

Colin Carritt

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June 2025

Dear Sir,

My reference 20054163

EN010147 Botley West Solar Farm Have Your Say Commentary

I write in support of the PVDP application for a Development Consent Order for the proposed Botley West Solar Farm. The national renewable energy demand, and the climate emergency, require major investment across the UK. The existing grid infrastructure in Oxfordshire will allow the quick and straightforward implementation of a major contribution to renewable energy for the UK. However, there are significant shortcomings in the application that the Examining Authority need to take into account in conditioning any DCO they may be minded to recommend..

Active Travel Connectivity.

In PVDP's extensive application documentation they say, "Botley West seeks to increase recreational use and access across the site through the creation of new footpaths and cycle paths." But what is shown in the application documentation is entirely inadequate and not always well targeted. The proposed new footpaths and cycleways fail to reflect "active travel desire lines". Recreational walking and cycling are important but active travel must also take account of more utilitarian purposes such as commuting, school and shopping trips. To fulfil this need, direct and quick routes are needed. I have been involved in active travel campaigning for many years and in 2020 I founded the Village Travel Network (VTN) www.vtn.org.uk that covers the communities of Woodstock, Begbroke, Bladon, Hanborough, Combe, Stonesfield, Wootton with Glympton, Tackley and Blenheim. The stated aim is "Bringing villages together to enable sustainable travel, connectivity and networking that enhances community safety, wellbeing, social opportunities and longer term environmental and low carbon benefits". Potential active travel routes in the neighbourhood of these communities, and that lie in or close to the BWSF site envelope include:-

1. National Cycle Network Route 5 Reading to Stratford – a strategic recreational route
2. Woodstock to Tackley and Wootton

Active Travel routes within the site envelope but funded through other sources include:-

- Bladon to Begbroke has recently been improved by Blenheim Estates,
- the urgent Eynsham to Hanborough Rail Station route is likely to be financed through a S.106 on the proposed development site at Eynsham and
- the long overdue B4044 cycle route between Eynsham and Botley is also the subject of alternative funding arrangements.

Appendix “A” sets out further details on Active Travel schemes for consideration in this DCO application.

Community Benefits

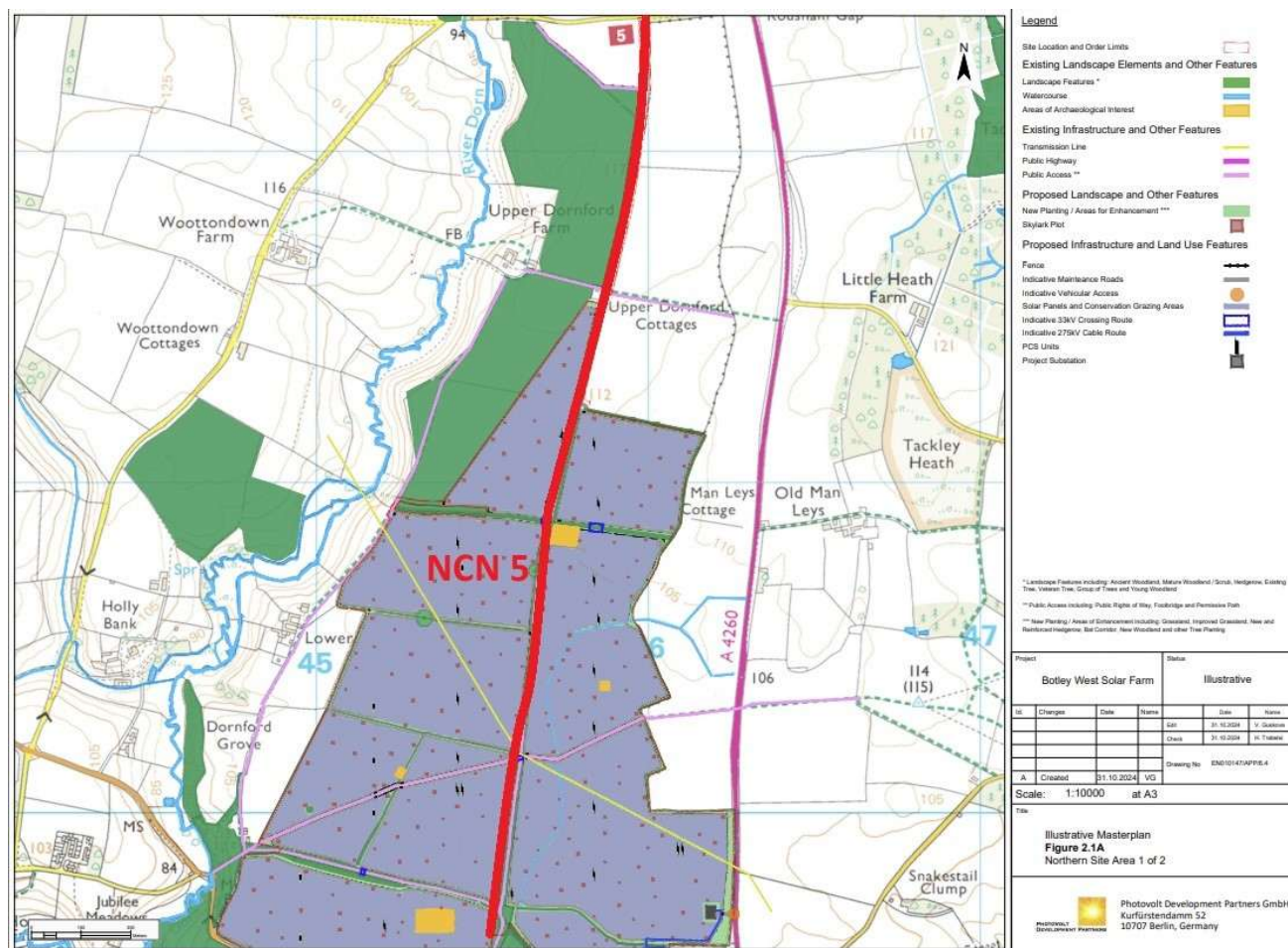
Although I recognise that Community Benefits do not form a material part of the Examining Authorities considerations, it is noticeable that the PVDP has included reference to Community Benefits in their application for a DCO. The level of Community Benefit offered by PVDP is entirely inadequate and should be substantially increased. **Appendix “B”** sets out how a fair level of community benefit might be calculated.

Yours sincerely

Colin Carritt

Appendix “A”

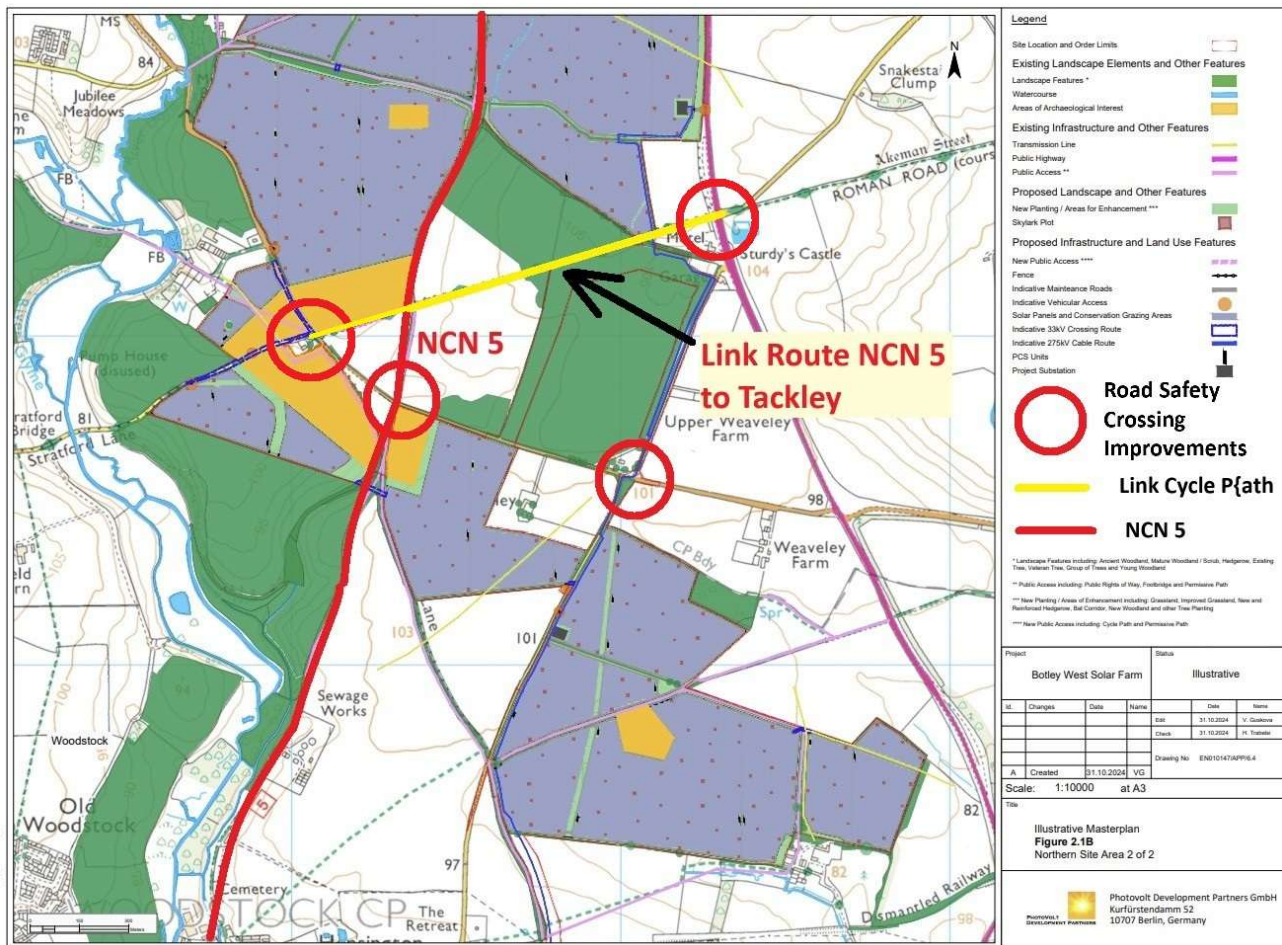
There are several key potential active travel routes within the immediate area of the proposed BWSF farm. These are shown below **on modified copies of Application Documents No. APP-062 Illustrative Masterplan 2.1A and 2.1B.**



Modified Drg No 2.1A

- National Cycle Route 5 Reading to Stratford.** The National Cycle Route No. 5 (NCN 5) (Def Map Ref 416/11/10-40, 379/19/10-20, and 413/5/10) is identified by the applicant as a national strategic cycle route. It runs through the heart of the Solar Farm proposals for approx. 3 miles (Drgs 2.1A and 2.1B). It was developed at the millennium (1999-2000) but is now in need of significant improvement. The applicant should be required to undertake a root and branch improvement to the structure and surface of this route between Upper Dornford and Woodstock. As a minimum this should include restoring the original width of the cycle path to a nominal 2.5m, the repair of the stone subgrade and a weather resistant top dressing.
- Woodstock to Tackley and Wootton** The applicant should further be required to commit to upgrading the existing bridleway, (Def Map Ref 379/1/10-30) also known as the Oxfordshire Way long distance path, and which crosses the NCN 5. The section requiring improvement is between where it crosses the B4027 and

where it crosses the A4260 (shown in yellow on the **modified Drg. No 2.1B** here). This will provide active travel connections between Woodstock and Tackley, and Tackley and Wootton. Construction should be to a similar standard to NCN 5.



The applicant should also be required to work with the Highway and Traffic Authority (Oxfordshire County Council) and to provide a significant financial contribution towards safety improvements to four difficult crossing points for cyclists and pedestrians between Wootton, Tackley and Woodstock. These are indicated on the modified Drg No 2.1B with red circles. These locations are:-

- Crossing of The Oxfordshire Way bridleway with B4027
- Crossing of NCN 5 with B4027
- Crossing of B4027 with unnumbered Banbury Road Woodstock at Weaveley Farm
- Crossing of the unnumbered Banbury Road Woodstock and Oxfordshire Way with A4260 at Sturdy's Castle

3. **Bladon to Begbroke.** It is understood that the applicant has already indicated a willingness to improve the bridleway routes between Bladon and Begbroke and these have already been partially undertaken by Blenheim Estates as part of their community commitment.

Appendix “B”

Whilst recognising that community benefits are not a material consideration in the determination of the application, and that there is no statutory obligation on developers to provide any such financial settlement, it is important to recognise that:-

- a) It is an established requirement underwritten by national guidelines in Scotland and elsewhere
- b) The UK government is currently consulting on the introduction of possible mandatory Community Benefits for renewable energy projects that are likely to include solar arrays
- c) Although, if enacted, the provisions of such regulations are unlikely to be retrospective, nevertheless, whatever voluntary community benefit is settled, it ought to take account of the likely future direction for community engagement with projects like BWSF.

The current offer from PVDP stands at £200,000 p.a. and is entirely inadequate. I support the representations made by the Botley West Solar Farm Reference Group and its constituent Community Benefit Steering Group who are calling for a substantially increased offer. They comprise sixteen parish councils within the application area, as well as the three District Councils and Oxfordshire County Council and, between them, represent over 18,000 residents affected by the proposals.

It is recognised that the UK government does not currently recommend specific financial levels for Community Benefit from renewable energy schemes, but in the absence of such directions it seems reasonable to reflect the Scottish governments clear recommendations of a Community Benefit fund equating to £5000 per installed MW. For BWSF at 840 installed MW this equates to £4.2 million per annum. Verification of the affordability of this level of Community Benefit is calculated as follows:-

- Using figures within the cost review the capital cost is expected to be no more than £516 million given the falling cost of solar technology.
- If the developer signs up to a Contract for Difference (CfD) arrangement with the government it will receive a minimum of £50.07 per megawatt generated.
- Given the load factor for solar in the UK, BWSF could expect to generate between 919,000 and 1,226,400 MWh.
- Taking OFGEM's annual domestic usage figures, this expected output from BWSF will approximate to the total power consumption for 330,000 homes, and this confirms the applicant's own predictions.
- Using a strike price of £50.07 per MWh the revenue that the developer can expect will be between £42 million and £61 million per annum.
- Allowing for the lower of these two expected revenue figures (a worst case scenario without a Contract for Difference agreement) then a Community Benefit of £4.2 million per annum would represent just 10% of the developer's annual revenue.