

My ref:  
Your ref:

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021

Contact: Gillian Beasley  
Telephone: [REDACTED]  
E Mail: [REDACTED]



Gillian Beasley,  
Chief Executive

The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng, MP,  
Secretary of State for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Box SH1104  
Shire Hall  
Castle Hill  
Cambridge  
CB3 0AP

By email only to  
[kwasi.kwarteng.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:kwasi.kwarteng.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Minister,

**Re: Sunnica Solar Farm**

The National Infrastructure Planning team at the Planning Inspectorate have registered a proposal for a Solar Farm near the Cambridgeshire and Suffolk border. Members of Cambridgeshire County Council have concerns regarding the scheme and on Tuesday 20 July 2021, passed a motion to that effect. In accordance with the agreed motion, I am writing to alert you to the views of Members of the Council on the project.

The motion was agreed as follows:

*“Cambridgeshire County Council committed in May 2020 to support the delivery of net-zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire when it approved its Climate Change and Environment Strategy.*

*The Joint Administration of the County Council is committed to reviewing the strategy with the aim of moving forward the Net Zero target for Cambridgeshire County Council towards 2030. This review will be carried out in the light of developments such as fresh information from the independent Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Commission on Climate Change, and successful trials of Local Area Energy Planning in Newcastle, Bridgend and Manchester.*

*The Council has already committed to investment into renewable energy generation, and it is clear that Cambridgeshire must generate more renewable energy to help deliver its ambitious decarbonisation targets. Good examples of work underway are projects such as Solar Together, supporting residents to purchase solar PV for their roofs and domestic battery storage; Babraham Smart Energy grid, which uses already developed land to generate solar PV over car spaces; and solar farms, such as North Angle Solar Farm. These schemes, developed by officers in the Council’s Climate Change & Energy Services team, have been supported across parties and by communities, putting Cambridgeshire in a strong position from which to extend its climate and sustainability ambitions.*

*The proposed Sunnica commercial development, a 500MW solar farm that covers 2800 acres of farmland on the Eastern edges of Cambridgeshire, will impact the villages of Isleham, Chippenham, Snailwell, Kennett, Burwell and Reach plus a number of villages in West Suffolk.*

*It is disappointing that communities including Isleham were included late in the initial round of consultation, and that COVID restrictions in force at that time limited the nature of the consultation that could be undertaken.*

*The planning decision for the proposed Sunnica Project falls under the legislation for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects that will ultimately be determined by the Secretary of State. A joint response was made by this Council in December 2020 along with Suffolk County Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, and West Suffolk Council, which acknowledged the need to increase renewable energy generation, while noting that no updates to the National Policy Statements for Renewable Energy Infrastructure had been produced to indicate that solar PV on the scale proposed is appropriate.*

*This Council resolves:*

- to continue to work in partnership with Suffolk County Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, and West Suffolk Council to make representations in respect of the Sunnica proposals as they develop.*
- to instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State to express concern at the size and scale of the proposed 500MW Sunnica solar farm on agricultural farmland, the effect of COVID restrictions on opportunities for public engagement and the omission of some residents from the initial round of consultations, and the impact of the proposals on rural communities.*
- to share a copy of the letter with the other 'host' planning authorities, both local MP's, and the Cambridgeshire Parish Councils of Burwell, Chippenham, Fordham, Isleham, Kennett, Reach, Snailwell and Soham."*

We hope that you will be able to swiftly provide a response acknowledging our concerns to these plans.

Yours sincerely,



Gillian Beasley  
Chief Executive

Cc. The three other 'host' planning authorities (Suffolk County Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and West Suffolk Council), both local MP's (Lucy Frazer, MP for South East Cambridgeshire, and Matt Hancock, MP for West Suffolk), and the Cambridgeshire Parish Councils of Burwell, Chippenham, Fordham, Isleham, Kennett, Reach, Snailwell and Soham.