

To:
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Your ref: EN010106

**PLANNING ACT 2008 AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE) RULES
2010**

**APPLICATION BY SUNNICA LIMITED FOR AN ORDER GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR THE
PROPOSED SUNNICA ENERGY FARM**

RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is a reply on behalf of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to the letter dated 27 July 2023 in regard of the Sunnica development application and the statement issued by the applicant on 10 August.

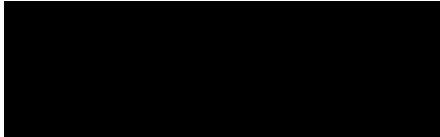
Although not requested by the Secretary of State the applicant has used their statement of 10 August to provide additional commentary on the Agricultural Land classification issues relating to the application. This was stated to be in response to the letter the Secretary of State received from the Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC MP and Matt Hancock MP, which in turn sent to the Secretary of State a letter from the Say No to Sunnica Action Group (both published on the Planning Inspectorate's website on 28 July 2023).

Having considered the applicant's additional response it goes no further in addressing the concerns highlighted both by the letter from the MPs and previously by the Combined Authority and others over agricultural land classification. It even criticises the lack of soil surveys by the Action Group when the applicant itself has not responded to their requests to facilitate appropriate survey access to the land. Notwithstanding the Statement of Common Ground between the applicant and Natural England on the approach to land classification, Say No to Sunnica Action Group have submitted detailed reasons questioning the adequacy and accuracy of the applicant's approach to this issue. Given the weight of these concerns, and some reasonable assumptions regarding evidence from neighbouring land, it seems that a precautionary approach is needed that considers the policy implications of the land being significantly more 'valuable' in terms of food production. This has not happened.

As you know the issue of protecting the Best and Most Versatile Land (BMV) is a national priority, set out in national planning policy. Implementing that policy in a robust, risk-based approach is vital because of the potential impact on the nation's food security, dependent communities and the long term challenge of achieving Net Zero from the land use sector. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has a significant portion of the country's BMV land. Failure to adequately consider BMV issues through this application may set a precedent in an area that is likely to face increasing pressure from solar farm development due to its location and landscape. There are other opportunities for energy generation that can be explored that do not pose a risk to BMV land.

In considering this application and additional comments received I hope you give great weight to the evidence on land classification and take a risk-based approach that continues to protect our best farmland.

Yours sincerely



Adrian Cannard
Strategic Planning Manager

