From: [redacted]
To: Sunnica Energy Farm
Subject: Interested party comments
Date: 26 January 2024 11:01:50

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Comments relating to Natural England & Sunnica responses to SOS.

Natural England.

I am extremely disappointed to read Natural England's response to the Secretary of States' request for further information, as they have again failed to provide any evidence to support Sunnica's experts claim that there is no link between the Stone Curlews nesting within the boundaries of the proposed solar and battery storage scheme and the stone curlews just up the road within the Breckland SPA. Assuming there is not without proper due diligence and clear reporting of its evidence is totally unprofessional and highly irregular.

Stone Curlew are a recognised endangered species and must be protected. Covering their nesting grounds in solar arrays is NOT protecting the species. Sunnica plans to provide mitigation areas for the Curlew, which suit their ill-thought-out scheme, expecting the Curlew to simply relocate to the areas proposed. This will not happen as Curlew only nest where they have low vegetation cover and a long clear line of sight to see predators. New solar panels, fencing and uncharacteristic hedgerow screening will prevent this.

It should be noted that the Say No To Sunnica Action Group's expert ecology advisor, Bioscan, has clearly stated and documented that it is distinctly possible that there is a link between the stone curlews within the scheme boundary and the Breckland SPA.

During the Examination, of which I attended all the meetings, there were numerous bodies that requested Natural England to complete its surveys, these included District and County Councils, The Suffolk Wildlife Trust and SNTS. Natural England by way of its latest response have admitted that these surveys have not been completed.

Thus, it would be inadvisable to proceed without the completion of full impartial studies and definitely before any Development Consent Order decision is made. I recall that Bioscan also stated that making a decision where there is distinctly uncertainty for the welfare of a protected species, would be illegal.

Sunnica – Landscaping.

The proposed scheme is spread over a vast area much of which is on the edge of the Fens (a vast flat landscape) and therefore by its very nature either flat or only slightly undulating land. Sunnica claim that their scheme was landscape led, but this is not the case as the scheme will not blend into the landscape and will be visible from all directions and from miles away in some cases. It is clear that the proposed sites were only chosen based on the land that was provided by three landowners, spread across a vast area and surrounding many villages.

During the Examination Sunnica proposed some hedge and tree planting in an attempt to appease the criticism they received about the visual impact of both the solar panels and the three BESS power stations. By their own admission they said that it would take fifteen years for the hedges, where planted, to help disguise the panels, but impractical to hide the BESS's due to their height. This aside, it should be remembered that this is mainly open Fen land and that building something of this enormity and then making an attempt to screen, in some areas, will only result in this truly natural landscape being irreversibly transformed and undoubtedly damaged forever. This, by default, will negatively affect the

thousands of residents in all of the villages blighted by the scheme and the visitors to this area, many of which are drawn to Newmarket for the horseracing and its supporting industry.

Sunnica claims that the land will be returned to farming after the forty-year lifespan of the scheme, this will not be the case as the scheme construction, de-construction and lack of farming will damage the soil structure, it may take many years thereafter to recover. This is currently prime productive farmland, known as the 'breadbasket' of England, however once again Natural England has made a statement without publishing their facts let alone taking into account other evidence i.e. ignoring challenging soil sampling provided during the Examination.

As per my previous submissions, I reiterate that this scheme is ill conceived, in the wrong place, far too detrimental to the area and is based upon energy trading, not energy generation.

Denis Field

and Lola, William & Henry Field

[redacted]

Interested party number 20030828

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