Dr Catherine Judkins, personal Written Representation

URN: 20031441

Please find below my Written Representation relating to the Sunnica Energy Farm DCO application.

Executive Summary

In March 2022 I submitted the Relevant Representation outlined in Appendix 1. The concerns and objections that I raised about this scheme then are still points that I object to today I have expanded on some of these points in the Appendix. This report will also attempt to explain how I feel about this scheme personally and how it will impact my life and the life of my family and friends. This will cover:

The impact of the scheme on our village community

The impact on the landscape

The impact on food production

And how these tie in to my family life.

Background

My background is in chemistry. In 2004 I took a job at the Horseracing Forensic Laboratory (HFL) in Fordham (I lived in another Cambridgeshire village, Waterbeach, at the time) and found myself transported into the exciting world of sports anti-doping. It always surprises me how, on the outskirts of the relatively small village of Fordham, stood a world-class analytical laboratory, delivering testing services worldwide and yet located in the rural countryside.

HFL was owned by the Horseracing Betting Levy Board (HBLB) before it was sold to Quotient and then sold again to LGC (Laboratory of the Government Chemist), who own the site today.

HFL was a delightful place to work, set in beautiful rural grounds and with excellent analytical capability. I loved coming in to work, seeing racehorses being exercised, and it was always a pleasure to entertain visitors to the site to show off our wonderful testing facility and the beautiful countryside that surrounded it. The site was so popular that some of the organisations that we worked with actually used our facilities to host their own events so the rural setting really was a selling point for the business and attracted further investment.

HFL is an excellent example of the multiple industries we have in this area that have been set up and supported by the horse racing industry. Initially starting out in a grade 2 listed Victorian house in Newmarket, the HBLB invested heavily in establishing the testing facility that stands in Fordham today. No expense was spared - the site included top class scientific equipment, spacious laboratories and grounds and one of the best stables I think I've ever seen for the horses that were housed on site at the time. It must have cost a small fortune but that investment has attracted lots of scientists and other workers, like myself, to the area. Staff were encouraged to continue to improve their knowledge and expertise, often gaining qualifications sponsored by the company, so this has had a real benefit attracting people to this area and establishing a high level of scientific expertise here. Not only did HFL carry out testing on behalf of racing and other equine sports, but it also supported many of the other industries that are linked with racing in and around Newmarket - the feed suppliers for the elite horses, sales testing in support of the Tattersalls auctions, equine

veterinary medications to name a few examples. Today over 400 people are employed on site and they are still encouraged to make the most of the rural setting using the outdoor recreation areas, outdoor meeting spaces, etc. The outdoors is recognised as being an important part of employees' health and well-being. Unfortunately Sunnica would reduce the enjoyment of this site considerably as the open outlook to the southeast would be directly on to the solar panels and solar stations of West Site B.



LGC (formerly HFL) site with its outlook onto what could be Sunnica West B. Note the picnic benches set up for employees to enjoy their surroundings. It would be difficult to imagine sitting here looking out onto panels and inverters.

Family and Community

When we decided to move closer to my workplace I asked colleagues at HFL where they recommended we look. Repeatedly I was told "Isleham". It had the reputation of being a friendly village and it didn't disappoint. We chose our family home here and have found it to be a really nurturing place to bring up a family. As soon as we moved in we were welcomed by neighbours who genuinely take an interest in your life. Not in a way of being nosey, but as a way of friendship and support. As with most families, there are always times when you need a friendly neighbour to help out. The offers of assistance are always available in this village and this gives a great feeling of community support.

Travelling around the village right now, it is possible to spot evidence of community activities which make Isleham so special. As an example, there's currently a beautiful poppy display outside Saint Andrew's church in preparation for Sunday's remembrance events, which are well attended by

multiple groups in the village (heritage society, scouts, the primary school, parish council members, etc). This display was created by volunteers who made all of the poppies by hand, put them on a scaffold and erected it with lighting in the church grounds. It's lovely see this at this time of year – not just up close but, because of the open landscape here, you can see the lit up church tower as you drive into the village from Freckenham, or along the Beck Road from Worlington, or from Prickwillow etc. It acts like a homing beacon when moving between our nearby communities and gives a sense of reassurance.



Volunteers putting up the poppy display in Isleham. The lit-up church tower of St Andrew's can be seen for miles.

Our children have attended the local primary school which, again, promotes strong community values within the school, but also within the wider village community. What I really love is that we live in a village that is so rich in history and nature and this gives us and our children a real sense of place and pride in living in this community. When the children at school learn about history it's quite easy for them to tie this in with what they see and hear all around them. They learn about the Romans and we have a Roman settlement here. But this would be part of the Sunnica scheme.

They learn about World War Two and we have very close ties here with the military air bases in nearby Mildenhall and Lakenheath and, of course, just outside Isleham was the tragic bomber plane crash just after World War Two in which 12 servicemen died trying to save the village from destruction. Once again, this important and sacred site would be covered over by the Sunnica

scheme. I, along with many other residents, feel that this important site should be removed from the development and preserved out of respect for the crew and their relatives. My children and husband feel the same way.

They learn about the Bronze Age and we have the famous Isleham Hoard (largest bronze age find in the UK). And in Year 4 they learn about Fenland landscapes and the way of life in the Fens.

All of this ties them very tightly to their surrounding landscape and heritage and I feel that this is really important and gives the younger generation here a very sound footing for the rest of their lives. If the landscape is tarnished, or the heritage hidden, then these strong ties will loosen, and the sense of pride and identity will ebb away. The sentimental attachment to this village is a fragile thing to preserve.

The photo below shows the Fenland landscape, as drawn by my daughter when she was in Year 4. Note the open fields, big colourful skies and line of trees on the horizon. The road leading to the sun in the distance. This is what it means to live here in a Fen Edge village. This is what we identify with. I would hate to think that her vision of living in the countryside involved a landscape of fields lined with security fencing, containing vast areas of metal and glass and with battery storage and huge substations overshadowing them. This is the type of landscape seek to create.

It is not fair to choose to live in a beautiful country setting, and have this taken away from us through the Sunnica development.



And the idea that this is a short term project of 40 years is a nonsense. I, for one, would see this scheme for most of the rest of my life. My children would be into their 50s by the time it is removed which means that all of their young and mid adult life would be in a transformed landscape of an industrial nature. And if they stay in the area and have their own children, all of their children's young lives will be dominated by living in an industrial solar and battery plant.

As well as being part of a close-knit community here, we have also created strong ties with friends in the villages nearby and this has come about through going to various village groups and activities in the area. I still meet up with the friends that I made at various toddler groups in Isleham, Fordham and Newmarket which I used to go to when my children were young. I often head out to see them at home, or sometimes we meet up half way and go for walks at the Snailwell footpath or for a drink at the La Hogue farm shop or the Fordham garden centre. My son played football for one of the Isleham youth teams and his teammates came from West Row, Red Lodge, Freckenham and Fordham, so again forging links with other children in the surrounding villages. We are essentially a community within a wider community, and this is really settling. The various village primary schools here feed into the secondary schools at Soham or Mildenhall or Newmarket and it's easier for the children to make that transition when they already know children from the surrounding area.

Family and Landscape

I've always grown up in the countryside with my native town being in Derbyshire, which is characterised by narrow, rural winding lanes lined with hedgerows or drystone walls in places. I remember distinctly my sister and her family coming to visit us shortly after we moved to Isleham and she commented about the landscape here and how unusual it was because she said, "You don't really know where the roads end and the fields begin."

That's exactly right because when you move around here you are really "in" the countryside and the wide open spaces and far reaching views give a wonderful sense of liberation. It took me a while to get used to not having hills and hedgerows but I have come to love and value this wide open, Fen Edge landscape very much.

The Sunnica scheme would change everything that I hold dear about this area and I think that we would have to leave because I couldn't bear the thought of being trapped in a place surrounded by industrial infrastructure and substations and battery compounds. It would no longer be a beautiful place to live. This would be a huge upheaval for me and my family as we love living here, we love being part of this very special community and I would be devastated to have to give that up just because of some ill designed development.

As a family we use the footpaths and roads in and around Isleham at the weekends. We often go for bike rides to the Isleham Marina, where we take the bridge over the lock onto the footpath along the river. Sometimes we go on foot. I love the Marina. When you go down there it's like being on holiday. It's a different experience even though it's just a mile or so down the road - serene tranquil and idyllic.

We typically head East and do a circular route which includes West Row (my children particularly like the playground there and call it their 'secret park' because it's typically less busy than the Isleham playground). Sometimes we get a pizza from the pizza van in West Row or a drink at the Judes Ferry pub by the river and then we cycle back home. We really enjoy this because it gets the children out on their bikes and they appreciate the lovely landscape surrounding us and the rural environment. Sometimes we do this with our friends in Worlington. This would change if Sunnica went ahead because we wouldn't want to sit in a pub garden by the river overlooking a battery storage system and substation and the idea of cycling around this is equally unappealing.

Most of this route would be subject to change if Sunnica went ahead because the scheme would be there with you along the River Lark footpaths, and when you cycle back along Ferry Lane and Beck Road and Sheldricks Road into Isleham. It would follow us the entire way. Highly visible, highly

industrial. An alien landscape. Instead of spotting nature and admiring the different coloured fields of crops, we would simply be cycling around the edge of a prison camp with fencing, security lights, a substation with even more security fencing and security lights, cameras, weather stations, inverters, solar panels. This is a depressing thought.

The open view from this route over to Mildenhall, Freckenham, would be blocked or spoiled.

We are lucky that we don't have to go far here to get a change of scene – there are open aspect footpaths, there are tree-lined footpaths, there are elevated footpaths, all with different features and characteristics. The thought that vast parts of this area would be transformed by fields of solar panels, which are all the same colour, instead of all of the beautiful different colours we get at the moment in the different seasons - whether it's wheat growing, potatoes - would be devastating. We have this changeable landscape. My son as a toddler loved watching farm activity in the fields as we travelled between the villages. Combine harvesters collecting wheat, forage harvesters collecting maize, the hay bale wrappers. He still does this today and often sends me photos from his school bus journey – Red Kites hovering above the fields of wheat, deer in the fields, even a badger. All of these things we take for granted will change and our experience of travelling in this landscape will diminish. There will not be any activity in the solar fields - just lifeless fields of glass and metal.

For recreation we would be faced with loading our bikes onto our car and heading to another place to go for a bike ride, which is completely the opposite of how it should be when you live in the countryside and you can cycle from your house.

Family and Food

We are also very lucky here to live in an area filled with local produce and we buy meat from the local farm shop near the Marina, we go strawberry and pumpkin picking in Isleham and our family is surrounded by fields growing potatoes or wheat or onions or carrots. Our children, and others here, have a really good understanding of where their food comes from and how to stay healthy.

Again, Sunnica would change this completely because instead of the crop growing fields we would have fields of solar and that association that my children have eating local produce and knowing where it's grown will be removed and that also erodes their sense of identity and sense of place.

Overall, the Sunnica scheme would severely impact our enjoyment of living here. We would no longer feel like we live in a Fen Edge village. Taking the character out of an area and damaging its identity creates a very ordinary place to live and that's not what we have and is not what we want. We moved here to be part of a community and to have a rural life in a rural setting. We do not want to live in a bland and artificial location. I don't think that we could bear living in a place like that when we are so used to being surrounded by beautiful scenery and countryside and nature. Instead a large proportion of the area would be taken up with industrial equipment

Appendix 1

I still object to the proposal because:

- 1) Loss of vast area of highly productive, arable farmland. This is meant to be avoided and is contrary to planning policy. Claims that land is 'poor quality' are disputed. Soils around Isleham are high quality. Independent analysis is essential before any decision about the scheme can be made. We have already lost a substantial amount of BMV farmland to solar in this region and it is unwise to lose any more in light of current food shortages. Appendix 2 has a table of solar farms in this area (either in operation or under construction). Almost all are on BMV land.
- 2) Significant harm to our heritage, cultural heritage/ village identity, sense of place. Archaeological assessments are inadequate. Part of the proposed East A site is a memorial (the site of a post-WW2 plane crash in 1949). It has been left undeveloped. This site cannot be drill-piled and covered in panels and fencing. There has been no assessment of the harm caused to this memorial site, nor the inevitable damage to any buried artefacts. Likewise with the Spurgeon stone memorial along the banks of the Lark. Sunnica have not paid any regard to this, despite it being close to the East A boundary and despite the harm that industrial development will do to this valued setting.
- 3) Assessment of loss of long-term agricultural jobs and skills, as well as jobs that support our agricultural industry, has been inadequate.
- 4) Economic harm to the racing industry hasn't been considered, despite it being one of the main areas of employment here. Losses to the racing industry, and its supporting industries (which I worked in), must be assessed.
- 5) There will be significant loss of, and disruption to, wildlife habitats. Mitigation proposals are insufficient. Rare and protected species in some areas haven't been considered. Local knowledge/input has been ignored.
- 6) Potential damage to waterways especially the Lee Brook chalk stream that feeds into the River Lark. Inadequate assessment of the inevitable harm to these chalk streams. The Lee Brook chalk stream, which runs through East A is under threat from run-off from the panels which would likely cause the Brook to silt up. This has not been adequately mitigated.
- 7) Loss of visual amenity and impact on mental health caused by the omnipresence of the scheme (which encroaches right up to village boundaries and even up to people's gardens in some areas). The spread-out design means there is no escape from it. Screening mitigation is wholly inadequate. Many areas cannot be screened due to their elevation. E.g. elevated easterly outlook from Isleham is open, tranquil, agricultural countryside, characteristic of this area. Replacement of this defining vista with vast arrays of panels, a huge battery storage compound and miles of fencing constitutes a complete re-writing of the local landscape. This harms the sense of place and identity (as outlined above).
- 8) This development is too large to sit sensitively within the landscape.
- 9) The cumulative impact both from the 4 Sunnica solar areas and the many other solar farms and other developments in this area (Appendix 2) has not been adequately assessed. This does not comply with planning policy.
- 10) The combined output of nearby existing ground-mounted solar schemes in operation/under construction is over 400 MW. There is no justification for a further 500 MW development over and above these, taking away even more valuable farming land.
- 11) Many recreational routes in the area will suffer permanent visual harm. Some will likely be damaged during construction. E.g. the popular paths around the River Lark and Lee Brook, as well

as U6006 (the historic Icknield Way) and the areas around the Limekilns/ Snailwell. The impact on PRoW has been inadequately assessed. PRoW closures over the construction period will restrict movement of people between villages, leading to isolation.

- 12) The safety of the huge Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) compounds is concerning. Inadequate information has been provided to assess the fire safety plans, air quality modelling etc. Li-ion BESS pose a known fire hazard. BESS are currently inadequately regulated. The siting of these so close to homes has not been justified and is contrary to consultation feedback. Noise pollution is also a concern.
- 13) Large amount of BESS seems excessive as 'supporting equipment' to the solar farm (and therefore not part of the NSIP process). Concern that the real aim of the scheme is energy trading.
- 14) Discriminatory statutory consultation (favouring those with access to computers and competent users) and lack of engagement with communities (especially the travelling community) means that a significant proportion of local residents were unable to raise concerns during the consultation. True assessments of the scheme were impossible from the minimal information they were provided with. Developer has repeatedly failed to respond to written questions submitted before/ during/ after consultation. Consultation feedback not acted upon.
- 15) Significant lack of information in the DCO application about many issues means that it still cannot be fully assessed and should not be approved.
- 16) Carbon neutral claims are incorrect per a report by Cranfield University, as submitted by the Say No to Sunnica Action Group Ltd. Development of this size and scale, and with the amount of materials that need to be manufactured, imported and transported, is inconsistent with their claimed carbon footprint. Developments that cannot be carbon neutral in their lifetime undermine the Government's net zero targets. Removal of vast areas of greenfield land, and the potential knock-on effect of increasing food imports, further undermines these targets.
- 17) Concerns about purchase, supply chain, lack of materials, etc means that there is a risk of the development being approved, but not deliverable, adding further anxiety to local residents.
- 18) Traffic impacts underestimated. Scheme would significantly affect my ability to get in/ out of the village for work, school and classes, recreation etc. Isleham, and other villages, have limited parking they cannot support likely opportunistic parking by staff vehicles.
- 19) Assessment of alternative sites is inadequate. Justification for this location is insufficient. There is no reason for the BESS to be placed so close to people's homes.
- 20) Insufficient details about decommissioning, and the funding of this, means that it cannot be assessed at this stage. This poses the risk of our future generations being left to deal with the removal, at great expense.

Appendix 2 – Solar Farm Table

Shows solar farms within an approx. 15 mile radius of the Sunnica scheme to give an idea of BMV land already lost to such developments. We cannot afford to lose any more from this area. This was last updated in September last year and there are more developments that have been added into the pipeline since that time.

Other Solar Farms and Renewable Energy Sources within a 15 mile radius of Isleham/ Worlington/ Freckenham/ Snailwell/ Chippenham.

Sep 2021

	Solar Farms/ Associated Batteries	Area Covered	Land Type	Local Authority	Output
	Operational				
1	Soham - Triangle Solar Farm	70 acres	Grade 3 Agricultural	East Cambs DC	12 MW
2	Red Lodge - Bay Farm, Barton Mills	35 acres	'Good' Agricultural	Forest Heath DC	8.1 MW
3	Exning/ Burwell Solar farm, Heath Road	153 acres	Grade 2 Agricultural	East Cambs DC	30 MW
4	Stretham - Stowbridge solar farm (extended in 2 phases 2014, 2015). Green End.	250 acres	Grade 1 Agricultural	East Cambs DC and South Cambs DC	44 MW (24+10+10)
5	Fordham Road - Forest Heath Solar farm	25 acres	Grade 2 Agricultural	Forest Heath DC	5 MW
6	Great Wilbraham solar farm	156 acres	Grade 2 and 3 Agricultural	South Cambs DC	38.1 MW
7	Lackford Estate solar farm	96 acres	Grade 3 Agricultural	St Edmundsbury Borough Council	21 MW
8	Lakenheath Toggam (now owned by Forest Heath DC)	43 acres	Agricultural	Forest Heath DC	13 MW
9	Chittering, Radical farm (original+extension). Permission for further 9.6 MW extension granted 2015	approx. 70 acres*	Grade 2 Agricultural	South Cambs DC	12 MW (5+6.3)
10	Wilburton Mingay solar farm (extended once)	121 acres	Grade 1,2,3 Agricultural	East Cambs DC	24 MW (5+19.3)
11	Broxted solar - Stradishall airfield	150 acres	Decommissioned RAF airfield	St Edmundsbury Borough Council	32 MW
	Under/Pending Construction				
12	Factory Rd Burwell. Goosehall solar farm	178 acres	Grade 2 Agricultural	East Cambs DC	43 MW
13	Icklingham, Elveden Farms (Permission granted)	approx. 35 acres	Agricultural	Forest Heath DC	8 MW
14	Ingham North Solar farm (Permission refused; resubmitted and granted)	47 acres	Grade 4 Agricultural	St Edmundsbury Borough Council	14.2 MW

	Solar Farms/ Associated Batteries	Area Covered	Land Type	Local Authority	Output
15	Burwell-Reach Hightown Drove solar (Permission granted)	200 acres	Grade 1 and 2 Agricultural	East Cambs DC	50 MW
16	Wicken - Bracks Farm (meadow view) solar (Permission granted)	119 acres	Grade 3 Agricultural	East Cambs DC	28 MW
17	Burwell substation battery, SE Weirs drove (permission granted)	1.3 acres	Grazing/ pasture	East Cambs DC	Battery 49.9 MW
18	Burwell battery NW Weirs drove (permission granted)	1.6 acres	Grade 2 Agricultural	East Cambs DC	Battery 49.9 MW
19	Battery within Goosehall solar farm	4 containers	Grade 2 Agricultural	East Cambs DC	Battery 5 MW
20	Cambs waste management park, Chittering (awaiting construction)	approx. 5 acres	Waste Management site	South Cambs DC	1.1 MW
21	Soham - North Angle Farm (Permission granted)	183 acres	Grade 2 and 3 Agricultural	East Cambs DC	30 MW
22	Swaffham Prior Energy Centre, Solar and Ground Source heat, Goodwin farm, Heath Rd (granted)	52 acres	Agricultural	East Cambs DC	Not stated
23	Chittering solar extension 2 (Awaiting construction)	approx. 50 acres*	Grade 2 Agricultural	South Cambs DC	9.6 MW
	Application under Consideration				
24	Cadenham solar farm, land SW Newmarket, Swaffham Bulbeck	173 acres	Likely Grade 2 and 3 Agricultural (surveys pending)	East Cambs DC	49.9 MW
25	Breach Farm, Ness Rd, Burwell	193 Acres	Grade 2 and 3 Agricultural	East Cambs DC and West Suffolk	49.9 MW
26	West Farm, Barnham (Appeal)	163 acres	Agricultural	St Edmundsbury Borough Council	29 MW
27	Battery within Cadenham solar farm (New England Farm) + 7Km cable to grid	within 173 acre solar/ battery area	Likely Grade 2 and 3 Agricultural (surveys pending)	East Cambs DC	Battery 50 MW
28	Burwell battery on land north of electricity substation, Weirs drove (adjacent to approved 49.9MW battery NW Weirs drove. This is considered 'phase 2' of this development)	1.1 acres	Grade 2 and 3 Agricultural	East Cambs DC	Battery 30 MW

	Solar Farms/ Associated Batteries	Area Covered	Land Type	Local Authority	Output
29	Sunnica solar plant (Statutory Consultation 22 Sept - 18 Dec 2020). Close to villages of Isleham/ Worlington/ Freckenham/ Snailwell/ Chippenham/Red Lodge/ West Row/ Kennett/ Burwell	approx. 2800 acres	Agricultural. Largely Grade 3, some Grade 2, some Grade 4 (per ALC008). Developer claims land is nearly all Grade 4.	ECDC, WSC, SCC, CCC	500 MW

Other Renewable Energy Supplies within this 15 mile radius also include:

- 1) Wind turbines Wadlow wind farm, West Wratting (26 MW)
- 2) Biodigester sites:

Symonds Farm Power Ltd (1.4 MW)
British Sugar, Bury St Edmunds (5 MW)
May Farm Anaerobic Digester (2.4 MW)
Hall Farm, Newmarket (0.5 MW, permission granted)
Bay Farm, Worlington (permission granted)

3) Landfill gas

Lackford Landfill (1.2 MW) Milton Landfill (2 MW)

* Chittering site has been extended once and a second extension is awaiting construction. The exact size of total site may be more than this figure but the information is difficult to obtain.

Note: the acreage shown in the above table is the area covered by the solar farm equipment. It does not include any additional land that might have been used for the cable routes to connect to the main substations.

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