

John Corlett: presentation to PINS OFH1, 13 May 2025

I've already submitted my Relevant Representation, but here I want to try to add some of the 'lived experience' of residents, which has been difficult to bring to the process so far. This is my personal story.

- I've recently clocked up [REDACTED] on this planet, over [REDACTED] of which I've spent in the village of Church Hanborough
- I'm fit, active, on no regular medication, and until quite recently I was economically productive
- I'm fortunate and privileged to be here, but I firmly believe I have reaped the benefits of a lifestyle in a lovely area of Britain where I can walk or cycle every day, enjoy community, nature and wildlife, and listen to owls or to absolute silence at night ...

But it's not just me. The glaring problem with 'Botley West' is the **sheer number of people** whose mental and physical wellbeing would be compromised. This is not a remote desert or unpopulated uplands – it is rolling hills and green fields and Cotswold stone villages, a Green Belt around an historic city, the setting of a World Heritage site.

And it is a densely inhabited area, with a rapidly growing population, where up to 30,000 people live right next to the target area, where many more pass through every day, and they are joined in their enjoyment by many of the district's four million visitors each year – one million of them to Blenheim Palace alone.

In the 3½ years since the plans first emerged, I've personally seen the welfare of friends, neighbours and communities decline. The threat of destruction of so much we hold dear has taken its toll; we are afraid, stressed and depressed, we spend hours at computers, researching technical and legal matters we never expected to engage with; we meet, not to strengthen our community bonds, but to campaign against what seem like overwhelming odds. The buoyant village spirit of our Jubilee celebration that previous summer is a distant memory.

We feel bullied by billionaire developers, belittled by condescending 'experts', insulted by superficial consultations, trivialised by lies and obfuscation fed to the media. We share the pain and loss of our local farming families as their lives and livelihoods are put on notice.

We fear a landscape where our uplifting views turn from a tapestry of seasonal colours to industrial black, punctuated by high fences, lights, security cameras, warning signs, unquantified noise, devastating glare in sunlight; where our fog-bound valleys in winter are covered by idle, inefficient infrastructure, where our skylarks have failed to breed, our ancient oaks are compromised, our happy places have vanished.

We cherish too our heritage of history and archaeology, much of it unexplored, in which we know this area to be particularly rich. What will I say to my young grandchildren when they find we allowed a developer to install concrete piles into Iron Age sites across the area? Or to surround our ancient villages with glass and steel? 'Sorry girls – climate emergency'?

Yes, of course our welfare will also be compromised by climate change, and yes of course we need the capacity in renewables to replace fossil fuels. But should we endlessly say yes to **panels on fields** wherever an opportunistic applicant pops up, irrespective of the damage - especially when we're told the blockages lie elsewhere, in the huge existing queue for National Grid connections?

Or, should an applicant be required to prove 'beyond reasonable doubt' that they have the best of all the alternatives, the greatest benefit for the minimum cost? Where is the comparison with community solar and wind? Among our villages it would not be hard to find a dozen more communities delighted to follow Southill Solar in Charlbury, or Westmill Solar and Wind in Watchfield.

With the behemoth that is 'Botley West', the cost is just too great. The impact is brutal. It's the wrong thing, in the wrong place, for the wrong reasons. We desperately need our planners to strike a balance.