

I have made previous submissions on behalf of the Solar Campaign Alliance which I currently chair. My main concern relates to the appropriate use of land. Land is finite and must be used in the right way. I am concerned that the increasing loss of good farmland will effect the food security of the UK.

At the time of writing to meet deadline 7 the country is facing shortages of several food items notably salad crops. The reasons are complex but most agree that weather conditions in the countries we import these items from is a key factor. Reliance on food imports is a dangerous policy and will become more so as the effects of climate change become more evident.

Part of food security policy must be to maximize home based food production that will require a raft of policies one of which must be the protection of farmland.

Since the Sunnica examination started several new NSIPs for solar farms have come forward as well as many new proposals for smaller schemes coming through LPAs. The cumulative effects of such schemes if granted approval could lead to a significant loss of farmland and consequently a reduction in home based food production.

It is understood that Defra will be producing a national land use strategy and it is assumed this will include better protection for agricultural land. It is known that NPPF guidelines for protecting farmland are being strengthened and other items such as the House of Lords inquiry into land use in England have called for protection of land and the use of solar on brownfield sites and commercial roof space. Ministers including the Prime Minister have all called for solar farms to be approved only in the right places and agree that farmland must be protected.

It is therefore important to remind the inspectorate of the importance of food security and the danger that approval of the Sunnica scheme and the many others like it could do home based food production.

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