

BOTLEY WEST SOLAR FARM EXAMINATION

WRITTEN REPRESENTATION BY BEGBROKE AND YARNTON GREEN BELT CAMPAIGN (BYG) IN ADVANCE OF DEADLINE 1: 4 JUNE 2025 IN RESPECT OF COMMENTS MADE BY MARK OWEN-LLOYD DURING THE DISCUSSION OF AGENDA ITEM 3a , THE ROCHDALE ENVELOPE FLEXIBILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

In RR 0092 submitted by BYG we concluded in Section 1. SITE SELECTION, ALTERNATIVE SITES, SITE DEFINITION – Paragraph 1.13 *“that PVDP had made no real effort to establish if another site (or sites) of a similar size (or smaller) in the UK could have caused less harm and should have been progressed rather than BWSF”*. We also pointed out in that paragraph that in an article in the Times, dated 16 January 2025, it was reported, following an interview with Peter Gerstmann and and Mark Owen-Lloyd, both of PVDP, that the Times was told by them that *“ Finding a “good landlord” in the Blenheim Palace estate, the ancestral seat of the Duke of Marlborough and birthplace of Winston Churchill, was one of the key factors in choosing the site in Oxfordshire for the mega-solar farm.”* We believe this explains why no efforts were made to explore alternative sites other than a token exercise to give the impression that some work had been done. The evidence available suggests a deal with Blenheim predates other matters investigated.

During Issue Specific Hearing 1, Mark Owen-Lloyd was asked by Mr Wallace *“When did negotiations start with the landowners here”* (Transcript ISH1 Part 1. 01:06:31:25-01:06:42:18). Mr. Owen-Lloyd, somewhat surprisingly, claimed he was unable to answer that question.

Given the sensitivity of the site selected, which is largely Green Belt with a high degree of BMV land and in close proximity to a WHS, it is important to establish whether the availability of land from Blenheim estate was a primary consideration in site selection, and overrode other considerations described by the applicants. We, therefore, ask the ExA to follow this up with the Applicant to establish whether a serious review of realistic alternative sites ever took place.