

Written Submission for D2 on Sunnica NIP Examination

Liam and Clare MacGillivray



Dear Mr Kean,

We are opposed to the Sunnica Project for the following reasons:

1. The scale and size of the project would fundamentally change the rural nature of this area. We work as equine veterinary surgeons around this area, and have chosen to live and raise our family in a rural village. The National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC) Design Group principles talk about "providing a strong sense of identity". Thousands of acres of solar panels will totally destroy the landscape character, visual beauty and sense of place: completely contrary to these principles.
2. This is exacerbated by the widespread nature of this project. Every village in our rural community will be blighted by this project, indeed the project seems almost designed to encompass as much of our area as possible. I go to work in Newmarket (via Chippenham-Snailwell), our children go through Isleham to school (in Ely, our local town), we walk in our own village of Freckenham and do Park Run in Mildenhall (via Worlington). In every direction we will pass through an industrial estate of solar panels. This would detrimentally affect every aspect of our daily lives.
3. From a professional aspect, two of my clients (both in Badlingham), one of whom I visit on a daily basis in the breeding season (Brookside Stud), will be quite literally surrounded by Sunnica panels.
4. The disruption to our daily work will be adversely affected by the installation and maintenance of this scheme, indeed we will be subject to traffic chaos for years.
5. The NIC Design Group states that the range of views of communities must be taken into account. There is almost universal opposition to this project within the local communities, with village surveys in Freckenham and Chippenham showing over 90% opposition to the scheme. This has been reflected by our democratic representatives, with all Parish, District and County councils opposing Sunnica. Both local MPs also oppose the scheme. There is no democratic mandate for Sunnica.
6. House prices will be negatively affected. (For most people their house is their single greatest asset).
7. The NIC Design Group also states that projects should deliver a net biodiversity gain. Turning thousands of acres of countryside into industrial estate will be completely contrary to this aim, with massive loss of wildlife habitat. The wooded and open countryside around Freckenham is home to a large number of species, including raptors (sparrowhawks, kestrels, buzzards, kites and owls), passerine birds, seasonal wildfowl, roe and muntjac deer, badgers and fox. Turning nearly 3000 acres of land into industrial estate will hugely degrade wildlife habitat.
8. On a personal level the village of Freckenham only has two footpaths into the countryside. One of these footpaths, from Mortimer Lane along Lee Brook to Beck Road, will be halved in size by Solar Array E07, and completely ruined. This is a walk that is used daily by large numbers of

the villagers for exercise and dog walking. It would be an appalling loss to the people of Freckenham.

9. Given the size of the proposed panels and battery units, it is inconceivable that any reasonable shielding or mitigation can be used to screen the project.
10. The siting of solar panels on good agricultural land is short-sighted and wasteful. Part of the battle against climate change involves reducing food miles and eating locally. By taking land out of production, a project like this is merely creating another problem and is a cynical and shallow attempt to make a quick profit, without actually solving the climate crisis. The area has highly successful arable, pig and equine farms.
11. Currently there are no government guidelines on the size of solar farms; this has been recognised in Westminster, and Hansard records debates on solar farms in March, April and June this year. Yet until sensible legislation is introduced we effectively have a wild-west situation, where private companies can exploit a “green” or “low-carbon” front to make money. Has the Examining Authority any scientific evidence that this project is actually carbon reducing? Given this wild-west situation, it is all the more important that the Examining Authority adequately safeguards the people of our communities against the very real concerns listed above. This is doubly important as there are long-term concerns about the decommissioning stage of the project.

We implore the Examining Authority not to allow this project to proceed.

Yours sincerely,

Liam and Clare MacGillivray