

DRAYCOTT AND CHURCH WILNE PARISH COUNCIL

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By email

To National Grid projects: Chesterfield to Willington Team,

Subject: Objection to the Installation of Pylons for Transmission Infrastructure

Draycott and Church Wilne Parish Council write further to our previous correspondence dated 7 August 2024 in response to Stage 1 consultation. We reiterate our continued support for the transition to renewable energy and the need for a resilient and modern transmission network. However, we wish to raise additional concerns as part of the Stage 2 consultation.

While our original objections remain unchanged, we would like to highlight a significant and material planning consideration that has emerged since our earlier response.

The area of land identified within Draycott for the proposed placement of pylons is also currently earmarked for residential development and is at a pre-planning stage. The developer has publicly indicated their intention to submit an outline planning application in April/May 2026.

Given this, the Parish Council seeks clarity on the following points:

1. In the event that planning permission is granted for the proposed housing development by Erewash Borough Council, which proposal would take precedence—the approved residential development or the National Grid infrastructure?
2. What contingency plans or alternative routing options are being considered by National Grid should the proposed development proceed and render the current pylon locations unviable?
3. How is National Grid engaging with local planning authorities and developers to ensure coordinated land use planning and to avoid conflicts between nationally significant infrastructure and local development plans?
This overlapping land use raises serious concerns regarding deliverability, long-term planning coherence, and the potential for avoidable disruption to both infrastructure delivery and housing provision.

We strongly urge National Grid to address this matter transparently within the consultation process and to clearly outline how such conflicts will be resolved. It is essential that local communities are provided with confidence that proposals are both practical and compatible with emerging local development.

In addition, we reiterate our previous position that alternative routing options and methods of transmission—particularly undergrounding or hybrid solutions—should be given more robust consideration to minimise long-term impacts on the community and environment. Our concerns include;

Severe and Irreversible Landscape Impact

The proposal to erect 50 to 70 metre pylons would place large, industrial structures in open countryside, which would permanently change the rural character of Draycott. These pylons would significantly dominate the skyline leading to a level of visual harm that is irreversible once they are built. To put this into perspective, this is higher than any other local structure including Draycott Mills.

Misrepresentation of Land Required for Underground Cable Installation

The width for excavating to underground cables has been reported by National Grid as ranging from 150 to 250 metres. This figure is misleading, as a recent DNV report indicates that a working corridor of only 30 to 50 metres is actually required, which encompasses haul roads and perimeter earth bunding.

In planning policy, there is often a default assumption in favour of overhead pylons, except in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Nevertheless, this same policy framework acknowledges that undergrounding should be explored, particularly given recent advancements in cable ploughing.

The presentation of exaggerated land requirements has the potential to distort the comparison between overhead and underground solutions. In the absence of clear, accurate, and current evidence, one cannot confidently assert that undergrounding has been adequately evaluated as a viable alternative. This situation raises important questions about the strength of the options appraisal and the extent to which the consultation provides a balanced and evidence-based assessment.

Failure to Properly Assess Alternatives

National Grid has not adequately demonstrated that it has assessed all reasonable alternatives for the proposed route. There are options available that could mitigate impact, such as routeing alongside existing transmission infrastructure, transport corridors, employing alternative alignments that avoid settlements, and utilising lower-impact technologies, including a hybrid system that incorporates undergrounding in sensitive areas. These alternatives do not appear to have been fully and transparently evaluated.

The proposed corridor between Chesterfield and Willington has increased in length to approximately 50% longer than the original straight-line option and exceeds the length of the previously rejected High Marnham–Ratcliffe route, which would have followed existing infrastructure and likely resulted in reduced landscape and economic impacts.

It appears that limited analysis and engagement with stakeholders during the Strategic Options stage has led to a predetermined route. Alternative approaches, such as underground cabling or hybrid solutions, could effectively mitigate landscape, environmental, and climate resilience risks and warrant thorough reconsideration.

Overhead transmission lines also present vulnerabilities, being more susceptible to damage from storms and potential security threats. Under the Climate Change Act 2008, the UK is legally obligated to adapt its infrastructure to address climate risks. Therefore, it remains unclear how reliance on overhead transmission alone aligns with these legal obligations.

Summary

This proposal will have a serious and lasting impact on local communities, wildlife, historic areas, and the countryside along the route. The effects are not small or temporary. Once infrastructure of this scale is established, the character of these areas will change permanently.

There is a concern that not all reasonable options have been properly explored. Alternatives like undergrounding, using a less harmful route, or utilising land already identified for major infrastructure do not appear to have been adequately assessed. This lack of exploration makes it difficult to trust that this is the right approach.

Additionally, there seem to be gaps in the information provided. The council are not convinced that local people's concerns have been taken into account. The burden of this project seems to fall heavily on those communities directly affected, while the wider benefits are felt elsewhere.

Overall, the proposal does not demonstrate that impacts have been properly minimised, that alternatives have been fairly considered, or that the overall level of harm is justified. For these reasons, the council object to the proposal as it currently stands and do not believe it should proceed in its present form.

We trust that these concerns will be fully considered and addressed as part of the ongoing consultation and look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Sheena Butcher', written over a horizontal line.

Sheena Butcher
Clerk to the Parish Council