

**Living in Isleham**

I moved to Isleham 12 years ago because I wanted my family to live in a safe environment in the countryside, away from the air pollution in the towns and cities. Never had I considered that someone under the guise of green energy would have the audacity to propose industrialising this countryside and environment that has been protected for hundreds of years. As I write this I am still in disbelief that this proposal is even being considered.

**Well-being & Safety**

At weekends we (my family) go for regular walks in this area and really appreciate the natural surroundings. The reason I moved to this area is because I truly value the countryside and what it harvests. It is a beautiful place where you can see fields trees and woodlands as far as the eye can see, it is a place with diverse wildlife and there are also very rare chalk streams that we have across its land. This proposal is in effect an industrialisation of the beautiful countryside. It's been like this for hundreds of years, a community place of agriculture that supports food sustainability in the United Kingdom. Every time I cycle or drive past the fields that have been proposed in this project I feel a sense of sadness and disbelief this is being considered.

I really worry about soil contamination. Solar panels contain toxic substances. Some panels have longer life-spans than others but they are all susceptible to cracking and leaking toxic substances. Decommissioning and recycling these materials is a huge challenge and also detrimental to our environment. The fields being suggested for solar energy are boarding our canals and rare chalk streams. I'm concerned that our local waters will become contaminated and ultimately affect the health of our community and wildlife.

Furthermore, I don't want my family to live next to hundreds of battery containers humming away in neighbouring fields with a possibility of having to evacuate my family should any of the containers catch fire (thermal run-away) or explode. I'm not an expert in this field but data tells us batteries continue to be highly toxic and there is a possibility these batteries can combust. I for one don't want to take that chance. For those people (the communities) that live here I fear this will have a negative impact on their well-being.

As I write this I'm trying to imagine the solar panels covering thousands of acres of land and the double height containers humming away trying to cool down the heat and energy produced and stored in these colossal batteries that are so close to neighbouring villages. The proximity of the sites in relation to the local communities is perverse, it's inconsiderate and unsafe in my view. The people that are proposing this project don't live here and I feel they don't care about our concerns.

I find it really depressing and am seriously considering moving away from the area if this proposal is approved. Hence this objection refers to my concern around well-being and safety so close to communities and wildlife.

**The concern over agriculture and the environment**

All the villages and towns in this region are closely connected to each other. I regularly travel between Isleham, Freckenham, Chippenham, Mildenhall, Red Lodge, and Newmarket and I find it insane to replace those fields growing potatoes, sugar-beet, wheat and barley with solar panels and large container units containing vast quantities battery technologies. I cycle past these fields every day. Regardless of soil quality (which is excellent in this region) you cannot deny the fact that year on year the majority of fields that are being suggested for solar use have been growing produce. It's just insane. This proposal will have an impact on food production/produce. East Anglia is the bread basket of the nation. With growing global food shortage, the impact of wheat supply due to the Russia/Ukraine conflict and climate change, it is more vital than ever to protect our farmlands from industrialisation.

I'm also very concerned about the mitigation strategy Sunnica are proposing. It is basically humanly impossible to replace the topsoil that has cultivated over hundreds of years with alternatives. Furthermore I object to Sunnica disturbing the local wildlife, the deer, birds, bats, fish

and local insects that inhabit this area. Anything Sunnica is proposing is a compromise at the expense of the countryside, the wildlife and the local communities.

**The scale, proximity & efficacy**

The Sunnica proposal has been going on for over two years now and in that time I have tried to understand their reasons for suggesting to cover a wide area of countryside in so many solar panels and battery containers.

The scale and location of the proposed sites is outrageous. This 500 Mega Watt proposed site is requesting 3000 acres of prime farming land. That's twice as much land compared to the Longfield development which is also a 500 Mega Watt installation. Why have Sunnica chosen to design this project in the countryside and also why have they chosen to install this so close to so many communities? I question the efficacy of the proposed Sunnica development. But more importantly proposing solar plants in countryside should be a last resort and all other possible avenues should be considered first such as rooftop and Brownfield sites.

I'm very doubtful that solar energy is the solution to our renewable energy strategy. I am also doubtful that the solar plant will produce the estimated energy that Sunnica proposes. 2022 saw the hottest summer on record and there are many solar plants already in existence and it would be very interesting to discover how efficient and how much energy was produced by those solar plants. I implore the business secretary to fully assess alternative energy supplies before sacrificing valuable agricultural land for low yielding, in-efficient and environmentally damaging technologies.

I'm also sceptical that this project is anywhere near carbon neutral. When you take into account the sourcing of raw materials the production of panels and batteries for distribution of materials the construction and installation of the plant as well as the energy that will be produced and ultimately the replacement of batteries and panels the recycling of toxic materials and the ultimate closure of the site after 40 years, I believe this project introduces more cost to the environment, the wildlife and society as opposed to the suggested benefits this proposal could offer. In this case the costs will significantly outweigh the benefits.

Even if solar energy is viable, I ask myself why have they not used brownfield sites or even rooftop surface areas first. If you look at Germany and their renewable energy strategy the largest proportion of solar energy is extracted from the rooftops, why can we not do the same? I come to the natural conclusion or assumption that Sunnica have proposed countryside because it is the easiest solution but not the right and ethical decision.

I'm based in Isleham, but this project does not just affect one community. Instead it affects many communities (Isleham, Chippenham, Freckenham, Red Lodge, Mildenhall, Worlington, etc) that are interconnected through agriculture, horse racing and local supply chains. I'm very concerned how this project will affect all the local communities. In my opinion, Sunnica have been very poor at addressing local concerns of residents and their overall approach to dealing with communities feels extremely disingenuous.

**Disruption**

I'm also very concerned about the disruption this project will cause in the event the project is ratified. I've heard Sunnica will require 1000-ton vehicles to help construct the sites. These country lanes are not designed to support this and the construction of these sites will clearly disrupt the inter-connectivity between these local communities for many years. When you are building so much so close to communities it will always have a detrimental affect on the locals.

**Sacred Land**

I also object to Sunnica proposing to build on land that is sacred to this area. 12 valiant airmen lost their lives in the 1950's. They selflessly took their own lives so that the Isleham community would survive. The Isleham children of that era live here today and clearly remember this incident. This accident has never been forgotten, nor should it be disrespected by outsiders who intend to disturb the land where these brave airmen tragically lost their lives. I find it offensive and

disrespectful to the families of the airmen and the people that survived within the Isleham community.

**Misguided - Let Common Sense Prevail**

As a constituent of East Cambridgeshire I have never written a representation before, however I am doing so now because this proposal from Sunnica is extremely significant and I believe will immensely impact all of the local communities that live and surround this proposed project. Bear in mind that there are so many people who just do not have the time or the energy to submit their own representations. I have met so many people in my community whose lives are so busy on a day-to-day basis that they struggle to even inform themselves about this Sunnica project which at the heart of it is the largest industrialisation of countryside in Europe as it stands.

It's clear that given the current climate and energy crisis the effects of energy costs increasing, oil prices increasing, gas supply being limited in Europe and moreover the impending climate crisis, it is more important than ever for mankind to find the right technologies and solutions to counter and solve these problems and challenges.

As an individual I think about this proposal all the time. It affects my sleep, it makes me anxious and it does the same to my wife and children. I ask myself, I challenge myself whether this proposal is justified and I'm sure the examiners who will be examining this proposal are also in the same dilemma. However as I conclude my thoughts and opinions on this matter I do always come to the same conclusion that this is in fact the wrong answer or solution to the current energy and climate crisis is.

This project is so wrong on so many different levels. In some ways the Sunnica project has been a useful exercise in understanding how 'not to implement renewable energy projects and strategies.' And also how not to interact with multiple communities that are affected by a proposal.

I find the proposal to utilise almost 3000 acres of farming land to produce solar energy ill-conceived and immensely inconsiderate to nature the wildlife and the communities that surround the proposed site.

I feel there is insufficient legislation and process in place to allow for such large projects to be carried out. I believe the Inspectorate, the government and business secretary can learn a lot from this ill-conceived project and there are many lessons learnt throughout this project that can help the establishment design better thought out renewable energy projects in the future. And I really hope that common sense will prevail during this decision-making process and keep my faith in democracy. Thank you for reading my statement.

