

## Sunnica Update May 2022

Many thanks to everyone for their input into the Sunnica Pre-Examination stage. Overall, there were 1359 Interested Party registrations (either individuals or groups), which give a really good indication of just how much this Sunnica proposal affects our 16 parishes and towns.

As you know, registration for Interested Parties closed on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022. Comments are available to view on the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) website

(<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/sunnica-energy-farm/?ipcsection=relreps>).

### Examining Authority Appointment:

The PINS Examining Authority (ExA) has now been appointed – there will be 3 inspectors reviewing the Development Consent Order (DCO) documents. One of these has already visited the area. The ExA will do further site visits during the course of the Examination.

### Timetable:

We are waiting to hear when the 6-month Examination phase will begin. This will be divulged at a Preliminary Meeting, which we were estimating could be held in early May, with a view to the Examination starting shortly after this.

However, an update sent from PINS on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022 indicated that Sunnica Ltd has requested a further (approx. 2.5 month) delay to proceedings, as they are making changes to the Scheme.

They are requesting that the Preliminary Meeting should not be held until 18<sup>th</sup> July; the start of the Examination phase normally follows a couple of weeks after this (see Sunnica's requested indicative timetable below).

For more details, please see correspondence between PINS and Sunnica (dated 19<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April) on the above website.

This change request has **not yet been agreed to**. PINS are asking for feedback from all **Interested Parties, Affected Persons and Statutory Parties** on this delay **by 23:59 on Weds 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022**.

### **Please have your say**

Sunnica has asked PINS to consider the following indicative timetable:

1. By end of May 2022 – explore the feasibility of the new Option 3, confirm all amendments, carry out impact assessments, technical assessments etc and prepare documentation (*we don't yet know the impact these changes will have on landscape, wildlife, traffic, noise, etc*)
2. End of May to end of June 2022 – full consultation on amendments (*we don't yet know how this will be done or with who*)
3. First two weeks of July 2022 – period to have regard to consultation responses
4. No earlier than 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022 – preliminary meeting and start of Examination on updated application and revised order limits (*we don't yet know if further delays would be required if 1-3 can't be achieved by the above dates*)

### How to respond to the latest PINS request for comments – **BEFORE 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022:**

PINS are *only* seeking comments from Interested Parties, Affected Persons and Statutory Parties on:

- a) Whether the Preliminary Meeting should be delayed until mid-July 2022

- b) The Applicant's proposed timetable (see 1-4 above) to consult further on amendments intended to form the formal Change Request to be made to the ExA.

PINS are *not*, at this stage, seeking any comments about the Scheme itself. Only on the above 2 matters.

All comments can be submitted via email to: [Sunnica@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:Sunnica@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

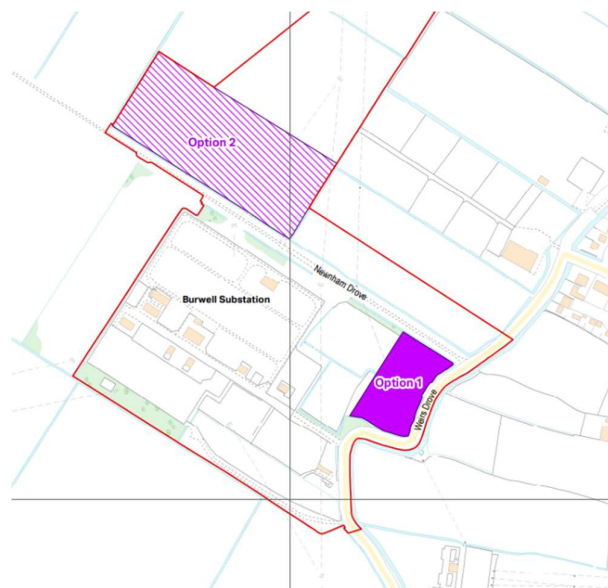
(see <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/sunnica-energy-farm/?ipcsection=overview> for more information)

### **What Changes are Sunnica requesting?**

The Sunnica solar and battery plant requires a connection to the National Grid substation at Burwell. In order to accommodate the Scheme, the Burwell grid station would need to be extended. This would be done at Sunnica's expense, and they proposed 2 options for the location of the substation extension (comprising 12m high infrastructure) as follows:

*Option 1* – build the extension on approx. 0.31 ha land within the existing Burwell substation compound, owned by National Grid

*Option 2* – build the substation extension on land adjacent to the existing Substation, which would require compulsory acquisition from the landowner. See map below.

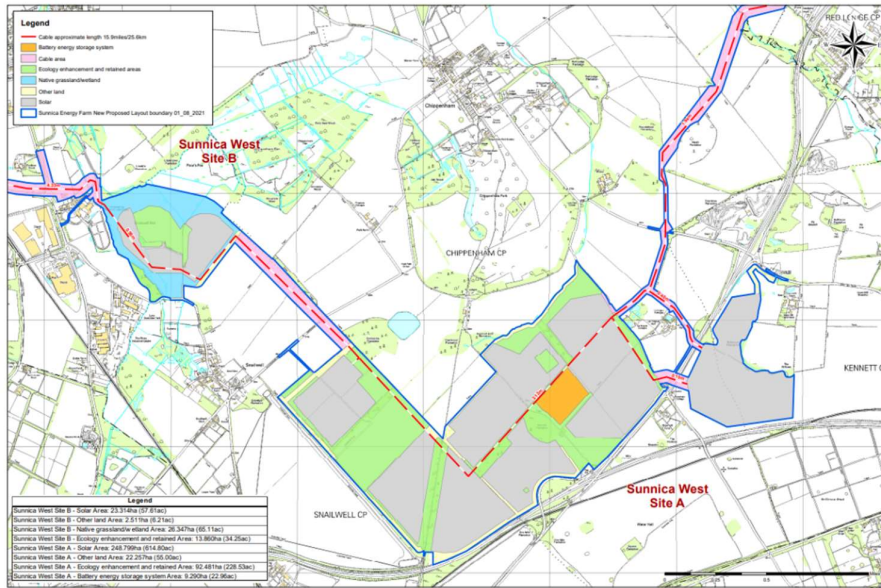


Sunnica have said that the operator, National Grid, cannot accommodate Option 1. So they are seeking to remove this from the Scheme.

But they are now also seeking an alternative for option 2, due to complications with the compulsory purchase order requirements. A new 'Option 3' is being explored.

### **Alternative Substation Extension – Option 3**

Sunnica is seeking a delay to allow them to explore a new option ('Option 3') for the Burwell substation extension – to an area within the Sunnica West A site (near the Chippenham Park estate and the Limekilns gallops).



We don't yet know:

- a) How exactly Option 3 would fit into the Sunnica West A site
- b) Whether the revised Option 3 is technically feasible – Sunnica and National Grid are currently trying to ascertain this
- c) If there are further options if this new Option 3 is not considered feasible
- d) If Sunnica can obtain an amended Connection Agreement with National Grid for this new Option 3
- e) What impacts this new Option 3 could have on local communities
- f) What impacts this new Option 3 could have on landscape, wildlife, noise, traffic, archaeology, heritage, etc.
- g) This change would likely require further assessments to be carried out to evaluate the impact on all of these points, and possibly more. The results of these additional assessments may also require further changes to be made. We don't yet know what would happen if these assessments could not be completed by end of May, in order to allow a consultation in June
- h) If this could not be completed before Sunnica's preferred start date of 18<sup>th</sup> July, could there be further delays?
- i) How and who will be consulted on these changes. Would it be a full public consultation?

Sunnica have said they will need to issue new versions of many of their DCO application documents (Land Plans, Works Plans, Access and Rights of Way Plans, the DCO, the Explanatory Memorandum, the Statement of Reasons, the Book of Reference, etc).

The ExA is therefore seeking our views on whether the delay request should be accepted or not, and whether the mid-July timeframe is suitable for this new Option 3 to be fully explored, evaluated and consulted upon.

**If you are an Interested Party, Affected Person or Statutory Party, please do submit your views to the above email address by 23:59 on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022.**