
TITLE: Sunnica Energy Farm Update

Committee: Planning Committee

Date: 2 September 2020

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[V55]

1.0 ISSUE

1.1 To receive an update on the Draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) relating to the proposed Sunnica development and to note the process.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 Members are requested to:

- i) To note the draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) as set out in Appendix 1; and
- ii) To note the process for the Council's involvement in the Development Consent Order Process as set out in paragraph 3.6 of this report.

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

3.1 The Sunnica Energy Farm is a National Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP), proposed to be located in the east of the district and is in close proximity to Isleham, Chippenham and Kennett. There is a cable route connecting to Burwell Electrical Sub Station (see appendix 3 for current draft map). As the proposal is an NSIP it is determined by the Secretary of State.

3.2 The proposal is seeking to provide 500MW through solar panels and batteries, which will power approximately 100,000 homes.

3.3 The Council has been actively involved in pre-application meetings relating to this proposal. This was encouraged by Government advice. The meetings were attended by various authorities throughout Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. A brief summary of the application process is provided at Appendix 2 and should Members wish to read further information on the Development Consent Order (DCO) process and the role of local authorities, this is provided at Appendix 4.

3.4 It is important to note and be aware that East Cambridgeshire District Council is not the decision making body and is only a statutory consultee in the Development Consent Order (DCO) process.

- 3.5 On 3 August 2020, the Council was consulted on the draft SoCC (Appendix 1). The consultation period expires on 1 September 2020. There is no requirement for consultation responses to be submitted via Planning Committee and further it is not possible for committee to endorse the Officer comment due to the consultation period expiring prior to a committee being held. Nonetheless, as this is a large scale development, it is important to bring this matter to Members attention. At the time of writing this report the comments are still being written and a copy of the response to the consultation will be provided to Members.
- 3.6 It is also timely to update Members on the different stages of the DCO process and the indicative timetable that is proposed. A short summary describing each stage is also provided.
- Stage 1 – Draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). A summary of this process is set out in Appendix 2 for information. This is the stage that Officers are currently responding to.
 - Stage 2 - Pre-submission work (November 2020 – February 2021). This is akin to the Council’s pre-application advice process. This is where Officers will make representation in relation to technical issues that are identified.
 - Stage 3 - Draft Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (Current time frame proposed: 23 February – 23 March 2021). This is where Officers make representations on part of the proposals that are agreed or challenged respectively. There will be an opportunity for Members to assist Officers in making these representations.
 - Stage 4 - Adequacy of Consultation Representation (AoC) (approx. April – May 2021). The Council will have 14 days to respond to this part of the process. The Council will need to agree or disagree that the developer has undertaken their consultation in accordance with their Statement of Community Consultation. The Planning Manager will provide this response and will ensure that Members updated.
 - Stage 5 - Local Impact Reports (LIR)/ Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) (Approx May – June 2021). The LIR is a technical document and the affected authorities will have the opportunity to write a joint report addressing the technical elements of the proposal. This will cover all topics relevant to the development. The SoCG will formally agree or challenge all of the issues raised in the process.
 - Stage 6- Written Representation (approx. June 2021). This is where the Council has the opportunity to either support or oppose the proposed development. This will be a matter for Members and will be a decision of the Planning Committee.

4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Members are requested to note the contents of this report.

5.0 APPENDICES

- 5.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Statement of Community Consultation
Appendix 2 – Development Consent Order Process (DCO) – Sunnica
Appendix 3 – Draft Application Site of Sunnica
Appendix 4 - The role of local authorities in the development consent process
(guidance from the Planning Inspectorate)

Background Documents

None

Location

Room No. 011
The Grange
Ely

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