



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sunnica Consultation
Newgate Communications
Sky Light City Tower
50 Basinghall Street
London
EC2V 5DE

04 December 2020

To whom it may concern,

As constituency MPs for the sites of Sunnica's proposed solar farm, we are together writing to set out our joint position on the project.

Sunnica Energy Farm will, if built, cross the boundaries of our constituencies of South East Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk, and will come into close proximity of a number of rural villages, including Isleham, Kennett, Chippenham, Snailwell, Worlington, Freckenham, and Red Lodge.

We ask that Sunnica Limited accepts this joint letter as our response to its statutory consultation due to close on December 18th. We have both read Sunnica's plans closely, and are grateful for the time you have taken to meet with us and our teams to discuss the project in further detail and to understand how it will impact our constituents.

We have formed our position following extensive engagement with constituents, parish councils, and district councillors over recent weeks as part of Sunnica's statutory consultation, and over the last couple of years whilst Sunnica has been developing its plans. In view of the representations we have received and the discussions we have had, we have come to the decision that we cannot support Sunnica's proposed project in its current form.

We both recognise the essential role renewable technologies will play as part of the UK's efforts to meet its 2050 net zero emissions commitment, and the important role that solar has to play as part of a diverse energy system. As the Prime Minister recently set out in the Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, embracing green technologies will be critical to economic growth by delivering net zero emissions in a way that creates jobs and allows us to carry on living our lives.

We are proud that our areas are already making a significant contribution to solar energy, with farms situated in Soham, Burwell, Stretham, Fordham, Great Wilbraham, Lakenheath, Exning, and Red Lodge, and other projects in the pipeline. We recognise the value that solar can bring in helping us deliver our energy needs locally.

From consulting with our constituents, we understand that the overwhelming majority of them are opposed to this project. In some of our villages, the local parish council have undertaken their own local surveys. For instance, in Chippenham, 93% of residents are in favour of renewables, whilst 92% are opposed to this project in its current form. In Isleham 92%, are in favour of renewables, whilst 84% are opposed to this project in its current form.

As constituency MPs, whilst we welcome the efforts that Sunnica has made to engage with our constituents, we are concerned that the company is not adequately taking their legitimate concerns into account as it continues to develop its plans.

The plan as proposed is going to take away vast swathes of open countryside, and we are concerned that Sunnica's latest proposals still do not locate the site at an appropriate distance from residents' homes. This closeness is particularly important given constituents' concerns over any potential fire risk from the sites, and we would welcome further clarity over how this will be managed throughout the project's lifetime.

Indeed, the size of the proposed 2,700 acre site is unprecedented on UK soil, and far larger than any other solar plant existing or proposed in our country. The proposed project will remove a large area of agricultural land from cultivation, and we are concerned about the impact that this project would have on the level of crops that can be produced locally.

We also share our constituents' concerns about Sunnica's classification of the soil across the proposed sites for this project, and would encourage Sunnica to produce the full data behind its findings at the earliest opportunity to allow for full investigation and scrutiny.

The proposed area for this site is in a tranquil and beautiful part of the world, that is not only appreciated by its residents and visitors, but also by the abundance of animals and wildlife that inhabit the area. We worry that the proposed site will dramatically affect the landscape, including natural, biodiverse habitats, and we share our constituents' worries around the viability of the proposed screening.

Finally, we have concerns over the decommissioning, and while we understand you have a bond over this aspect, we would welcome further details over how the process would take place. We wish to be clear that any risk that the site is not properly returned to how it was before is unacceptable.

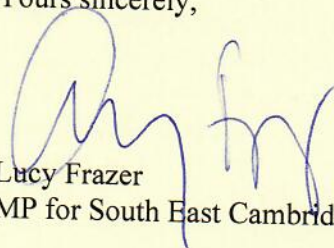
We understand that Sunnica will be submitting its plans to the Planning Inspectorate in Spring 2021. Ahead of this submission, we ask that Sunnica fully consider how their proposed project will impact our constituents, particularly those who live in the immediate vicinity of the project, throughout construction, operation, and decommissioning.

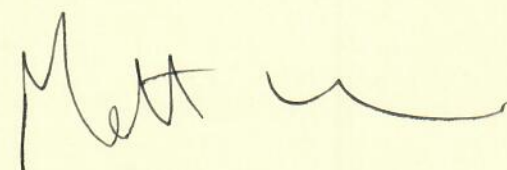
We ask Sunnica in particular to listen to our concerns about the proposed project's scale; the loss of local countryside for agriculture, recreation, and pleasure; the impact on biodiversity and wildlife; safety concerns; and decommissioning plans.

As a result of the above considerations and concerns, we stand with our constituents in opposing the project in its current form, but would welcome opportunities for Sunnica to engage in further dialogue with our constituents over meaningful change.

We look forward to being updated as Sunnica develops and updates its plans following the representations it has received from our constituents, and us as constituency MPs, as part of its statutory consultation.

Yours sincerely,


Lucy Frazer
MP for South East Cambridgeshire


Rt Hon Matt Hancock
MP for West Suffolk