

I am a supporter of green energy, however I am vehemently opposed to Sunnica's Solar Power Plant and Battery Storage Systems (BESS) scheme.

Size of the scheme.

This scheme is categorically too big for the landscape within which it is proposed. 2500 acres of highly productive agricultural land would be permanently lost under millions of solar panels, 76.8 acres of Battery Energy Storage Systems and three extremely large and tall (up to 10m high) 400kV electrical substations.

This scheme would be the largest in Europe (500MW) and would surround nine villages and the historic town of Newmarket, famous for its horse racing industry, (collective population of 40,000). All of the villages and the horse training areas of Newmarket will have clear views of the solar panels and the sub-station/BESS compounds.

It is totally unacceptable to industrialise this landscape with an ill-thought out, hotch-potch energy trading solar scheme. We currently import 40% of our food, losing swathes of agricultural land to solar schemes, compounded by housing developments, will without doubt drive the UK to be reliant on importing even more.

The cumulative impact also needs to be seriously considered as there are already many existing Solar/BESS sites within a five-mile radius from centre point of this proposed scheme. As of September 2021, this totalled 1,601 acres, Sunnica's would add another 2500 acres.

Land & Landscape.

Sunnica claim this land is of poor quality simply because it is not grade 1 or 2. What they fail to understand is that the millions of tons of root vegetables that are currently grown on this land will not grow in grades 1 & 2 soil. Sunnica and the landowners will not allow professionals on to this land to undertake independent soil analysis to ascertain its current true grade.

This highly valued mostly level landscape has remained unchanged for many years, this scheme would decimate both the views and access to the countryside that are enjoyed by the residents, visitors and tourists. This historic landscape would be lost forever and the disruption to and loss of wildlife, fauna and flora would be catastrophic.

Sunnica say they will "mitigate the views" by hedge and tree planting. A view cannot be mitigated, only lost. They have stated that the planting will take 15 years of growth to screen the panels, in the areas they choose to plant, so for 15 years the views that I moved my family here to enjoy will be replaced with views of solar panels and then ultimately blocked by hedges and trees, therefore compounding the loss of landscape. We moved here to enjoy the vista of the open landscape and to utilise the access to countryside, however this will be totally taken away from us should this scheme be approved.

In my case, (as with many others affected by this scheme) the landscape will be transformed into an industrial one for the rest of my life. I will be dead by the time Sunnica claim the land will be returned to farming (in 40 years). Since this scheme was first announced I have found the whole process extremely stressful to the point where I have already considered selling my family home and moving us to another area, however like many others I have decided to stay and fight against this application for the benefit of my children and future generations. I will not let the arrogance of Sunnica drive my family from our home. I wish to make it perfectly clear; I will attempt to sell and move if the scheme were approved.

Sunnica have made claims of enhanced biodiversity gains and mitigation enhancement, however they have failed to provide any evidence of this dubious claim.

If 2500 acres of prime farmland is covered in glass, steel, concrete, batteries and electrical sub-stations, it will turn the land beneath into a desert landscape, impossible to return to farming in 40 years' time. Sunnica claim it will all be able to be returned to productive farming at the end of the predicted lifespan of this scheme. Soil structures and nutrients in the ground will be damaged by construction and decommissioning traffic compacting the soil and by the lack of agricultural use of the land respectively.

I further doubt this scheme will last 40 years, as new more efficient technologies already being developed will make solar generation even more uneconomical than it currently is.

Alternative sites.

Sunnica have failed to demonstrate that they have looked at alternative sites or locations. There is no evidence of them even considering brownfield sites.

Consultation.

Sunnica have still failed to provide details of the BESS's and panels to be used, deliberately withholding information for nearly three years. I have attended many of the non-statutory, statutory and on-line Webinars, none of these whatsoever have been satisfactory in providing enough detailed information to enable me to fully understand the scheme. I feel Sunnica have been deliberately guarded with the amount of information they have provided and the documents they have released are virtually impossible for a 'lay-man' to follow as pertinent information is spread across several documents disguised by constant cross-referencing and/or appendices.

I joined the webinars, these were hosted by Sunnica's representatives, Newgate Communications, the process involved Sunnica and its team presenting the scheme, however it was only possible to email in questions, there was no opportunity for two-way discussion. They attempted to answer questions at the end of the sessions, many were inadequately answered and in my personal experience, answered by either referring me back to the online documents that I had asked my questions about or failing to respond at all.

Many people across the numerous parishes are elderly and have not been able to attend the so called 'Consultations', held in a handful of selected locations, due to the lack of public transport. Sunnica did not even hold one in Worlington. The webinars further restricted access to being consulted as again a great deal of people did not have access to the technology to join the 'virtual' events.

Events and meetings were held by the Say no to Sunnica action group, Matt Hancock MP and Lucy Frazer MP, to which Sunnica were invited, however they did not attend any of them.

BESS and Sub-stations.

There are undeniable risks associated with battery energy storage systems regarding the danger of failure and catching fire. BESS's of this size have never before been approved close to populated areas. Sunnica propose three massive BESS's/Sub-stations to be located in very close proximity to populated areas, including schools. This would not be an issue if these battery storage systems were completely safe, however they are notorious for catching fire, exploding and releasing toxic fumes. There have been 50 reported BESS failures and fires in the past five years, the majority of which have been within the first few months and/or years of operation. Some resulting in life changing injuries for firefighters.

Please follow the link below for full details.

[\[Redacted Link\]](#)

Sunnica have repeatedly refused to state that the BESS's are safe.

Sunnica propose that 'lagoons' will be constructed to store water for fire suppression; however, no provision has been made to prevent contaminated water draining into the aquifer. Drinking water for Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex and London is sourced from this aquifer. Water course pollution will also cause harm to wildlife.

Current safety legislation regarding BESS's are insufficient for such large-scale installations, posing a risk to residents from toxic fumes that are released in the event of a fire.

This is not a green scheme, the millions of panels are incapable of fully utilising (charging) the massive BESS's, this scheme is purely about energy trading, buying and storing at low rate and selling back at peak rate. Sunnica call this is "balancing the grid".

Local impact.

This proposed scheme will affect 40,000 residents locally but there will be no community benefits derived from it. Sunnica have stated that only 27 jobs will be created to operate the scheme once constructed.

The local population will be forced to endure increased levels traffic and disruption during the two to three years of construction, presenting safety issues for residents. Most of the

already busy affected villages have narrow streets & lanes, limited pavements and no pedestrian crossing points.

Sunnica's Traffic Management Plan predicts 1682 staff vehicle journeys and 202 HGV journeys daily, for six days a week. Worlington only has three roads that allow all road users to pass through the village, they converge and the narrow junction adjacent to the Walnut Tree public house. The roads are Newmarket Road, The Street (B1102) and Mildenhall Road (B1102).

This junction is already extremely busy especially during the rush hour periods, with traffic using this junction as a 'rat-run' to bypass Fiveways roundabout on the A11, in particular a lot of Military personnel accessing RAF Mildenhall in addition to the local residents from Worlington and neighbouring villages, use these roads.

Sunnica propose that all of the construction traffic including HGV's, will navigate this junction to access Sunnica East Site A. Large vehicles turning left out of Newmarket Road into The Street have to use both lanes of the road and overhang the pavement to navigate this junction.

Additionally, Sunnica plan to install traffic lights at one East Site B access along the main route in to Worlington from the A11 (Newmarket Road) and use Newmarket Road and Golf Links Road as further routes to another Sunnica East site B access point.

This will, without doubt, cause a major increase in traffic numbers, subsequent delays and inconvenience. As a local independent tradesperson working in Worlington and the surrounding villages any travelling delays will impact my ability to earn a living. There are no alternative routes.

There is an unknown effect on buried archaeology, many important historical finds have been made in this area.

This scheme not viable without unwelcome Compulsory Purchases & leases.

There will be noise and dust pollution both during construction and sound disturbance from the electrical equipment during the 40-year lifespan.

The personal impact on my family will be horrendous, we currently enjoy access to the open countryside and direct links (footpaths, lanes & droves) to the neighbouring villages. Like other villagers, we use these on a regular basis, making the most of this rural setting and the pleasures of uninterrupted views of this historic landscape. There is an abundance of wildlife to be enjoyed too, including many Stone Curlew that nest within the Sunnica scheme boundary.

During the Covid pandemic Worlington drew many visitors in from areas such as Bury St Edmunds. These new visitors were drawn here by the many accessible walks, cycling routes, and abundant natural landscape that can be enjoyed. This continues post Covid but people will not be drawn to an industrial landscape.

This scheme would totally transform the landscape and sever the village communities permanently by transforming road and PROWs currently used. Some PROW will be re-routed permanently adding to the loss of amenity and our access to the countryside.

To reiterate, I will attempt to sell my house and move my family from this area if this scheme were to be given planning permission.

There needs to be a 'impact/cost' verses 'benefit' investigation and subsequent Government Policy regarding the change of use of farmland from food production to electricity generation.

Denis Field & family

Residents of Worlington

Unique ref: [REDACTED]