council, said:

“We are incredibly disappointed that this initial, non-statutory consultation explored just one option: a disruptive network of overground cables. It was presented in such a way that this is the only option, and that it is a done deal. I would like to assure our residents in Essex, and our friends in Norfolk and Suffolk, that is certainly not a done deal, and together we will oppose the current proposal at every opportunity and pressure for alternative solutions to be fully detailed.”

Councillor Andrew Proctor, Leader of Norfolk County Council, said:

“It is ironic that the current proposals by National Grid threaten significant and totally unacceptable impacts on Norfolk’s communities, businesses and cherished landscape. 50-year old, carbon-heavy technology is being proposed to deliver a clean energy solution. I have written to both National Grid and the energy minister, laying out our concerns and urging him to consider offshore and underground alternatives, that could allow the clean energy from the North Sea to join the National Grid without the disproportionate impacts that overhead cables could have on our county. I look forward to the motion being heard in the council chamber.”

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

“We are sending a strong message with the councils coming together to reject this completely unacceptable project to get electricity onshore. There is significant momentum against the pylon proposal from our residents, businesses, and our MPs. There has been no clear and detailed information presented on alternatives, particularly an offshore solution. In Suffolk, we have been lobbying for strategic electricity networks since 2011 and we will continue stand firm alongside our neighbours to ensure that Suffolk, Norfolk, and Essex are not damaged by the serious shortcomings in these current plans.”

National Grid completed the East Anglia GREEN non-statutory consultation in June and later this year, it is anticipated they will publish a report outlining the key themes from the feedback received and explain the next steps. They expect the first statutory consultation to take place in early 2023, with an application to the Planning Inspectorate in late 2024.

20 is Plenty Campaign

I have received info on the 20 is Plenty Campaign, from some of my Parish Councils. Therefore, I have spoken to Safer Essex Road Partnership (SERP) to ask their view on this. They are in the process of updating the Functional Route Hierarchy Review. Once completed, this will be followed by the revision of the Essex Speed Management Strategy.

I understand that the original hierarchy was established in 2005 and is well out of date and doesn't reflect the aims of the authority now in terms of sustainable travel, etc. Quite a few of us Council Members are keen that the Speed Management Strategy is reviewed and updated, but the hierarchy needs to be completed first

I understand from SERP that Ringway Jacobs are looking at options on the hierarchy, based around TfL/Hertfordshire “place and movement” approach, and this has been shared with the Highways Cabinet member, Cllr Lee Scott, where there were recommendations to pursue the impacts of the changing of the hierarchy and looking at how the hierarchy can be delivered.

I have also requested an update from Cllr Scott stating that this has been going on for some and is in danger of being taken over by events such as 20mph in Wales and strong lobbying by the “20 is Plenty for Us” group. I have received an acknowledgement from Cllr Scott and a promise of an update. However, I think that the response will eventually be that the Functional Route Hierarchy Review and Essex Speed Management Strategy need to be completed before a view is given on whether ECC supports the universal 20mph campaign, as opposed to the current selective approach.

School Crossing Patrol School Lane:

One applicant expressed an interest but changed their mind before the planned interview. Can you please re-broadcast the advert?

Report on the Bloor Homes Planning Application from the ECC viewpoint:

Bloor Homes site in Broomfield and Little Waltham - 9 August 2022 CCC Planning Committee - considered 2 connected planning applications:

- STRATEGIC GROWTH SITE NORTH OF WOODHOUSE LANE, BROOMFIELD, CHELMSFORD – 20/02064/OUT
- BROOMFIELD HOSPITAL, HOSPITAL APPROACH, BROOMFIELD, CHELMSFORD – 21/00881/FUL

This was for:

- Outline application for residential development for up to 512 dwellings
- Formation of a new link road between Woodhouse Lane and Broomfield Hospital,

Main concerns by local PCs and residents was the impact on traffic, Education services and Health services.

A number of measures are included in the application to help mitigate these:

Highways and transportation

- Northeast by-pass contribution of £2.5million.
- Cycle/footbridge over Essex Regiment Way contribution of £0.4million
- Junction improvements contribution of £1m .
- Great Waltham to Chelmsford cycle route improvements contribution of £175,000 towards completion of section 2 between Goulton Road and the Hospital Link Road .
- Cycle route south from new access roundabout contribution of £300,000 towards a cycle route between the site access roundabout and Croxton Lane .
- Payment of a commuted maintenance sum for hospital link road.
- Closure/downgrading/alterations to Woodhouse Lane.
- Developer to provide a bus service to the site to the specification of the highway authority prior to occupation of the 60th dwelling.
- Residential Travel Plan (including car club scheme) annual monitoring fee of £2660 until a year after full occupation.
- Restriction on occupations until the new access roundabout, the spine road, works to Woodhouse
- Lane, cycle facilities and bus stop infrastructure have been carried out and a certificate of completion

Education:

- Early years – provide an early years and childcare nursery. Obligations to provide the land required for this (0.13 hectares) and a financial contribution towards the facility
- Primary Education – a financial contribution of £2,585,000.
- Secondary Education - a financial contribution of £2,094,036 is required to mitigate the impact of the development on local secondary school provision.

Health:

- Provision of land for a health facility with space for the new building appropriate access, parking and servicing arrangements to accommodate a building of around 1,000 sq. m
- Contribution of £253,900 [£496.18 per dwelling] to support the development proposal.
- Community Facility - A community facility to be provided within the health facility building.

The link road, which is at the end of the new Spine access road, goes over Health Trust Land. The intention was for it to just allow staff and suppliers to access the hospital grounds via this route with a controlled barrier. At the last minute (the day of the committee), the Trust withdrew their support for the contribution proposed by the developer to maintain the link road. ECC highways had already

approved this approach, so the meeting was thrown into a last minute debate on alternatives (developer funded bus from the P&R for staff and patients) but the committee decided to conditionally approve both applications on the basis that the issues around the link road could be resolved between the developer and the Trust.

Highways Issue in Main Road:

I have been in correspondence with one of your residents in Main Road (off the B1008) – on pavement defects and rat running queue jumping. My last correspondence to her is copied, and was also sent to your Clerk. The Parish Council need to decide whether/how they want to take this forward.

Pavement Defects:

I escalated the defects and didn't get a particularly helpful response:

“Broomfield Road is a priority route which is inspected in its entirety on a monthly basis. This is the most frequent inspection regime.

I can see we are aware of a number of pavement and kerb defects, and with the exception of a sunken utility trench outside number 317, there are no repairs planned at the moment. The Highway Inspector does not consider that urgent repairs are required but will continue to monitor these defects for deterioration.”

Not being happy with this, I visited the area again and took some more photos and sent them in with a message that there was more bits without kerbs than there were with kerbs, and were we both looking at the same place!. I also copied in the Highways Cabinet Member and offering to take him on a tour. This got a more positive response:

“I can confirm we have identified the correct location, however, the photographs you have provided do show that the area outside 385 has significantly deteriorated since the Inspector's last visit. I have therefore requested a reinspection and I have supplied the Inspector with your photographs. You can track the progress of the inspection and the action taken using your unique reference number 2790387 via the track it pages of the Report it Tool: <https://www.essexhighways.org/track-it>

The long term problem

Having parked there to take the photos, I can see why residents might park partly on the pavement or deliver/waste trucks etc mount the pavement – which is leading to a deterioration. Basically, it's not a very wide road. The danger is that if we get the pavement repaired, it will get damaged again unless we do something else

Using the route as a short cut:

I have personally witnessed cars being too impatient to sit in a queue on Broomfield Road, and queue jump by taking the route. Also taking the earlier entrance to bypass the queue. I have discussed this with Highway Engineers and there aren't many options:

- Access Only – difficult to enforce
- No through road – on both roads – but you have the problem of delivery vehicles and bin wagons having to turn round
- One way – easier to implement – can choose a direction that is opposite to the queue on Broomfield Road, or the 2 roads having opposite flows

Next Steps:

Lets see if the inspection proves helpful. If not I will push the Cabinet member.

If the pavements do get repaired – is it feasible to put parking restrictions on both sides? All the residents seem to have their own drives. If we don't do something like this, the pavements will soon deteriorate again. The downside is that a parking free route will cause the queue jumpers to go faster!

One way? – I can raise an LHP scheme to look at this.

On all such things like this, I take my lead from the Parish Council who represent all residents. There will be (there always is) some people who object to whatever is proposed. The Clerk is copied in.

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