

## **Written Representation to PINS re Botley West solar power station by Harry St John**

### **Background**

**My name is Harry St John. I am now a resident of Eynsham, having lived in North Leigh since 1997. I worked as a rural Chartered Surveyor for 47 years, 34 of them in Oxfordshire; so I know the area very well indeed.**

**I was until May 2024 the Ward Member for North Leigh in West Oxfordshire District Council when I stood down after serving in that role for 8 years, serving on the Planning and other Committees. I was also a Parish Councillor in North Leigh for over twenty years about half of them as Chairman.**

### **Professional Experience**

**My early professional career involved me in land/estate management, forestry and in particular compulsory acquisition of clients land by various public bodies - eg over 30 miles of motorways and bypasses (involving over 700 acres of clients land), many miles of water, sewer, gas and oil pipelines being laid and latterly in HS2 where I was acting for HS2 acquiring blighted properties along the route between Buckinghamshire to Northamptonshire.**

**I was closely involved in two of the MSAs on the M40 where our clients defeated the CPOs threatened by the Highways Agency, thus enabling the private sector to deliver the much need facilities rather than the State.**

**All these acquisitions were backed by Government or quasi Government bodies and executed in the wider public interest - i.e. a modern highway system and services infrastructure.**

**In the latter part of my career I was more involved with the buying, selling and valuing of farms and estates, land, woodland and related property, including the promotion of and sale of land for residential development, in central and southern England.**

**At a local level, within the last thirty years I have been involved with a number of properties, now blighted directly by the subject scheme.**

**So I think it fair to say I know and understand the locality, farmland, soil quality, what drives values in the rural property market in this part of England and the Planning and related legislation and policies that affect rural property.**

**It was part of my professional knowledge and furthermore sitting on Planning and Scrutiny Committees at WODC for much of my time as a local councillor kept me up to date.**

**During my professional career, I was the local chairman of the rural branch of the RICS, the CAAV and of the Oxfordshire branch Country Landowners and Business Association.**

**For some years I was also a member of the Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum.**

**On a personal level, I am a keen walker, bird watcher, recorder of butterflies, various country pursuits; I coordinate local volunteers on North Leigh Common, and have been a Trustee of the Wychwood Forest Trust for a number of years.**

**The ancient hunting forest of Wychwood covered about 41 parishes in West Oxon and a good part of the subject site lies in the Wychwood Forest area, specifically designated in the WODC Local Plan adopted in 2018.**

**The Trust is a charity that promotes the historic landscapes involved, promoting wildlife habitats, rural skills, regenerative land management combined with education and better understanding of the landscape and history of the area. Blenheim Park and estate was, until Queen Anne gave the estate to the Duke of Marlborough and paid for most of the cost of the Palace on behalf of a grateful nation, an integral part of the royal hunting Forest of Wychwood used since Norman times.**

**My wife and I now live in Eynsham but whilst our home is not affected directly by the scheme, the countryside we live in, walk in and drive through daily will be seriously impacted by it for reasons set out below.**

## Grounds for MY OBJECTION .

	Pages
• Scale.	3 - 4
• Landscape impact and Green Belt.	4 - 6
• Community benefit.	6
• Time Frame.	6
• Funding and Company Structure.	6 - 8
• Grid Connection offer.	9
• Practical Issues and other Impacts.	9 - 15
• Conclusion.	15 - 16

I wish to object to the Botley West/Blenheim solar power station project on a number of grounds set out below for the reasons stated. I reserve the right to expand on these if necessary when I get to speak at the Examination later this year, if the Inspectors allow me to do so. I hope my local knowledge and experience will be of some use to them when reporting to the Secretary of State.

### • Scale

- Firstly, the **sheer scale** of the whole solar panel array proposed; the panels and related infrastructure will cover c 2200 acres of farmland with a further 1000 acres given over to landscape buffers and grazing or community horticulture.
- There are a number of smaller scale solar farms in this part of Oxfordshire/England which are largely out of sight and not that close to many dwellings or settlements. Most people are quite happy with these sort of schemes and each one adds to the overall supply of renewable energy without dominating an historic landscape of such quality - as this proposal would.
- Whilst I can understand the Governments desire to accelerate the delivery of solar power generation, this part of England is not as sunny as the southern coastal belt of England or east Anglia. The applicants do not seem to have looked hard at any sites in those areas.
- Nor have they made any obvious effort to see if there might a similar amount of land available adjacent to the same 400KV pylon line between Oxford and Gloucester.

- Looking at the route of this pylon line, there appear to be large tracts of mainly arable land of average quality but in a more sparsely populated area with fewer constraints eg World Heritage, Green Belt designations, listed buildings etc.
- In my opinion there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the applicants have made more than a cursory attempt to look elsewhere for a suitable site.
- My impression is that the existence of one willing and large land-owner (i.e. Blenheim Estate ) has driven the site selection here and two other smaller owners have been understandably tempted to join the informal grouping.
- I understand that a significantly more efficient solar panel material is soon to come to the commercial market (a panel combining silicon and perovskite) - I have read that tests indicate it might be at least 30% to 50% more efficient converting sunlight to electricity compared to conversion rates achieved by current technology.
- I understand this new type of PV panel could become commercially available in the next couple of years.
- **If this proved to be the case, would the applicants accept reducing the size of the proposed site needed to generate the same amount of electricity? Or will they just generate a lot more energy than currently planned on the same size of site without sharing the added financial return/benefit? Perhaps they could be asked that question by the Inspectors.**
- If I understand the reasoning, a connection into the 400KV NG pylon line is the vital element for a solar farm or frankly power station on this huge scale, so as to maximise the return on the investment through scaling up.
- There appears to be confusion over who will deliver the connecting substation which needs a separate planning consent as yet not even applied for - throwing the timing and delivery dates (especially in the context of the Connection Licence) into serious doubt. **So far NGET have failed to appear at the Examination and without their input/evidence I cannot see how the Inspectors can advise the Secretary of State with any confidence.**
- Other similar sized projects across the world are mainly located in deserts where the ground is flat and the sunlight (irradiance) is very strong and consistent in largely cloudless skies - unlike conditions prevailing in the UK and Oxfordshire.

- **Landscape Impact and the wider setting of the Blenheim World Heritage Site (WHS)**
- I fully support the recommendations set out in the letter responding to this proposal from ICOMOS of February and July 2024 in responding to the applicant's second consultation - this organisation advises on World Heritage sites and their designation/status - and in particular to the specific recommendations made by one of the UK's most respected Historic Landscape experts, Mr Hal Moggeridge, whom ICOMOS consulted/involved on this matter. **(See page 354 onwards in document APP - 034 in the PINS library; this document runs to 945 pages of S47 responses from various bodies).**
- **Mr Moggeridge** is very robust on what he sees as the likely damaging impact on this Internationally important historic landscape that **forms a further wider protective buffer/setting around Blenheim Palace and Park's WH designated boundary**; much of this buffer is also part of the Oxford Green Belt.
- He recommends the removal of a significant number of fields currently included in the scheme, should the proposal be approved in part. The Applicants have barely changed their initial scheme **thus ignoring Mr Moggeridge's advice and patently superior expertise.**
- He has over 60 years in Landscape architecture, creating not destroying landscapes compared to the applicant's expert claiming just 15 years experience - I suspect largely designing schemes to offset damage of projects like this. I know whose opinion I would give greater weight to, especially as the Applicant's expert seems to have unaware of or just plain ignored a key document prepared and signed in 2017 on the management of the WHS at Blenheim, which has a very helpful Appendix **on the wider setting of the landscape protecting the core WHS boundary.**
- I am sure others will produce this report at the Examination as it explains why the WODC Local Plan has no buffer zone round the WHS as there were and are adequate other protective designations e.g. the Cotswold AONB and the Green Belt and the dominant ownership by Blenheim - and perceived to be a landowner with a strong sense of community responsibility for this historic Estate.
- There have been some excellent birds eye drone photos of views of the estate, the Palace and Park. It would be helpful if the applicant or Blenheim Estate could provide pictures that might have been or could be taken taken from close to the top of the tall monument (Victory Column) north of the Palace - this column is

listed Grade II\* and it would be interesting to verify whether any of the fields to be covered in panels can be seen from the top of the Column. If they have none, perhaps the applicant could be asked to provide some 360 degree shots from this highest point in the WHS.

### **The Green Belt**

- The Inspectors will be aware that the Government proposes to change Green Belt policy and introduce a Grey Belt designation where parts of the Green Belt, deemed partially degraded or developed, could be released for further development.
- It would therefore massively increase the risk of long term development on parts of the proposed solar farm that presently lie in the Green Belt, should the landowners decide such land could be more profitably used for housing etc.
- I believe that is a serious risk that further justifies refusing this project along with its many other flaws.

### **Community benefit**

- The amount of community impact benefit on offer is frankly paltry given the sums involved and the potential returns to operator/landowners alike.
- The Secretary of State should surely insist on a much higher figure than the initial offer of £50K pa since increased to £200 K pa.
- The applicant needs reminding that the planning fee to PINS was less than £10K whereas two much smaller solar farm proposals (c 100 to 150 acres in West Oxon both had to pay in excess of £100,000 in planning fees). So the Applicant is getting off very lightly here, despite generating a huge amount of extra work for many organisations and local Councils affected.
- The Applicants state they are considering providing subsidised electricity to local communities but give no figures, details of how such a discount would be applied and to whom or any time frame. I assume the Inspectors can require them to define in more detail this aspect of any community benefit they decide to concede and a legally binding agreement to do so.

### **Time frame**

- It is hard to grasp the concept of 40 years being a temporary use. That is almost two generations. Temporary consents are normally applicable for residential caravans or mobile homes not over 2000 acres of solar panels on over 3000 acres of land - **about 25% of the whole Blenheim Estate.**

- By 2070, dependence on fossil fuels will be minute, and thus the country will be even more dependent on renewable energy - why on earth, after investing approaching £1billion would one abandon the power station?
- The panels themselves will need replacing in about 25 years, as will 105km of 2 metre high fencing, the wooden posts having probably rotted away at the base. So the overall investment will be still higher let alone the considerable construction activity that will be needed - not adequately addressed in the project programme as one might expect and the Inspectors have already pointed out.

### **Funding and company structure**

- PVDP, who represent Solar Five Ltd, state on their website that they work closely with landowners throughout the design process and planning period to accommodate the landowners land use strategy. They claim to fund projects promotion from internal sources and have the financial means to invest in new projects without external funding.
- I find this a surprising statement given the very considerable sums involved here, where outside investors will be sure to be involved in its actual development, if approved.
- It would appear that the Applicant Solar Five Ltd is one of a dozen off the shelf £100 private companies with similar names ( eg Solar One Ltd and so on) all owned jointly by Herr Peter Gerstmann (a resident of Shiplake, Henley on Thames, and a businessman based in Berlin) and Madame Yulia Lezhen - apparently a resident of Cyprus, but of unknown nationality.
- It is self evident that neither of them have much if any interest in how this part of Oxfordshire might be affected by their private company's proposal - a massive energy infrastructure project run for private profit but potentially to be granted unlimited CPO powers by the DCO - if approved under the provisions of the 2008 Planning Act.
- However I can see **no compelling reasons put forward by the applicant** as to why this small private company should be given such powers, rightly exercisable only **where the public benefits outweigh the private loss. Here there are more private benefits than public ones. (See the MHCLG guidance on the Compulsory Purchase process issued in October 2024 and updated in January 2025).**
- Indeed, it is entirely possible that the two company owners could just decide to sell the consent, if granted by the S of S, to a third

party about whom nothing is known, and take their profit that way.

- The finances of the company are unknown as the relevant figures in the financial statements on the PINS website have been redacted - so there is no way of telling if they really have the funds to pay the estimated £69 million they state will be needed to compensate landowners and a further c £900+ million to construct the solar power station.
- What financial guarantees are in place that the operator will have the funds in c.40 years time to remove the panels and decommission the whole facility, as promised now? Companies can easily be wound up/liquidated leaving no assets available to complete the decommissioning and land restoration.
- So there is no substantive evidence of how this proposal will actually be funded, by whom and no current guarantee that compensation funds have been deposited anywhere to give affected parties confidence that they will be paid for what might be taken from them by compulsion - as would be the case of a public body exercising CPO powers that the DCO could grant if approved by the S of S.
- Moreover if the scheme were approved, consent will come with conditions and legal agreements on the long term management of the site - if it is not clear who - over the next forty years - will be in charge /responsible, then what confidence or guarantee has anyone got of that person/organisation delivering what is promised during that time.
- Such questions do not arise if a Government body or a Local Authority are driving the scheme.

### **Grid Connection offer**

- The company says it has a Grid connection offer from the National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) valid until October 2027. The project, if approved, would take at least two years to build assuming funding can be put in place first to pay for the construction costs in the interim. That sounds a very tight programme given the Examination last until November 2025 and so a decision possibly reached by spring next year at the earliest, and the long supply chains for materials, shortage of skilled labour etc.
- They say they have applied to NGET to extend this offer for another year but do not say if that has been forthcoming as yet.



- The Application fails to say for sure where the vital 400 KV substation near Farmoor will be actually built (on a c. 4 hectare site comprising buildings up to c.12 m high - nearly 40 feet - by 87m x 30m).
- The Applicants agent Mark Owen Loyd has told me that the NGET - not Solar Five Ltd- will be applying for a wholly separate planning approval for the new 400KV substation from the Vale of White Horse later this year. The Planning Officer from VoWH said last week they haven't even been approached in a pre App consultation as yet.
- So the key connection link to the National Grid /400KV pylon line coming west out of Botley to Gloucester, is in fact not part of this proposal, and subject to a different/separate planning process.
- There must be some doubt whether this substation facility can be approved, the land acquired and the infrastructure built in time for October 2027 or even by October 2028, if no application has even been made yet by NG, knowing how slowly these things can progress.
- It might be deemed premature to grant the DCO approval unless the S of S was sure there was a consent in place for this new NGET sub station and that NGET were owners of the site.

### **Practical issues and impacts of the applicant's proposals**

- **Security Fencing and public rights of way**
- The whole scheme involves the erection of security galvanised steel netting fencing c 2m high over 105 kilometres or c 65 miles. This is to keep out humans and deer, and keep in sheep. Other animals should be able to get through the netting fence with the exception of fully grown badgers - maybe special passes can be provided for them..
- Where a public right of way passes through the scheme in most cases both sides will have such 2M fencing - in my opinion degrading the very experience of walking through the countryside .
- It will look like a prison camp or detention centre - albeit without razor wire but many security cameras.
- In places, rights of way will end up in "tunnel like corridors" with high hedges either side and consequential virtual loss of the long rural views over the mosaic of woods, hedges and fields that exist now.
- Who would want to walk along such a path then? In my view the proposal is immensely damaging to the enjoyment of these public rights of way.

- The fence posts will consume a great deal of timber i.e. more trees being felled, or iron - both of which will need concrete footings with consequent soil damage in the erection and decommissioning process along 105 kilometres.
- After 25 years, the fencing will need replacing if the posts are timber (as illustrated in photo montages). Whether the wire netting will last 40 years depends on local conditions.
- **Are these elements properly reflected in the Carbon footprint calculations provided by the applicants experts and if so where?**

### **Damage to local wildlife, habitats etc**

- Others more expert than I will highlight the obvious risk to iconic local birds such as barn owls, sparrowhawks, red kites and other low flying birds like the swans prevalent in the Evenlode valley fields in winter months who could collide into this type of 2m high fencing of which there will be 105 km or 65 miles - we are being told by the applicants experts the impact will be negligible - which I find an extraordinary conclusion.
- Much is made of the application's provision for skylarks - but as is well known sky larks prefer wide-open spaces where no predator can catch them unawares. The panels would make a perfect spot for a sparrow hawk to launch an attack on some unsuspecting skylark. In my experience sky larks would not come near a solar farm of this size or extent (I understand this has been confirmed by research on other solar farms) and the two year construction period of disruption in each field would have driven off the ones there now anyway.
- Removing 3000 acres of largely arable land from growing grain will reduce the quantity of seed available from crops and arable weeds to feed farmland birds which are present in the area - this group of birds are already in serious decline, so reducing the local food supply further is ill-advised at best; the 1000 acres not covered in panels might be of some benefit to these birds depending on what is grown on it and how it is managed.
- The Applicant seems unlikely to be involved in the long term management so is unable to provide any measure of assurance on this sort of detail. **Specialist conditions should be imposed on the applicant/operator/landowners by the S of S.**
- The whole area has a significant population of deer - roe, fallow and muntjac who wander about freely at present for the most part. If this much new fencing is erected, they will be unable to follow existing routes of travel and be channelled by fence lines -

what provision is made to add an increase in RTAs involving deer on local roads? **Can the Applicant be asked for more information on this and how they will prevent this increased risk?**

- **Grazing and mowing grass**

- The panels will mostly face south and thus will prevent the sun shining on much of the ground immediately below panel tables. The proposal states sheep will be used to graze the grass in each panel field enclosure and surplus land not panelled (apart from any parcels used for community food farming).
- I question how much grass of any quality or feed value will grow under the panels - because of the lack of direct sunlight so essential for photosynthesis etc to take place in healthy grass.
- Furthermore, any shepherd will be unable to see quickly where his flock is, because they will be hidden by panels, framework etc. Sheep are notoriously prone to one problem or another, so being able spot a poorly animal is a vital part of shepherding.
- Shepherds use quad bikes to inspect stock, which could only run up and down the gaps between panel tables which will damage the grass there, impacting grazing quality further. I would defy any one trying to gather sheep in a panelled area as any sheep dog would be faced with a maze of panel table legs etc.
- The bottom edge of each panel is stated to be c 0.8metre. However the height of a typical cross bred sheep is about 0.9 metre so they will struggle to get under that part of each panel, although lambs could be small enough. Obviously they could all access from the higher side assuming there are no struts as seen on some solar structures eg at Blenheim's own 20 acre solar array and the one at Kencot..
- In short I believe the practical problems will put off most sensible farmers or shepherds. This could mean the grass will need mowing or trimming through the Sumer months - causing greater risk to ground nesting birds and small mammals, reptiles etc., making it a less suitable BNG area.

- **Hedges**

- The applicants propose planting 26.5 kilometres of new hedging and gapping up another 22km of existing hedges. That sounds admirable, but when fully grown to obscure the offending panels etc in the landscape, the new hedges will blot out many existing and important long views we all enjoy at present - especially

across the Evenlode Valley and the many paths and roads in the Central section.

- If and when eventually decommissioned the panels etc would disappear, but the hedges would have to remain because of the Hedges Act, which precludes removal of that much hedging.
- **This means a permanent change to the rural landscape affected not a temporary one as claimed.**
- **If the scheme is approved, may I request a condition be imposed that ensures plenty of berry bearing hedgerow plants are used creating the new hedges and then not cut until the spring to help feed birds over winter /spring when other foods supplies are exhausted - the hungry gap.**
- The new hedges will of course shade adjacent grassland to some extent and further reduce its productivity.
- **Soil damage during construction**
- Much of the topsoil in the many panel enclosures will be damaged by heavy machinery moving around often in wet conditions drilling holes, erecting panels and fencing and laying cables within the site. Have the applicants made provision for restoring the topsoil before sowing the enclosures to grass or wild flower mixes? If not why not?
- The various construction compounds - c. 8 hectares (20 acres) in total - involve the topsoil being stripped and stored for restoration later.
- There are going to be c. 25 km of cables laid - it is not clear how much of that will be in roads or roadside verges as opposed to farmable land - we should be told, as if laid in farmable land the top and subsoil will be permanently damaged by laying cables or pipes. If the mechanical damage was say 3 metres wide across along say 12km that means getting on for 3.6hectares/10 acres of land would have damaged soil.
- In dry conditions during construction the problem of dust needs to be catered for with water bowsers suppressing dust blowing over residential property nearby.
- Likes where site accesses onto public highways is made, wheel washing facilities will be required.
- I therefore ask that suitable enforceable conditions are imposed on the applicant and their contractors to ensure local roads are kept free of mud or dust, no topsoil is removed off site and soils fully restored.
- **Loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land.**

- **It is clear that there is a substantial amount of Grade 3A and Grade 2 land within the site. There is a good plan showing this. But where are the areas calculated? This should be provided so it is clear to all what percentage should not be used under the basic Planning Policy tenet of avoiding BMV land for development whenever possible especially when alternative locations exist?**
- BMV land general has slopes no more than 11% and soil depths of over 30 cm. It is the most versatile and productive land.
- Permitting the loss of such productive farm land when we are so dependent on imported food already is a very unwise strategic mistake for our country to make, as many others have pointed out but the Applicant has ignored.
- Might I remind the Inspectors that nationally BMV land comprises only about 40 % of the total farmable area remaining in England and only 70% of the land in England is farmable. So BMV land is a long term strategic and irreplaceable asset for feeding the nation, despite the applicant dismissing this and claiming there is spare arable land elsewhere!
- **Noise generation during construction and then operation**
- Obviously there will be noise generated during construction and if approved can I ask for a condition to avoid reversing beepers on machines on site - use only voice warnings which don't disturb whole neighbourhoods.
- There are going to be 156 inverters each emitting 92dBA, 6 small substations emitting either side of 80dBA and the main substation likely to emit c.93dBA. The applicants conclude that the impact on the area will be slight. My view is that the cumulative background noise will be audible as an annoying background hum across a large expanse of the local area, depending on wind and other weather conditions. One assumes the hum might be loudest on sunny days when the greatest power is being generated but that is when people are more likely to be out in their gardens, walking on footpaths and generally enjoying the countryside.
- I am told by a WODC planning officer that he was surprised by the amount noise an inverter makes when he visited the community solar farm at Shrivenham, hence my concern about 156 of them in this vicinity.
- **Artificial Lighting**

- The more secure locations will be lit at night and other parts will have sensor activated lighting- how do the applicants propose to manage the movement of animals at night, which is likely to set off the sensors and thus lighting up the normally dark parts of this rural area with floodlighting? This could be really annoying to humans living nearby and disruptive to bat and other nocturnal animals habitat.

## Other General matters

- In the library paper APP - 021 relating to compulsory acquisition para 1.4.6 refers to the CA Guidance of 2013 - there is also a new general CA guidance issued first in October 2024 and updated further January 2025 - should not the key extracts from that revised guidance be added in to the PINS Library of relevant documents?
- **Adequacy of Public Consultation** - I wish to report that many of the photo montage illustrations (about 30 out of 50 or so ) were either hard to find or **simply not available at the exhibition I went to at Eynsham village hall**; in particular the ones looking east, north east and south east from the higher ground south of Church Hanborough over the Evenlode valley - these in my opinion are the "Money shots" that would have revealed the true and immensely damaging impact these proposals will have on this rural landscape; the applicants team either deliberately or negligently omitted having these either on display or available as they should have been.
- I told Mr Owen Loyd at the time and in later emails that it made the whole exhibition/consultation a travesty and that his company and client should be utterly ashamed - he did not agree! But the recent court case involving Lambeth Borough Council and the failure to consult in accordance with the Gunning Principles as pointed out by Stop Botley West and WODC response to the consultation should be a warning to all concerned.
- In researching Solar Five. Ltd and Herr Gerstmann, I found on line an interview he gave to a renewable energy magazine/web-site in which he said and I quote - "**I would not do a project like this (ie Botley West) in Germany - because it is not possible. It would drag on for twenty years and have lots of objections. The DCO process allows the Secretary of State to determine what is in the interest of the nation as a whole - energy independence or the view from the window!**"

- So it is very clear where he stands, but I do wonder what he would feel if someone proposed a similar scale of solar farm in the fields next to where he lives in Shiplake, only 30 miles away? His home may indirectly benefit from the electricity generated but his company application says it will power 330,000 homes - there are only 260,000 houses in Oxfordshire.
- Over the last few years Blenheim Estate have produced an annual report on the economic impact of the estate on the local economy but strangely little or nothing has been said about this project.
- The estate, Palace and Park is run on exemplary lines in so many respects but many feel, in this instance, that the Estate Trustees have lost sight of the need to prioritise the protection of this National and International jewel for posterity - it was given by a grateful nation to the 1st Duke and thus by succession to other members of the Spencer - Churchill family; we now look to them to act in the wider public's and National interest as well as their own. Lady Henrietta Spencer- Churchill has, to be fair, entered an objection.
- It was reported recently in the local press that the current Duke of Marlborough is himself opposed to this proposal even though one assumes members of his family/relations could benefit enormously were the project approved. It seems the various Blenheim Estate related family or wealth fund trusts and two other key landowners have now actually agreed to sell or lease their land to the operator if the scheme is approved.
- We need to hear from these owners what actually is the case or at least have someone produce the relevant documents/agreements to the Inspectors and the public arena, in the interests of open transparent process in such a public Examination where much is at stake.

## Conclusion

- Yes, the Government and the S of S may want to see more renewable energy projects built to generate electricity so that we can all largely rely on them rather than fossil fuel power sources. This project would feed a lot of electric power into the National Grid whose capacity is already stretched to breaking point, but **there is no compelling evidence or justification for the grant of compulsory powers to enable a private company to profit in the short term rather than any outright public benefit?**
- The wholesale transformation for c.40 years of such an important, historic and largely unspoilt stretch of Oxfordshire rural

countryside **represents a massive public DISBENEFIT** that must far outweigh any public benefit of more renewable energy, when there are so many more suitable places on less good land where this need could equally be met and delivered without impacting so many elements statutorily protected eg a world renowned WHS and its wider setting, Oxford's Green Belt buffer and the introduction of so much alien infrastructure into the pastoral landscape.

- In short this is clearly the wrong place to build such a huge solar power station.
- For all the above reasons, I request the Inspectors to advise the Secretary of State to turn down this application.

Harry St John -  
**May 2025**