

Written Representation to the ExA – Deadline 2 Submitted 8/11/2022

From Mike Stone [REDACTED]

I have lived in Freckenham for 40 years and object to the Sunnica proposals, the subject of the forthcoming hearings, on the grounds detailed below. I urge the Inspector to refuse the application.

Size, scale and location. A power plant equivalent to 1,400 football pitches on 2,500 acres of farmland is unacceptable, and disproportionate. The landscape will be blighted by 1,000,000 2.5 meter high panels, 30 miles of security fencing, over 100 acres of concrete, and 77 acres of battery compounds, which will dominate the visual amenity for miles around. As well as 3 large sub-stations located near to Isleham/West Row, Chippenham/Snailwell and Red Lodge/Freckenham. These will be significant industrial structures which should not be built in a rural location.

Loss of 2,500 acres of high yielding vegetable and cereal producing land will become an industrial wasteland and cannot be returned to its former use. Britain has less farmland in use than at any time since 1945 and is only 64% self-sufficient. It will increase dependency on imports and carbon miles on food transport. The scheme will be located entirely on greenfield land, and with the current ongoing war in Ukraine it is essential that Britain increases food production and security, rather than reducing capacity.

Destruction of wildlife habitats and disturbance of archaeological treasure with a detrimental impact for hundreds of species and 92 designated heritage assets inside or within 1km of the proposed site.

Negative effect on village settings and impact on health and mental wellbeing. Two years' intense construction, with resultant air pollution will be detrimental, especially to those with respiratory conditions. The transfer of over 1000 staff in vehicles plus 160 HGV vehicle movements per day, will over burden the highway network, create unsafe and congested country roads. The noise, glint and glare and concerns over technology believed to be dangerous, will impact on residents who will find themselves in a noisy, congested, polluted industrial landscape. These batteries are a fire risk with subsequent omission of toxic fumes, and a risk of lightning strikes, accidental damage, leaks and contamination, malfunctioning equipment and explosions and will give rise to mental health issues. If approved the lithium-ion BESS storage compounds would be amongst the biggest in the world, and there have already been a number of serious fire incidents at such compounds recorded in the past few years. The scheme would have a negative impact on the value of all properties in the affected area forever.

Traffic Chaos - throughout construction contractors will bring in HGVs, including abnormal loads and 1,260 staff will be accessing the sites 6 days a week 7am to 7pm

Concerns over the decommissioning of the panels. The hazardous materials are not easy to recycle and can contaminate drinking water. Whilst not an immediate issue it will affect our children and grandchildren, and will potentially leave a toxic wasteland which will transform the landscape forever.

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Loss of existing footpaths & byways forever - green routes will become corridors between rows of panels and gigantic battery compounds and no one will choose to walk through an industrial landscape, or graze sheep here.

Poor Screening and inadequate buffer zones - planting native hedging will take years to grow to obscure the panels and longer to screen the battery storage units, both of which would be particularly alien to the existing farming and countryside landscape. The setbacks/buffer zones from roads, paths, and properties are totally inadequate, and will not mitigate the impact of this industrial power plant on our local communities.

Sunnica has no experience building to this scale or experience in battery storage. If it became bankrupt during the project, or due to technology changes became uneconomic, who will be responsible for the failure and decommissioning costs? A fully funded decommissioning bond must be funded at the start of any planned development, not just in the later years of the scheme, and there must be a guarantee that the burden of decommissioning would not fall on the local authorities.

Will hinder pursuit of Carbon Zero by 2050 importing panels and batteries from China will create a huge carbon footprint. The scheme is unlikely to be carbon neutral over its lifetime.

The threat of compulsory purchase of land in order to lay cables, to gain or improve access to sites where the solar farm is to be built is iniquitous and should not be allowed to proceed. It is totally wrong to force through these unpopular proposals, which will ruin the landscape and cause huge distress, disruption and legal costs to those affected by compulsory acquisition to ensure that this unwanted scheme can be built, maintained and operated.

I fully support renewable energy plans to meet the UKs target to be carbon neutral by 2050. Sustainable renewables - but not at the expense of food security and the local environment. In the UK there are over 250,000 hectares of unused south facing commercial roof spaces, plus millions of domestic rooftops which could be used to meet Net Zero targets, rather than using highly productive irrigated farmland surrounding 9 rural communities, where there is also a risk of the loss of potential archaeological sites of national significance. Personally the plans will impact on my wellbeing and life in this area. I have chosen to live in Freckenham for so many years because of the close knit community of local villages connected by productive farmland. The effect of Sunnica will be to industrialise my countryside, destroy Public Rights of Way, impact my quiet enjoyment of the location due to the construction issues of noise, traffic, HGV movements, and will destroy and disturb our wonderful wildlife habitats and displace many species. The totally random layout of the sites will surround my local rural villages and enclose the vast open spaces which are a valued feature of this area. Meeting the UKs goals to combat global warming and protect the planet should not be used to justify commercial gain by permitting the wrong development in the wrong location. The production of sustainable, renewable energy should not be an excuse to decimate local communities and rural landscapes. The scale of this scheme is so large that even with mitigation proposals the residual impacts are too great, and I strongly urge the Inspector to refuse these plans which are totally inappropriate and would stretch for 15 miles from one end to the other and affect 16 parishes and towns along its path.