

Email sent to National Grid from Councillor Burrow on 19 September 2023

Dear Sir

I am the lead councillor of Little Waltham Parish Council (LWPC) on matters concerning the Norwich/Tilbury transmission line. Little Waltham is a village some 3 miles to the North West of Chelmsford, Essex. The line runs very close to the village and we have made submissions to the National Grid in August 2023 (as part of the second non statutory consultation) objecting to the current proposals and asking for alternative solutions to be considered. Since that time we have been corresponding with Jeremy Potter the Spatial Planning Services Manager of the Directorate for Sustainable Communities at Chelmsford City Council (CCC) who is the lead resposdee for the City Council on the Norwich/Tilbury line, and with Kemi Badenoch our MP.

We have been particularly concerned with the heritage assessment undertaken for Little Waltham by the National Grid which seems to us wholly inadequate, having read the various documents published by the NG including the Design Development Report of June 2023, where an alternative route away from Little Waltham is set out, but rejected. We have raised the matter with Jeremy Potter who has said the CCC will be asking for a further heritage assessment for Little Waltham and has suggested we should take part in this process.

We have considered the archaeological excavations which have taken place in the village since the 1950s to the current day in 2023 as part of our heritage assessment of Little Waltham and we have passed them on to Jeremy Potter who has sent them on to the Chelmsford City Council Principle Heritage Officer. Mr Potter has suggested we contact you with our findings as providing a fuller picture of the historic heritage importance of Little Waltham.

There have been a number of archaeological excavations around the southern part of the village (in or adjacent to the Waltham gap "pinch point") from the 1950s to 2023. Taken together they provide a picture of the significant archaeological importance of the village. They demonstrate that there have been settlements at Little Waltham for over 5000 years. Here is a summary of the findings:-

Neolithic period - In the 1971 excavation of the southern end of the village at the Scheduled Monument Site of Ash Tree Corner (see Chelmsford Excavation Committee-Excavations at Little Waltham 1970-1971 PJ Drury), pottery and a hearth was found on the site indicating occupation during the Neolithic period. The pottery was carbon dated to 3170 BC, or in other words some 5000 years ago.

Iron Age period - The 1971 excavation also found the outline of 15 round huts and pottery in an open settlement, and a further 2 round huts in a palisaded settlement. They were dated to the Iron Age, 3rd and 2nd century BC, in other words over 2000 years ago.

An excavation in 2021 at the south end of the village found a series of pits and ditches dated to the late Iron Age and early Roman period.

Bronze Age period. A 1990s excavation at the south end of the village also found evidence of a farmstead with cropmarks extending to surrounding fields, dated to the late Bronze Age.

Roman period - A 1950s excavation found Roman pottery and evidence of timber framed buildings, part of an "extensive settlement" adjacent to the Roman road at the south of the village, dated to the 2nd century AD, i.e. just under 2000 years ago.

The 1971 excavation found field boundaries, and evidence of domestic occupation, dated to the Roman period.

Medieval period - The 1971 excavation found evidence of both early, late and post medieval settlements with croft and ditch systems, pits and field boundaries.

Norman period - Mention in the Domesday Book dated 1087.

It seems reasonable therefore to suggest there has been settlement at Little Waltham for 5000 years at least, covering all the major developmental periods in English history from the very beginnings of settled life in Britain . So significant has the archaeological value of Little Waltham become that new proposed development in the village is commonly preceded by a compulsory archaeological investigation as a condition of planning consent - see developments at Blasford Hill 2022, Foxtons 2015, the village primary school 2021 and Belsteads School in Back Lane in 2023 - and see National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

This exceptional archaeological history of 5000 years, plus an ongoing compulsory requirement of archaeological investigation of new development in the village plus a unique existing display of listed buildings in the village spanning over 500 years amounts, we would suggest, to a very significant heritage, a heritage which will be severely impacted by 50 meter pylons running so close to the village. To preserve this heritage, and in view of the unique restrictions of the narrowness of the Waltham pinch point, we ask for the line to be undergrounded as it passes Little Waltham, or an alternative route found. Ms Kemi Badenoch MP has expressed her support for these alternative options to be considered.

We would like to be involved in any additional heritage assessment for Little Waltham as requested by the Chelmsford City Council.

Cllr John Burrow

LWPC lead on Norwich/Tilbury line