Stage 2 consultation response and objection

Pinchbeck Parish Council | Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire

To National Grid Electricity Transmission plc
By email to ContactWMEL@nationalgrid.com

1 The Council objects to the proposals in their current form

Pinchbeck Parish Council maintains its objection to the proposed overhead transmission infrastructure affecting the parish. We support a reliable electricity network and the transition to cleaner energy. Our objection concerns the route, technology, concentration of infrastructure and consequences for the people, farmland and landscape of Pinchbeck. National need does not remove the need to demonstrate that avoidable local harm has been minimised.

Our formal Stage 1 objection was submitted on 6 August 2025. This response develops its substantive concerns in light of Stage 2, including the account recorded by Cllrs James Avery and Ann Savage after meeting the Fenleigh Farm family on 29 October 2026. We ask National Grid to redesign the affected section and consult on credible alternatives before fixing the alignment for its Development Consent Order application. The detailed requests below supplement our objection; they do not signify acceptance of the proposed route. [1-5, 15]

2 Responding to the revised scheme

Our principal interest is Route Section 1, South Holland: approximately 11 km of new 400 kV overhead line from Weston Marsh B to South Forty Foot Drain. Weston Marsh B is proposed through the separate Grimsby to Walpole project. Its relationship with WMEL must nevertheless be assessed together at the affected locations. [6]

We acknowledge the refinement to a northern alignment between Surfleet and Pinchbeck and the stated avoidance of a permitted 63-home development. National Grid also identifies woodland screening and fewer visual effects on homes as reasons for its choice. These are relevant improvements, but a lower number of affected properties does not establish that the impacts on the remaining households and farms are acceptable. [7]

3 The basis for considering undergrounding

We recognise the strong starting presumption for overhead lines in EN-5. However, paragraphs 2.9.14-2.9.15 and 2.9.24-2.9.26 provide for consideration of feasible alternatives, including undergrounding outside nationally designated landscapes where significant landscape or visual effects warrant it. Costs, technical feasibility and the environmental harm of underground works must be weighed alongside their benefits. [8]

We ask for that comparison to be undertaken for the affected Pinchbeck section. Our case rests on the combination of residential amenity, open Fenland views, established vegetation, recreational access, farming and cumulative infrastructure effects. We do not assume that undergrounding is automatically required or free of environmental harm.

Alternatives requested by the Council

4 Targeted undergrounding and a revised local alignment

Our preferred starting point for local redesign is a properly engineered underground alternative through the most sensitive part of the parish, including the Cuckoo Lane and River Glen area and the affected Burtey Fen holdings. National Grid should compare a continuous underground section with shorter targeted sections, identifying logical connection points and the full extent of associated works.

The comparison must show cable routes, working widths, joint bays, sealing-end compounds, any additional electrical equipment, maintenance access and restrictions on future land use. It should test trenchless watercourse crossings where suitable and explain the implications for flood defences, soils, archaeology, drainage and future repairs. Costs should distinguish construction, operation, losses, maintenance and replacement, using consistent assumptions and an appropriate appraisal period.

We recognise the engineering and operational issues described in the Strategic Options Report, including charging current, additional equipment, construction disturbance and repair times. These issues justify a location-specific design assessment; a generic whole-route cost comparison does not by itself resolve whether a limited underground section is proportionate. [9]

5 A route north of Surfleet

Maxey Grounds has proposed a route north of Surfleet. Following their meeting with the Fenleigh Farm family, Cllrs Avery and Savage have put forward for examination a route running west from a location near Surfleet crematorium, north of Surfleet. This is distinct from the selected northern option within the corridor between Surfleet and Pinchbeck. National Grid should map and assess this suggestion against the current alignment and underground options, including whether it would reduce impacts on homes and small businesses. [4, 15]

The Parish Council proposes this as an alternative for investigation, not as an endorsed alignment through another community. It must be assessed with Surfleet and other affected councils, residents and landowners. The comparison should cover homes, farms, habitats, heritage, watercourses, line length, additional angle towers, construction access and connections to Weston Marsh. The objective must be to reduce overall harm, rather than transfer it across a parish boundary.

6 Coordinated network alternatives and local refinements

The Strategic Options Report retains Option 4 as its preferred strategic solution. We ask National Grid and NESO to explain how the latest connected generation and network assumptions support that choice, and whether greater use of existing infrastructure, rationalisation of connections or coordinated onshore and offshore solutions could reduce the new infrastructure burden around Pinchbeck. We acknowledge that a subsea connection would need to fulfil the relevant network function and cannot simply replace an inland line on a like-for-like geographical basis. [9]

If an overhead section is retained, test further separation from homes and recreation routes, alternative pylon positions and designs, and spans that protect vegetation and usable fields. Publish the trade-offs, including any increased tower height or additional structures. No generic minimum distance is proposed: the required separation should follow the assessed effects at each property.

Requested outcome: a published options comparison with mapped alternatives, reasons for selection or rejection, residual effects, cost assumptions and an opportunity for affected communities to comment before the route is settled.

Homes landscape ecology and public access

7 Address the burden on the most affected households

The September 2026 Cuckoo Lane correspondence reports an indicative pylon approximately 150 yards from nearby homes and conductors passing between properties. This is a resident-reported estimate, not a verified survey measurement. We request a property-specific schedule of pylon and conductor distances, heights, maximum sag and the extent of design flexibility, together with an explanation of how each affected home has influenced route selection. [5]

National Grid explains its route choice by reference to housing, habitats, soil and heritage constraints as well as land used for horses. We acknowledge those multiple factors. Please show their relative weight and explain why further changes cannot avoid the remaining residential impacts. A count of affected properties should be accompanied by assessment of the severity and duration of effects on individual households. [10]

Provide proportionate residential visual amenity assessment and accurate winter and summer visualisations for Cuckoo Lane, Crossgate, Burtey Fen, Glenside North, Northgate and the Glen corridor. Include cumulative infrastructure and identify where views, setting or tranquillity remain materially affected after mitigation. Existing trees must not be treated as effective screening if the construction or operational design would require their removal.

8 Clarify vegetation removal and protect wildlife

Resident correspondence raises apparent loss of trees in visual material at the Cricket Bat Willows, Cuckoo Lane Spinney and the boundary adjoining Cuckoo Lane Farm. These observations require confirmation; they are not evidence that every tree shown as absent is proposed for felling. Please publish a surveyed retention and removal plan, with the reasons for each proposed loss and the clearance requirements during construction and operation. [5]

Avoid loss of established trees and hedgerows through route and construction design before relying on replacement planting. Assess birds using the river and farmland, including collision risk, nesting and seasonal movements, and the effects on habitats and connectivity. Any mitigation must specify location, delivery date, maintenance responsibility and monitoring. Replacement planting cannot immediately replace the amenity or ecological function of mature vegetation.

9 Preserve Cuckoo Lane and River Glen connections

A resident who walks or cycles to services in Surfleet reports concern about haul routes crossing Cuckoo Lane and wording referring to stopping up a River Glen footpath. Please identify the affected highway and definitive rights-of-way references, and distinguish temporary restrictions from any permanent stopping up or diversion. Confirm the position of the route described in the correspondence as part of the Macmillan Way. [5]

The Council objects to permanent loss of these connections or prolonged severance without a safe and practical equivalent. Any temporary restriction must be justified, limited in duration and accompanied by a mapped alternative available before closure. Assess additional distance, accessibility, road safety and access to buses and local services for people without cars, as well as walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

At the Cuckoo Lane crossing, provide a specific design and management arrangement that maintains safe passage wherever practicable, controls construction vehicles and preserves emergency, resident, farm and delivery access. Publish advance-notice arrangements and a rapid route for resolving access problems.

Fenleigh Farm viability and succession

10 Protect Fenleigh Farm and the next generation

The account recorded by Cllrs James Avery and Ann Savage following their meeting with the family on 29 October 2026 brings the consequences for Fenleigh Farm into sharp focus. The 324-acre holding has been farmed by the family for four generations. Its present no-till and regenerative approach represents sustained investment in soil health; Maxey Grounds records twelve years of no-till management, including four years supported through the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). [4, 15]

The immediate and medium-term concern is the proposed haul road across several fields. The family's account, as recorded by the councillors, is that the road and its effects on the fields would take approximately 30% of the holding out of production for the duration of the pylon construction programme. That is a substantial potential loss of productive capacity for a farm of this size, with consequences extending beyond the footprint of the permanent pylons. [15]

National Grid must test this estimate with the family and provide a field-by-field land-use plan distinguishing the haul-road footprint, other temporary occupation and land rendered inaccessible or impracticable to farm. It must identify the duration of each restriction and the period needed to restore productive use. The Council considers that the reported scale of disruption raises a serious threat to the viability of the whole business which cannot be answered by generic assurances about temporary works or crop-loss payments.

The six proposed pylons would add lasting constraints on field operations, machinery movements and efficient cultivation. Assess these permanent effects alongside the temporary loss of production, soil compaction, drainage disruption, reinstatement and recovery time. Any comparison of alternatives must consider the combined effect on the holding as a working business, including cash flow during construction and its ability to continue afterwards. [4, 15]

The consequences are also personal and intergenerational. Samuel, the family's grandson, is the next generation intending to take on the farm business. The proposed disruption therefore threatens not only the present occupiers' livelihood and enjoyment of their home, but his opportunity to continue farming and the continuity of a business built over four generations. The Council considers this concentration of potential harm disproportionate and a compelling reason to revisit the route and construction access design. [15]

The family anticipates reduced SFI support as land is removed from production and is concerned that compensation would not adequately reflect the short-, medium- and long-term consequences. National Grid should establish the actual implications with the family and scheme administrators, assess attributable income and payment losses, and explain the arrangements for reinstatement and recovery. The availability of compensation does not demonstrate that a viable business or its succession can be preserved. [15]

Agree independently informed baseline surveys, soil handling and weather-related working limits, and measurable recovery criteria appropriate to the existing no-till system. Monitor soil structure, drainage and productivity long enough to identify delayed effects, with funded remedial measures. Survey agricultural land quality and address cropping, irrigation, machinery clearance and access. Apply the same scrutiny to underground alternatives. Individual land rights and compensation negotiations remain matters for the affected parties and their advisers.

The Council asks National Grid to prioritise avoidance of this harm through rerouting or redesign, including the alternative north of Surfleet, and to demonstrate that the construction access strategy will not undermine Fenleigh Farm's continuing viability. Compensation must not be used as a substitute for that assessment.

Drainage and construction access

11 Demonstrate that drainage and flood resilience are protected

The parish depends on functioning drains, watercourses and managed flood infrastructure. Assess temporary haul roads, compounds, crossings, foundations and cable works against the operation and maintenance of that system, including construction during wet conditions and cumulative works by other promoters.

Provide location-specific drainage and flood-risk information agreed, as appropriate, with the relevant Internal Drainage Boards, Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority. Identify crossing structures, culvert capacities, maintenance access, flood conveyance and storage, dewatering and pollution controls. Explain the assumptions for climate change and how the design avoids increasing risk to homes or farmland.

Secure pre-work condition surveys, emergency arrangements, prompt repair obligations, post-work inspections and funded remedial measures. Temporary access works must not be left obstructing drains or degrading soil drainage after construction.

12 Match construction arrangements to local roads

The Maxey Grounds representation specifically questions the suitability of Burtey Fen for construction vehicles. We request a road-by-road assessment of width, bearing capacity, drainage structures, passing opportunities and conflict with residents, agricultural vehicles and vulnerable road users. [4]

Publish proposed vehicle types and daily and peak movements, access points, delivery hours, compound locations and programme. Agree enforceable routing and traffic controls with the highway authority, including protection of school and commuting movements, dust and noise controls, road-condition surveys and repair responsibilities. Compare alternative access arrangements against both highway safety and farm viability. Avoiding unsuitable roads must not simply transfer an unacceptable burden onto Fenleigh Farm or another holding; assess field severance, temporary land loss and recovery before selecting a haul-road route.

Cumulative effects noise and consultation

13 Complete a community focused cumulative assessment

We acknowledge Draft Environmental Statement Chapter 19 and its preliminary assessment. Paragraphs 19.5.6-19.5.8 state that the later stages of assessment of combined effects on the same receptors, and resulting additional mitigation, remain to be completed. The Council therefore seeks completion and local application of that work, rather than asserting that no cumulative assessment exists. [11]

Explain the current inclusion, exclusion and screening decisions for Grimsby to Walpole and Weston Marsh substations, Meridian Solar and associated connections, Ossian-related infrastructure, and relevant battery storage proposals near Spalding Power Station. These were identified in our Stage 1 objection; their current status, locations and likely programmes should be checked rather than assumed. Include other reasonably foreseeable developments affecting the same receptors. [1]

Assess combined and successive construction disruption, repeated access restrictions, drainage pressures, land take, noise, dust and the eventual concentration of structures. Show the effect on the same households, holdings and recreation routes across project boundaries. Provide an integrated works programme, shared constraints plan and clear responsibility for preventing conflicts and delivering mitigation. Where timing is uncertain, test credible overlap scenarios.

14 Answer the local noise and safety questions

Chapter 15, paragraph 15.1.2, states that operational overhead-line noise is excluded from that assessment following the Scoping Opinion. Please provide the supporting justification and explain its application to the nearby Cuckoo Lane and Burtey Fen homes, including Fenleigh Farm, where the family has raised noise and health concerns about the proximity of the line to their home. Scoping a topic out does not answer those local concerns. [4, 12, 15]

Provide proportionate evidence of likely sound levels in dry and wet conditions, including relevant fog conditions, against representative local background sound and at the nearest homes and gardens. Explain design measures and the procedure for investigating and resolving operational complaints. EN-5 paragraph 2.9.41 addresses assessment of overhead-line noise in dry and wet weather. [8]

Residents have also asked about electric and magnetic fields and everyday use of routes beneath conductors. Provide understandable, location-specific information demonstrating compliance with applicable exposure guidance, electrical safety requirements and phasing policy, with advice on agricultural machinery and ordinary public access. The Council does not assert that the scheme causes cancer or that underground cables eliminate magnetic fields; these are not the basis of our objection.

15 Make further engagement useful and accessible

We recognise that Stage 2 provides printed materials, information points, events and online opportunities. We welcome that wider provision. Access to documents must also be accompanied by understandable answers to the local questions in this response. [13]

Provide a Pinchbeck-specific response schedule showing the evidence considered, any design change and reasons where a request is rejected. Explain the consultation framework now being applied and how further environmental findings and material route changes will be shared. Offer an accessible local meeting, readable large-scale plans and paper responses. Give affected people a reasonable opportunity to comment on new information before the design is finalised.

Requested action and conclusion

16 Secure mitigation without treating benefits as consent

National Grid has publicised a community benefit fund. Please explain eligibility, allocation and governance for communities affected by this project and by overlapping schemes. Any benefit arrangements should be transparent, locally informed and additional to the measures needed to address the development's impacts. [14]

Community benefits or private compensation cannot substitute for avoiding harm. The Council's participation in discussions about either mitigation or benefits must not be represented as support for the current alignment. Where the project proceeds, secure necessary environmental, access and construction commitments through the appropriate consent requirements, management plans and agreements, with clear responsibility, monitoring and enforcement.

17 The Council asks National Grid to

1. Reconsider the overhead alignment affecting Pinchbeck and undertake the comparative appraisal of targeted undergrounding, local route changes and the wider north-of-Surfleet option described in sections 4-6.

2. Explain how strategic network coordination could reduce the concentration of infrastructure around the parish, and identify the evidence supporting the remaining need for this particular route and technology.

3. Provide property-specific assessments and answers for Cuckoo Lane, Crossgate and Burtey Fen, including verified distances, views, noise, safety and vegetation treatment.

4. Resolve the proposed treatment of Cuckoo Lane and the River Glen footpath, protecting safe and practical access to homes, services, farmland and recreation.

5. Provide a whole-farm viability and succession assessment for Fenleigh Farm, addressing the reported 30% production loss, six pylons, SFI implications and recovery period; redesign access and routing to avoid unacceptable harm, and secure soil, drainage and reinstatement measures.

6. Complete and publish the local cumulative-effects assessment and a coordinated construction and mitigation programme, with an opportunity to comment on material new findings.

7. Acknowledge this objection, provide a point-by-point written response and arrange a meeting with the Parish Council and affected residents and landowners before the local design is settled.

18 Conclusion

The Council remains willing to engage constructively, but objects to the proposals in their present form. Fenleigh Farm illustrates why fewer affected properties cannot alone justify a route: concentrated harm may threaten a family business and the next generation's future in farming. National Grid should demonstrate why that harm cannot reasonably be avoided through undergrounding, rerouting or coordinated redesign, including changes to construction access.

If that work cannot be completed within the current programme, we request that finalisation of the affected design is deferred and further consultation undertaken. We reserve the opportunity to supplement this response when further information becomes available and to participate in the subsequent consenting process.

Robert Smith
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Local documents supplied to the Council are identified below. References to landowner and resident statements retain their status as representations. Personal contact details and title numbers have not been reproduced.

[1] Pinchbeck Parish Council, Formal Objection to Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire Overhead Transmission Project, 6 August 2025, pp. 1-3.

[2] Clerk's covering email, Consultation Response - Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire (National Grid), 6 August 2025, supplied redacted copy.

[3] Pinchbeck Parish Council Minute Extracts Relating to National Grid, meetings of 23 June and 28 July 2025, minutes 25.106 and 25.125. These record Stage 1 arrangements, not approval of this response.

[4] Maxey Grounds & Co LLP, letter to NGET, 12 October 2026, pp. 1-3, concerning Fenleigh Farm and the affected holding.

[5] Correspondence between the Clerk and a Cuckoo Lane resident, 14 September 2026, pp. 1-3, embedded within the supplied PDF portfolio titled 261026 Stage 2 WMEL Consultation PPC Response Draft rev 0.pdf.

[6] National Grid, Our proposals, Route Section 1 South Holland.
https://www.nationalgrid.com/the-great-grid-upgrade/weston-marsh-to-east-leicestershire/proposals

[7] National Grid, In your area: Weston, Surfleet, Pinchbeck and surrounding areas, September 2026, printed pp. 4-7.
https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/597521/download

[8] DESNZ, National Policy Statement for electricity networks infrastructure EN-5, 2025, in force 6 January 2026; particularly paragraphs 2.9.14-2.9.26 and 2.9.41.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-for-electricity-networks-infrastructure-en-5-2025

[9] National Grid, Strategic Options Report Update, August 2026, update summary, section 7 and Appendix D.
https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/597556/download

[10] National Grid, Draft Environmental Statement, Chapter 3 Main Alternatives Considered, August 2026, paragraphs 3.8.9-3.8.11.
https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/596971/download

[11] National Grid, Draft Environmental Statement, Chapter 19 Cumulative Effects, August 2026, paragraphs 19.1.1 and 19.5.6-19.5.8.
https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/597451/download

[12] National Grid, Draft Environmental Statement, Chapter 15 Noise and Vibration, August 2026, paragraphs 15.1.1-15.1.2.
https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/597396/download

[13] National Grid, Have your say, and Stage 2 Consultation Strategy, September 2026.
https://www.nationalgrid.com/the-great-grid-upgrade/weston-marsh-to-east-leicestershire/have-your-say
https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/597561/download

[14] National Grid, National Grid shares updated plans for vital electricity upgrade between Weston Marsh and East Leicestershire, 8 September 2026. Available through the project website: https://www.nationalgrid.com/wmel

[15] Cllr James Avery, email to the Clerk, 29 October 2026 at 16:47, recording his and Cllr Ann Savage's meeting with the Fenleigh Farm family that morning; Cllr Savage's reply at 17:39, confirming the account and highlighting Samuel's future in farming. Supplied correspondence. The approximately 30% figure is the reported estimate and requires a field-by-field assessment.

Online sources checked 26 October 2026. Consultation deadline: 11:59 pm, Tuesday 3 November 2026. This response focuses on Pinchbeck and is not an exhaustive technical audit of the entire Draft Environmental Statement.