

Little Waltham Parish Council response to the Chelmsford City Council Response to National Grids Second Non-Statutory Consultation on the Norwich/Tilbury Line

Thank you very much for sending us a draft copy of the CCC response to the NG second non statutory consultation on the Norwich/Tilbury line.

Heritage Assessment

We are delighted with the prominence given in the report to the position of Little Waltham and the need for a full heritage assessment before any pylon route/undergrounding is decided. We absolutely agree with this position as the NG Design Development Report June 2023 (where an alternative route around the west of Chelmsford is considered) dealt with the Little Waltham heritage in what we believed was a rather inadequate and incomplete manner.

This suggests to us either that the NG is deliberately underplaying the importance of Little Waltham heritage (to avoid the expense of undergrounding or utilising the longer alternative route) and /or the NG simply does not have the complete picture of just how substantial the heritage value of LW is. It does seem that a full heritage assessment of Little Waltham will play an important role in the final decision on how and where the line passes the village. However we are concerned because we note that the request to the NG for a full heritage assessment was made in the CCC response in 2022, and the NG do not seem to have responded to that request. Indeed the June 2023 Development Report suggests they are persisting in what we believe is their rather inadequate assessment of LW heritage. Furthermore we are not confident that even if the NG do undertake a heritage assessment it will be as full as perhaps it could be.

We in Little Waltham ask rather that CCC carry out a full heritage assessment themselves and send it to the NG to form part of the NG assessment. This will have several advantages. The CCC through its Principle Heritage Officer, and through the Planning and other Departments will have complete records of the LW heritage, including architectural, archaeological, planning and historic aspects. It will mean that the fullest picture can be presented to the NG, and it will help ensure that the Little Waltham heritage will be given the fullest consideration by the NG.

The Alternative Route

An alternative route was set out in the NG Design Development Report of June 2023. Section 3.7 of the CCC 2023 response deals with the alternative route (which is across uninhabited land to the north and east of Little Waltham). Having put forward this alternative route the NG then dismissed it because it was slightly longer. Part three of the Little Waltham PC response of August 2023 (copy appended) deals with what we would argue is the unsatisfactory reasoning behind the NG rejection.

We would be very grateful if the CCC felt able to support this alternative route in a positive way. It is worthy of support because, as the development report itself accepts, it avoids adverse effects on residential properties and on heritage assets in Great and Little Waltham. It would also avoid any adverse effects of the line on electronics at Broomfield Hospital and on the emergency helicopter service there. It would arguably not breach Halford three, which is limited to instances where "all other things are equal", which is clearly not the case here, with the balance of adverse residential and heritage effect very much in favour of the alternative route. In any event an extra couple of kilometres of line is relatively small in the larger picture – much smaller than undergrounding the line past the Walthams and the hospital.