

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

The British Horse Society

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The
British
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Society

Bringing Horses and People Together

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11th November 2022

**Sunnica Energy Farm
Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010106**

I am writing on behalf of the British Horse Society (BHS) a membership charity with over **119,000** members representing the UK's **3 million** regular riders and carriage drivers, in response to the current consultation on Sunnica Energy Farm. The BHS is the largest and most influential equestrian charity in the country, working to improve the lives of horses and their owners through its four core foundations of education, welfare, safety and access.

BHS RESPONSE TO SUNNICA ENERGY FARM CONSULTATION

Comments for the proposals:

The British Horse Society believes that the proposals for the East Sites A and B and West Sites A and B will create a huge loss of amenity value to the Public Rights of Way, affected by these plans this loss of amenity must be mitigated by Sunnica Energy Farm by creating other equestrian routes.

The scheme provides an opportunity to create new paths for cyclists, walkers and equestrians and links between the communities that are short of paths and links at present, these new routes should be permanent public rights of way and not just permissive routes that will disappear when the site is decommissioned.

Closures without alternative routes should be avoided and, if necessary, construction traffic managed to reduce the length of closures, rather than an automatic blanket closure.

The BHS note that the following Public Rights of Way (PROW) legally utilised by equestrians will be either directly, or indirectly affected by the development includes inter alia:

Burwell Byway 15

Burwell Byway 16

Burwell Byway 4

Snailwell Bridlepath 5

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Redlodge Bridlepath 005

Freckenham Bridlepath 002X

Freckenham Bridlepath 001

Freckenham Restricted Byway 002

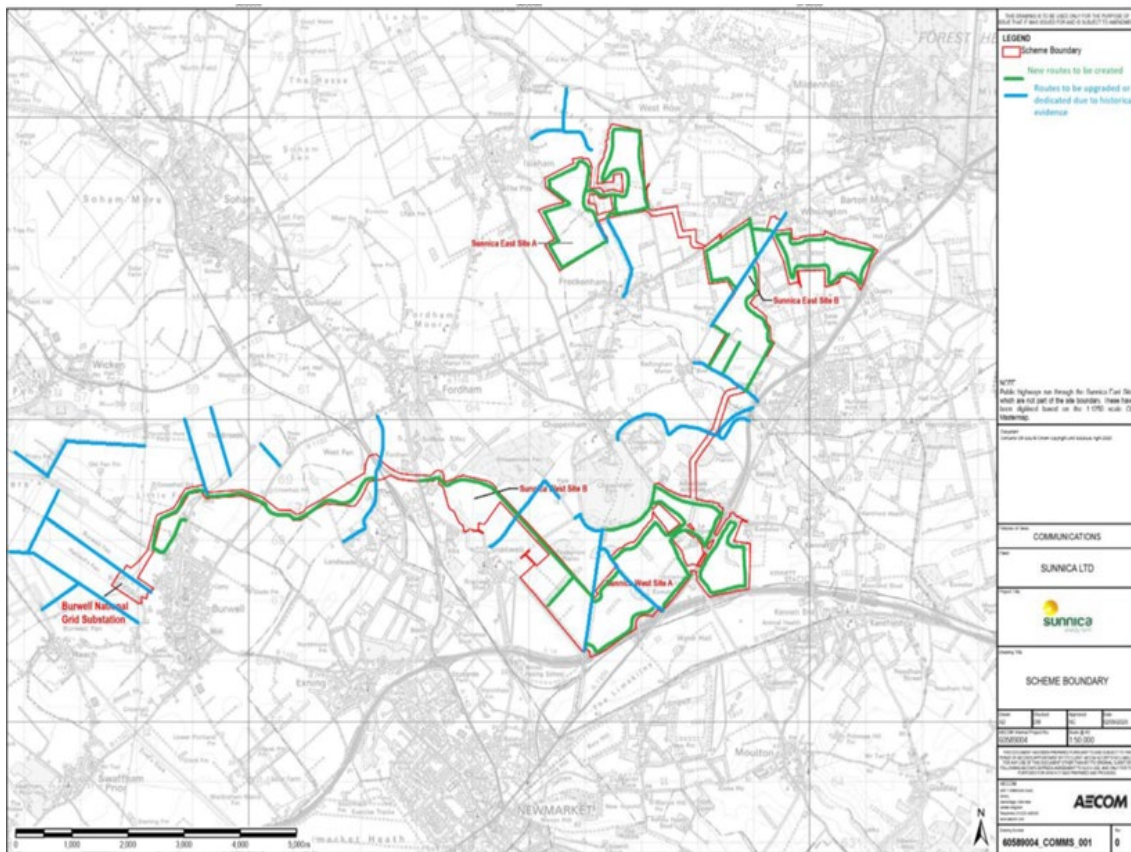
Green Lane, Freckenham USRN 14601287

It is essential that protection and mitigation is put in place for all PROW:

- 1 directly affected by the development, during the construction phase, and to ensure adequate reinstatement post construction
- 2 indirectly affected by the development, to ensure that equestrians can still use the routes safely with construction works going on in close proximity

The BHS website provides good guidance on Solar Farms on the website : Advice Leaflets which can be found here [\[redacted\]](#) Changes to Bridleways.

The BHS believes historical evidence indicates several routes within and surrounding the site are either unrecorded or under recorded as footpaths and that no rights of way enhancement opportunities have been proposed within the application. These routes can be reasonably alleged to subsist at a minimum of bridleway status. These public rights should be asserted and not be allowed to be subsumed within this development or anything beyond it. The BHS wishes to ensure that any planning permission which may be granted protects the rights of equestrians. Other routes are still be investigated. All these routes are shown blue on the following map:



Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs)

Applications have already been submitted to Cambridgeshire County Council for some of the routes that border or cross the site to be recorded as bridleways.

M148-LH

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Summary of Evidence

Definitive Map Modification Order Application

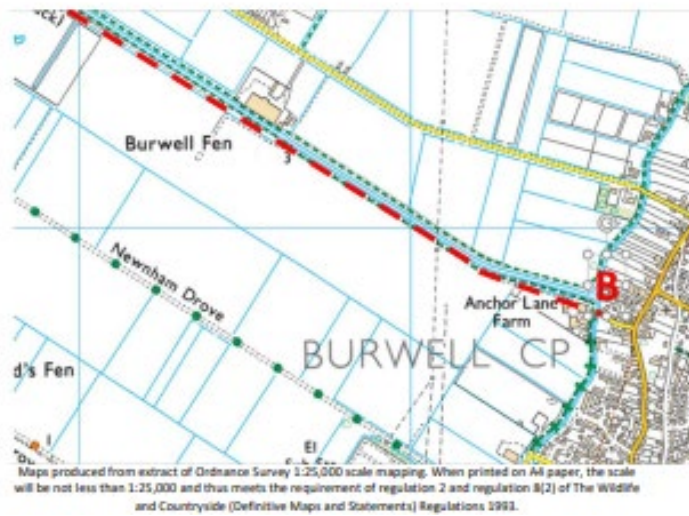
Parish: Chippenham **Grid Reference:** TL650700

Map of Path: Route applied for is shown in RED DASHES starting at Park Farm, Snailwell Road, Chippenham goes north west along Chippenham footpath 2 before turning north east and ends on the B1085, Chippenham Road, Chippenham. The route is shown as a footpath on OS Maps and the online Definitive Map. The application is for a bridleway.



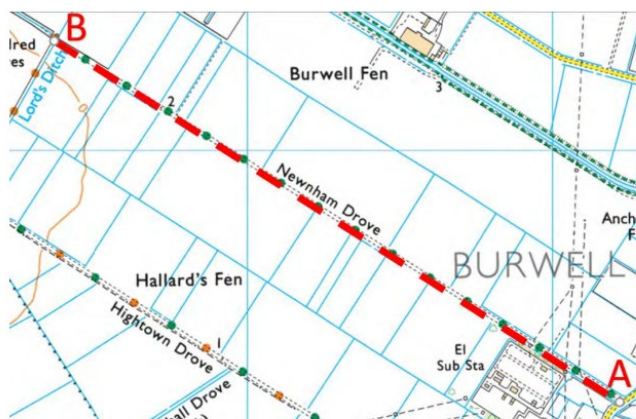
M200-LH

BHS DMIMO REF CAM 0255



M 196-LH

For a route in the Parish of Burwell to be shown as a Public Bridleway marked on the map below by the red dashed line A-B



Map produced from extract of Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale mapping. When printed on A4 paper, the scale will be not less than 1:25,000 and thus meets the requirement of regulation 2 and regulation 8(2) of The Wildlife and Countryside (Definitive Maps and Statements) Regulations 1993.

24th March 2022

The BHS considers the evidence provided in support of our applications to be strong and fully expects, after the Council has completed its necessary due diligence, that these routes will be added to the definitive map.

It is likely that the Definitive Map team's deliberations and research will take many months and these applications may not be determined before a decision is taken on this proposal.

Notwithstanding the need for such review to be undertaken, it is our position that these routes are currently legal bridleways but are not correctly recorded and that the public's rights should be asserted in considering this planning application.

Accordingly, we consider that it should be a requirement of any permission that may be granted that these routes and any other existing bridleways / restricted byways / byways are protected, with no obstruction, adequate width available and the scope for appropriate safety measures to be put in place when the routes are correctly recorded.

Consideration should be made not to fence users into too narrow a corridor, particularly for a length more than a few metres. A minimum width of 4m is required (preferably 5m), irrespective of any recorded width of the right of way, with vegetation cut through the full width Fencing (see BHS guidance on Solar Farms at [REDACTED]). Solar panels and buildings should avoid the lines of these routes and any change to the surface of equestrian routes should be carried out with materials suitable for horses (see BHS guidance on Surfaces [REDACTED]).

All the arrangements submitted within the planning application regarding the impacts on the PROW and safety measures should be reviewed to ensure that they are compliant with legislation for the paths being used by equestrians and their riders. Importantly, arrangements should be made to ensure that the paths can be properly maintained to bridleway standard during the life of the solar farm. The BHS would be very pleased to provide the applicant with further information if required.

Where bridleways cross any construction and maintenance access routes, construction appropriate warning signs should be sited along the access routes to warn of the possibility of horse riders crossing. This would not be necessary until such time as the bridleways were added to the definitive map but should be erected as soon as that order has been made and accordingly this should be a requirement of any planning permission.

Should the routes cross the security fence, then the fence should not cause an obstruction to the public right of way when recorded. However, the applicant should be aware that any fence across these lines may at a future date need to be removed.

If the noise to be generated from any of the equipment is likely to be within the audible range of horses, sound insulation will be needed to ensure that it is acceptable to horses, not only those that use the bridleway or lane but also for those kept within proximity of the site. Again, the Society would be happy to be consulted on this matter. As mentioned above, the applicant can find advice leaflets on equestrian requirements for Solar Farms on the British Horse Society website at : [REDACTED] under Recommendations for Standards and Specifications.

If the construction of the solar farm is not completed before the bridleway routes are added to the definitive map then it will be appropriate to put in place measures to ensure the safety of these routes whilst construction is ongoing.

Network connectivity

There is a thriving equestrian community in the area which needs safe off road access. Any improvement in the recorded network will be of great benefit. A good bridleway network has a significant impact on the rural economy in terms of diversification opportunities for farmers and landowners to provide livery facilities plus creation of rural employment such as farriers, trainers, feed merchants, hay producers, vets, tack shops, saddlers – the equestrian industry (excluding the racing industry) in Cambridgeshire contributes over £100 million p.a. to the rural economy. We would stress again that these bridleways may reasonably be alleged to exist but are merely unrecorded or under-recorded.

It is noted within the Design and Access Statement section 5.3 Permissive Paths that 3 permissive routes will be created. It is unclear from the documentation:

- 1 Where exactly these routes will run to and from. The maps referenced do not clearly show the specified routes
- 2 It is essential that equestrians (including carriage drivers) are provided for within the scheme.
- 3 Every opportunity should be taken to enhance the PROW for the maximum number of users in accordance with the Cambridgeshire ROWIP

Summary

Any consent given for this application should protect the unrecorded or under-recorded bridleways alongside and across the site. The BHS requests conditions to the permission to that effect and address width and surface construction, obstruction and traffic management as set out above.

Equestrianism is a popular activity in this part of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, and one which contributes significantly to the local economy. The equestrian community in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire currently has many difficulties in finding safe access within the area, as identified in county policies. Many of these issues could be addressed and resolved through good planning of future routes. We hope therefore that Sunnica Energy Farm will support this and local equestrians affected by the proposals.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss any aspect of this response further, please do not hesitate to contact me. We also ask that should this development be permitted, the British Horse Society be included as a Stakeholder in respect of equestrian access.

Yours faithfully

Teresa Hudson

Access Field Officer – East Region

