

Isleham Parish Council 20030170 Submission to Open Floor Hearing 9.12.22

Richard Radcliffe, Chair of Isleham Parish Council

My Council has consistently opposed the proposals from Sunnica. These objections are grounded in and reflect the clear and strongly held views of the majority of our community.

The consistent messages they have given to us are.

- The devastating impact the scheme will have on the local landscape and views in our village and over our wider area.
- The impact of taking what we know is good land out of agricultural production.
- The safety of relating to the battery storage areas.
- The impact this industrial development has on our use and enjoyment of our environment and the benefits we currently have.
- The effect on Isleham sense of place at the fen edge dating back to the Bronze Age and our long established links to our neighbouring communities.

These are set out in detail in our Written Representation.

This might have been so different if Sunnica had properly consulted with us, to use our local knowledge, and given us the opportunity for meaningful discussions.

They did not so we are where we are.

This proposal will destroy our village and environment that has been shaped by our history and geography. It is a rural, agricultural setting, which changes with yearly with the crop rotation practiced by the farmers. It shows our relative isolation, it has wide open views, big skies and a sense of remoteness and tranquility.

This is Isleham and these factors attract people to move here and stay. It gives us our sense of place in the landscape.

We are not in a designated landscape area but that does not mean our landscape has no value.

The Panel have seen when visiting Sunnica East A sites EO1 to EO10 what a stunning landscape we have.

Sunnica have chosen not to recognise this and from what I have heard in a previous hearing have skewed their scoring of landscapes and views to lessen their value.

Sadly so many of the conversations I have with fellow residents are about their concerns over Sunnica's proposals.

What so many find difficult to understand is how the planting of hedges and woodland to screen the panels on EO5 will work and how the site of the 1949 tragic plane crash will be dealt with.

We are pleased to note that Sunnica after, as I understand it 6 years of planning, have finally recognised the significance for us of this event and aim to withdraw the plane crash site from the scheme.

The long ranging views across the site from both the East and the West are cherished. These will be destroyed for those living at the eastern edge of our village and from the homes on Station Road. For the many who worship and use the ARK Church together with those walking, cycling or driving along Sheldrick's Road and Beck Road our route to and from Mildenhall and Station Road leading to Chippenham the impact is devastating.

You have heard directly at the previous open floor hearing from some our residents of how we use this area for exercise, to look at nature, and the changing aspect with the seasons. It is a tranquil setting. The value of this cannot be underestimated particularly when our residents so clearly explained, at the last hearing, concerns over their and their family's mental well being with the proposed industrialisation of the area.

We are grateful that you will consider these aspects but were taken aback that Sunnica failed to address them when responding at the last open hearing.

The mitigation proposed for this industrial sea of solar panels at EO5 is woodland and hedging which is unlikely after 15 years provide much screening because of the lie of the land here dropping down to the Lee Brook.

Does Sunnica not understand? They could have if they had communicated with us directly but we haven't had the chance to explain.

This is an open landscape. One the very few places in the area which give long views across to the fen edge, the Breck and the chalk uplands. Historically it has not been hedged or heavily treed.

From the village looking east, our views will be restricted to a few metres to the screening. We lose the view of the Lee Brook our Parish boundary, of St Mary's Church Tower in Mildenhall, to Chalk Hill by the A11 and to the forest behind Mildenhall.

The views of St Andrew's church, the ARK church, the irregular edge of village and the big skies when travelling westerly along Beck Road will be lost to the many users of this entrance to the village.

However site EO1, clearly visible from Sheldricks Road will not be screened. Sunnica's mitigation set out in their Environmental Statement - Chapter 10 - Landscape and Visual Amenity is "Parcel E01 – the solar panels are offset from the Fen woodland to the north and by 8m from the Lee Brook to the west. The proximity to the woodland aids in screening views from the wider landscape to the north."

No mention of the view from Sheldricks Road to the west.

So we lose stunning views to gain a long range view of panels in one part and newly planted trees and hedges close to the village. This fails to reflect and in fact destroys Isleham's place in the landscape.

To us it raises the question as to whether this whole area been properly assessed for its landscape value? A point clearly made to you in a previous hearing by experts.

My Council considers that had Sunnica taken the care it should have in identifying sites for its development and held meaningful discussions with our community they would understand the harm their proposals will do to our lives, the potential risk to our health and wellbeing, our landscape, views and the value given to our environment by those living in Isleham.