

SUNNICA UPDATE

Sunnica's application for a Development Consent Order, will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in June, not May as originally intended.

West Suffolk & East Cambs Councils are working together to produce a Statement of Understanding. This will identify areas that the councils agree and disagree on, with Sunnica's proposal. - **Still in progress**

The Parish Council Alliance have been advised to focus on the areas of disagreement, readying any relevant information for the Planning Inspectorate's examination which invites submissions from interested parties over the 6 months following submission.

The areas of disagreement (material planning considerations) identified so far are:

1. Battery Storage - specifically the lack of any detail to conduct a thorough independent review. The concerns highlighted are: a) the potential impact on the local residents and specifically two schools in Red Lodge, especially as they are in the line of the prevailing wind (including the need for evacuation plans in the event of an incident) and b) the impact of the low frequency noise emitted by the battery farms and c) the through life management and decommissioning of the battery farms - **no further detail on battery type, but a real emphasis being placed on this issue, along with point 3 below**
2. Highways & HGVs - specifically construction traffic. The majority of the planned access roads are 'C - class', for example Golf Links Road is earmarked for HGV traffic. There will also be 800 workers on site for 2/3 years, although Sunnica state that many will be staying in a caravan park they will create (Freckenham Road?) so the work traffic through the week will not be that significant.
3. Quality of Farm Land - solar projects are not allowed on farming land graded as A, B, or C1. The farm land being used has been listed as C3 by Sunnica, but this grading was last done in the 1990s. The belief is that this might have altered in recent years and Sunnica changed the boundary to include a different farm after the grading was released in their project documentation - **possibility of more updated information on land grading from a local farmer, attempting to provide more information at the next meeting**

These are the three key areas, but they are also challenging the following, although they are aware that Sunnica may well have alternatives that wouldn't stop the project or could simply ignore (in other words that are not likely to stop or reduce the size of the farm):

Bio-Diversity - the impact on the wildlife, specifically protected species (the existence of Milk Parsley, Great Crested Newt, etc..) - Sunnica's alternative would be to isolate and build around or move the protected item - **looking for expertise in this area**

Deer Containment fences and Landscaping - the fact that it will take 10 to 15 years for the tree saplings to grow to a height that would hide the deer containment fencing (8 to 10 feet tall and miles of it) - also considering the closure of Bridleways

Density of Solar Farms in the area - there are 3 more solar farms planned in the area (area not clearly defined, but within 8 miles) and a hydroponics plant at Bay Farm that will utilise solar and battery storage (stacked 18m tall). I believe this is on the Newmarket Road by the 'House of Muddy Paws'. - **further confirmation that the Hydroponics plant will have significant battery storage**

Aviation - although the bases at Mildenhall and Lakenheath have been consulted and considered safe, the light aircraft traffic using Newmarket Racecourse hasn't been considered and would be subject to thermal currents that make the air unstable over solar farms. - **Civil Aviation have stated**

they do not want to stop Carbon Neutural initiatives, so do not see this being a problem and therefore support the project

Archaeology and Listed Buildings

Finally, in the summer of 2022, if passed by the Planning Inspectorate, they offer up a period where a legal challenge could be mounted. The PCA is currently exploring the implications of a legal challenge and are looking to raise funds. Their primary focus is to crowd fund and this is about to start, but they are looking to councils to raise funds as well. I have already flagged that Red Lodge declined to be involved previously, but at some point I will bring it back to the council to vote on, to confirm the councils most current thinking.

Crowd funding looking to raise £25,000 to support a legal challenge and farm land grading costs - currently at £800 with two council contributions of £3,000.