

Written Representation from Peter Maxwell Interested Party Reference No. 20031342

As a long-standing resident of Chippenham – 25 years – I am concerned about the proposed Sunnica Solar and Battery Industrial Plant which will place our charming, rural village in the centre of an huge industrial plant.

Whilst Sunnica claim that this development is temporary - 40 years – for most of us that is at least half a life time, if not more, with a vague, unsubstantiated claim that it will be decommissioned after its useful life has ended.

The industrial nature of this project will not only impact on those living in Chippenham, but it will adversely affect the 14 villages, and towns that it will surround. Not only will it affect all local residents, but it will seriously negatively harm people's livelihoods within agriculture and within the equine world, where Newmarket is the global headquarters of horseracing.

Agriculture

The land grab by Sunnica will amount to circa 2800 acres. Anyone involved in farming locally will tell you that the land Sunnica propose to carpet with solar panels and batteries is deemed to be “best and most versatile” (BMV). It is noticeable that Sunnica, together with the landowners, have resolutely refused to allow any independent assessment of the soil. Given Sunnica's reticence to consult openly and widely with the local community, the only assumption must be is that they have something to hide. It would be appropriate if the ExA were to require an independent soil analysis to be completed.

Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly the case that all the acreage currently used is profitable and productive farming land from which farmers for centuries using crop rotation have provided us with food for our tables. Given the exigencies of the importance for the UK to be more and more food sufficient, it would be plain wrong to cover this valuable resource with acres of solar panels and batteries.

Horse Racing

Newmarket is recognised as the preeminent centre for horse racing worldwide. It commands the attention of owners, trainers, breeders globally, and one only has to attend the auction sales at Tattersalls, for example, to see the international flavour and money that makes Newmarket so important. Within the scope of the Sunnica plan, they intend to place not only solar panels but also a battery/substation in fully view of the historic and popular training gallops - The Limekilns - in Newmarket, where the view extends right across to Ely Cathedral. This will be a significant detrimental effect on the horseracing business. The inspectors will be aware that earlier infrastructural development in Newmarket have taken full cognisance of the importance of the equine business, so that the railway line runs underground through Newmarket, and much of the A11/A14 has been built below Newmarket.

Solar Panels

The solar panels proposed are 2.5 metres in height, but what Sunnica seem to avoid admitting is that the panels themselves will be on top of metal supports which will likely raise their overall height to at least 3.5 – 4.0 metres. This is huge and will take years to camouflage with trees and vegetation, notwithstanding the sites will, in any event, be surrounded by concentration camp style barbed wire security fencing.

Solar panels are about as inefficient as one can get in generating electricity. Solar barely generates any electricity in winter when it is most needed. In any event output is massively irregular, and average output over a twelve month period is a pathetically low circa 8-10% of total capacity.

Batteries

With some 77 acres of batteries, with associated electricity sub stations there is a potential disaster waiting to happen. Despite Sunnca's platitudes, it is clear from Suffolk Fire and Rescue that they have serious concerns. When Lithium Ion Battery (LIB) fires occur they are almost impossible to extinguish, and the batteries need to be submerged in water for several days, and the remaining water is then highly toxic, so cannot be easily be got rid of. When the Tesla Battery station caught fire in Australia, they had to evacuate a seven square

kilometres area. If that were to happen here, four schools of primary aged children in Red Lodge, Isleham, Fordham and Moulton would have to be rapidly emptied. In addition, there are several thousand horses in training or stud that would need moving, and there are not enough horseboxes to move them all. There would be carnage, and it is doubtful that Sunnica would have sufficient liability insurance to compensate the owners for the loss which would run into many hundreds of millions. And all that is ignoring the evacuation of the thousands of residents in the surrounding towns and villages.

Sunnica were put on the back foot at the last ExA hearing having finally to admit that its batteries would be linked to the grid and will feed off the grid to arbitrage the electricity spot price, despite them claiming the batteries were an Associated Development. But in reality, its primary business will be feeding off the grid and arbitraging the spot price, and only feeding off the solar panels when they generate some electricity.

A further key issue omitted by Sunnica is that every ten years the batteries will need to be replaced. So, over a forty-year life, they will have to be changed at least three times with the concomitant dangers of moving volatile and flammable objects.

Sourcing

The source for the panels is China. 45% of world supply of solar grade polysilicon used in the manufacture of solar panels comes from Xinjiang Province where Muslim Uyghars are used as forced, slave labour in the manufacture. A further 30% comes from elsewhere in China. China dominates the market with a 75% share, and uses slave labour, in contravention of the Modern Day Slavery Act of 2015.

Decommissioning

Sunnica have suggested that they have decommissioning covered in forty years time. They are at best being disingenuous. At current prices it will cost them at least £120 million. They decline to commit to putting up a financial bond - inflation proofed. The harsh reality is that the owners of Sunnica will bleed the company dry, financially, so that there is insufficient funding to pay for the decommissioning, and the surrounding countryside will be left with rusting, degrading panels. So, there must be financial certainty provided up front.

One other reason for Sunnica flim-flamming over decommissioning is that there is no money in scrapping solar panels. Part of the problem is that the cadmium contained in the panels require leaching out. That would mean finding leach pads which could accommodate each panel for a period of up to six months. Further the value of the other materials within a solar panel is not sufficient to cover costs, let alone make a profit. Look to the United States to observe solar panels abandoned in Arizona and other such similar places

Lithium-ion Batteries (LIB) are also a problem to decommission, and there are difficulties in efficiently separating the components cleanly and safely.

Carbon Neutral

Sunnica keep repeating their scheme will create clean energy and will contribute to net zero. It won't. If one builds in the construction of the component parts of this scheme, the anthropogenic CO2 generated during the construction and commissioning phase will never compensate.

Summary

This project lacks any altruistic merits. It's been put together by a bunch of hustlers, who are solely interested in this as a get rich scheme.

It runs the risk of seriously damaging the world-renowned bloodstock industry. It will ruin our centuries old productive countryside, at the edge of the fens, with the amazing vistas that we are so fortunate to be able to enjoy.