

The Planning Inspectorate
National Infrastructure Planning
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

Our ref: Sunnica Energy Farm
Contact: Julie Barrow

By email:
Sunnica@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

13 July 2022

Dear Mr Kean,

EN010106 – Sunnica Energy Farm – Procedural Deadline A

West Suffolk Council Unique Reference Number 20031311

This is the response of West Suffolk Council to the matters outlined in the Examining Authority's letter of 28 June 2002 as being required by Procedural Deadline A.

Written Submissions on the Examination Procedure (including whether changes need to be made to the draft Examination Timetable)

West Suffolk Council has no objection to the use of virtual methods for future Examination hearings.

West Suffolk Council submitted a joint response with the three other host authorities to the Examining Authority's letter of 4 May 2022 inviting comments on the timing of the Preliminary Hearing. In that response the Councils highlighted their concerns in respect of the holding of the Preliminary Meeting in the week commencing 18 July, at the start of the summer holiday season.

A further request was made by West Suffolk Council to the Casework Team on 21 June 2022 asking that its governance timetable was taken into account in respect of the Draft Examination Timetable.

It is of some concern to West Suffolk Council that Deadline 1 and Deadline 2 are set at 17 August 2022 and 30 August 2022, with the Local Impact Report due on 17 August and the Written Representation due on 30 August. Given that both deadlines are at the height of the summer holiday season and that the Council's Cabinet is unable to meet in August, West Suffolk Council request that consideration is given to extending these deadlines into September 2022.

West Suffolk Council agrees with the Examining Authority's Initial Assessment of Principal Issues as set out at Annex C.

At present West Suffolk Council considers that the following issues would benefit from fuller consideration at Issue Specific Hearings:

- Landscape and visual amenity (including heritage)
- Ecology and nature conservation
- Battery storage and safety
- Soil quality/best and most versatile agricultural land and impacts on agriculture and farming operations
- Highways impacts (including ProW)

Requests to be heard orally at the Preliminary Meeting

West Suffolk Council will be represented in person at the Preliminary Meeting and may wish to speak to Agenda Items 2, 3, 4 and 6. Brief comments on Items 3 and 4 are set out in this response.

Item 3 – Assessment of Principal Issues

The Council has had regard to the ExA's Initial Assessment of Principal Issues and generally concurs with the issues listed in Annex C.

The Council is currently undertaking its Preferred Options Local Plan Consultation (regulation 18) and while the plan is not yet at the final submission (regulation 19 stage) (planned for mid-2024), the preferred options establish the District's direction of travel in respect of strategic and local policy guidance and site allocations. It is considered that this should be taken into account under Issue 28 (Environmental Statement – general matters).

The Council suggests that landscape and visual effects are included as an issue where appropriate in any of the SoCGs requested in Annex F.

Item 4 – Draft Examination Timetable

See above.

Requests to be heard at notified Issue Specific Hearing

West Suffolk Council will be represented in person at the Issue Specific Hearing on the draft Development Consent Order and requests to be heard at the Hearing.

Requests to be heard at notified Open Floor Hearings

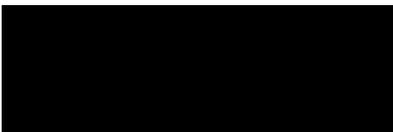
West Suffolk Council will be represented in person at Open Floor Hearing 1 and Open Floor Hearing 2 but does not expect to speak to the Hearings.

Suggested locations for site inspections

The following locations have been identified for site inspections. They have been chosen by virtue of the specific characteristics of the location and in some cases how far-reaching views of the scheme will be:

- The Ark – Long distance views from this location across Sunnica East B – a good vantage point
- The pub at West Row/ River Lark footpath- views towards the proposals at Sunnica East A including towards the BESS and substation at E33
- Badlingham Lane, the whole length - an important landscape, recreation, and ecological feature and considered locally to be historically significant;
- Lee Brook (possibly from Beck Road) – Part of the green and blue infrastructure in the landscape that will become illegible if panels are set too close
- Ferry Lane including the raised junction SE of E10- Views to the north including to the BESS and substation at E33
- Elms Road at E18 – views to BESS and substation at E18
- Golf links Road at E32 and north west of E30 – wide ranging views across the open landscape towards chalk hill
- PRow at ECO2 – Existing footpath where the change in land use from arable land to chalk grassland might encourage more informal use of land to be managed for stone curlew without mitigation measures
- River Kennet at E22 - an important recreational route from Red Lodge. Access along the River Kennet is promoted as part of the strategy to avoid recreational effects on Red Lodge Heath SSSI and Breckland SPA
- The Limekilns – View across Sunnica West B which will persist into the long term
- Worlington Road coming from the south (mitigation towards U road/west) – views across the panels towards the U6006 footpath and vice versa
- Junctions in Freckenham – trees within the road junctions that contribute to the amenity of the village and potentially threatened by road schemes.

Yours sincerely



Julie Baird,
Director, Planning & Growth