

**COUNTY COUNCIL: 20TH JULY 2021**

Amendment proposed by Councillor Lorna Dupré

Additions in bold and deletions shown in strikethrough

Motion from Councillor Mark Goldsack

~~Under the previous Conservative administration~~ 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. ~~Work started last year scoping 'Local Area Energy Planning' as a 'route map to net zero by 2050' for Cambridgeshire which was also highlighted in the recent report by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Commission for Climate Change. A planned approach, such as 'Local Area Energy Planning' offers a more cost-effective long-term solution for decarbonisation and provides better local benefits for our communities.~~

**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 and its fair share of carbon emission reductions. Good examples of work ~~underway~~ **under way** are projects such as Solar Together, supporting residents to purchase solar PV for their roofs **and domestic battery storage**; ~~Ba~~**Abraham** Smart Energy grid, which uses already developed land to generate solar PV over car spaces; and solar farms, such as North Angle Solar Farm., ~~which is at an acceptable human scale. These widely supported, Conservative administration schemes have resulted in huge praise for the County's efforts from groups and people including Friends of the Earth, putting Cambridgeshire County Council as one of, if not the leading, Green focussed local authority. 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.~~

~~There are examples of renewable energy projects that are not best practice exemplars, or suitable at the size and scale being proposed in rural communities. It is important the council and its partners highlight both good and bad practice and find better local solutions. The proposed ~~Sonica~~ **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, and~~

Kennett, **Burwell and Reach** plus a number of villages in West Suffolk. For context it is over 2100 football pitches worth of land and will change the rural nature of the countryside in just one project! The electricity generated by this project will feed directly into the National Grid at Burwell providing no local benefit. There are so many better ways to get the same volume of renewable energy generated in Cambridgeshire than private solar PV farms of this scale using greenfield sites in the countryside.

In the village of Isleham, the consultation undertaken by Sonica falls well short of the statutory minimum required. It was a late addition to the site plan and after most of the consultation work in neighbouring villages was undertaken. The good people of Isleham are being unheard and mis-treated by this process, despite several representations to Sunnica direct. **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. As it stands the Sunnica Project is not supported by the relevant elected Members of West Suffolk District Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, and Suffolk County Council, as the other relevant 'host' planning authorities. In addition, both local MP's; locally elected County Council members; and all local and neighbouring Parish/town councils stand against the development. **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 is requested to agree 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.**
- **The Chief Executive writes 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.** The letter is to propose that better solutions for generating this scale of renewable energy can be achieved through a combination of retrofitting solar PV on roofs of homes and businesses; on brownfield sites and with smaller scale solar PV farms that work in harmony with the local communities. Delivery can be achieved using 'Local Area Energy' planning which Local Authorities can lead in collaboration with their communities.

- ~~The letter is to include that the consultation process for the proposed Sunnica development has major weaknesses and has failed local people, particularly in Isleham which was left out of early discussions.~~
- ~~The letter is to also confirm that the planned size and spread of the proposed Sunnica development is wrong for the level of green field land required; has an unreasonable impact on the daily lives of rural communities; and that the Council does not support the Sunnica Proposal.~~
- ~~To The Council shares a copy of the letter sent to the Secretary of State 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; to ensure its objections to the proposed Sunnica scheme are known.~~
- **To share** a copy of the letter sent to the Secretary of State 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.; to ensure its objections to the proposed Sunnica scheme are known.