

# Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Sunnica Energy Farm
<b>File reference</b>	EN010106
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	28 July 2020
<b>Meeting with</b>	Sunnica Energy Farm
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Project meeting
<b>Circulation</b>	All attendees

## Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

## Project update

The Applicant provided a general update since the last meeting with the Inspectorate in January 2019. A brief summary of the Proposed Development was set out. The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that post non-statutory consultation the redline boundary had been revised to accommodate changes to the Proposed Development. It was also confirmed that the changes to the redline boundary did not impact the s53 applications that were currently being considered by the Inspectorate.

The Proposed Development will connect to the existing Burwell National Grid Substation.

The Applicant confirmed that the geophysical surveys and ecological surveys were almost completed for all of the main sites, being Sunnica East A and B as well as Sunnica West A and B. It was confirmed that some of the changes undertaken to Sunnica West A and Sunnica West B were as a result of potential archaeological finds detected during the geophysical survey work. It was confirmed that these areas would be used as non-intrusive mitigation land to avoid disturbance.

## Consultation

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that the local communities had showed a high interest in the Proposed Development and it was in discussion with the Parish Councils. It was confirmed that the Applicant had set up working groups with West Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.

It was confirmed that the Applicant was in discussion with Highways England regarding impacts on the local road network.

To ensure the consultation is robust, the Applicant will send a consultation booklet and questionnaire direct to people living in the core consultation zone and use a virtual exhibition, webinars, telephone surgeries and if possible physical events, noting current restrictions. It was confirmed that the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) was drafted to ensure flexibility in the consultation approach to allow for any changes that may necessary as a result of Covid-19 (eg in terms of ability to hold face to face events etc).

The Applicant confirmed it was aware of the local pressure group 'Say No to Sunnica' and that it had been in contact with representatives of the group, either directly or via the Parish Councils.

### **Environmental Impact Assessment**

The Applicant provided an update on the environmental surveys that have been undertaken and the programme through to preparation of the Environmental Statement. The Applicant confirmed that it did not consider that re-scoping was necessary following the changes to the red line boundary following the non statutory consultation.

### **Compulsory acquisition and Special Category Land**

It was confirmed that the Applicant is holding 1-2-1 discussion with landowners and that there is no Special Category Land within the redline boundary.

### **S53 applications**

It was confirmed that 16 s53 authorisation request applications had been submitted to the Inspectorate in two separate submissions in December 2019 and January 2020. The Applicant confirmed that it did not anticipate any further s53 application submissions as a consequence of recent changes to the red line boundary. The Applicant stated that it was continuing to negotiate with landowners in an effort to reach voluntary agreements but noted challenges around engagement.

The Inspectorate explained it was continuing to progress the s53 applications, noting complexities in content and number. The Inspectorate confirmed that it required further clarification in respect of all 16 applications and that some s53 Requests for Further Information had already been issued to the Applicant, with others to follow in due course. The Inspectorate asked that in providing its responses, the Applicant should provide updates, evidence and information it considers pertinent to the application, and which would inform or provide answers to the Inspectorate's requests. The Inspectorate will then consider this information as part of its determination, with input and advice from the Planning and Infrastructure Legal Team as required. The Applicant and the Inspectorate agreed that a follow-up meeting to specifically discuss the s53 applications may be worthwhile and that the Applicant would be in contact to arrange this.

### **Programme**

- Statutory Consultation on the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) scheduled for August 2020;
- Statutory consultation will run from 22 September to 2 December 2020 (10 Weeks) and;

- Draft documents review early February 2021
- Application would be submitted April 2021

The Inspectorate queried whether the date of the Application could be amended slightly to take account of the bank holiday and it was agreed the Applicant would consider this.

The Inspectorate raised concerns over the limited time period currently set out in the Applicant's programme for updating the SoCC post consultation with the local authorities on the draft SoCC. The Applicant clarified it had been working closely with the host authorities and was not expecting any major changes to the draft SoCC. They would take any comments into account before publishing the final version of the SoCC.

It was highlighted that the draft documents review process can take up to 12 weeks to complete depending on the complexity of the case but usually a much quicker turnaround is possible. It was clarified that if the review was targeted it could be reduced to four to six weeks. The Inspectorate requested that the No Significant Effects Report be included in the draft documents review (if applicable).

The Applicant committed to agree a contact plan with the Inspectorate and provide a list of documents to be sent to the Inspectorate for review.

### **Any Other Business**

The Applicant was advised to be clear in the naming of the various sites in the Environmental Statement and in the consultation material and if possible, consider a naming convention that would be more meaningful to the communities.

The Applicant was advised to review the Cleve Hill Solar Farm decision.

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that they will relaunch the website before the statutory consultation period starts, to ensure ease of use for interested consultees.

### ***Specific decisions/ follow-up required?***

The following actions were agreed:

- Contact plan to be established
- The Inspectorate to update the submission date on the website to state Q2 2021.
- Arrange a follow-up meeting prior to Christmas 2020.