

Cumnor Parish Council: Submission to PINS OFH Session 1 Tuesday 13th May 2025

Cumnor Parish Council (CPC) thanks PINS for this opportunity to explain our issues and concerns with this proposed solar power station, and the cumulative impacts of this and other interrelated applications in the Parish.

Mindful of your guidance, this isn't a repetition of our evidence led [Relevant Representation](#), but is our attempt to briefly summarise how and why we have reached the decision to formally oppose PVDP's planning application for three solar power stations, in particular the southern one that would sit entirely within Green belt farmland in our Parish.

By way of context, Cumnor Parish, located about 3km west of here, is the only one within the DCO boundary in the Vale of White Horse DC area. 75% farmland, with 3 SSSIs, 8 local wildlife sites, 36 miles of PROW and the largest expanse of open water in Oxfordshire, the Parish is home to some 7000 residents, pretty much all of whom would live within 1.5km of the power station.

So, how have we reached the decision to oppose this application? The answer is by cutting through the PR guff, analysing the evidence, including that collected by our residents, while constantly communicating with as many people as we can reach.

Now, we've had some practice at this, because this application, and National Grid's linked Farmoor substation also in the Parish, are the 3rd and 4th power station applications we've assessed in the last 4 years.

Interestingly, whether they be NSIP or Town and Country Planning Act applications we've observed some common themes.

Every applicant has told that in order to save the planet, their power station must be built on their chosen site – and only there. Every applicant uses the ubiquitous 'sheep may safely graze' photo. And every applicant has told us that we shouldn't worry as this is only 'temporary'.

We've also been told that the top of a hill is the best location for a power station – by the applicant whose site was the top of a hill; we were then told that was rubbish and the best place was in a valley – by the applicant who wants to build in a valley.

This applicant is asking us and you to believe that the only place is in Cumnor on a steeply shelving north facing slope, shaded by ancient woodland to the south and visible for miles around – including from the world renowned Wytham Woods SSSI.

Basically, we're all being asked to believe the unbelievable.

You'll understand why, therefore, applicants hiring consultants to tell us - and you - things about our Parish that are impossible, leads us to have a very low degree of confidence in their assertions.

You'll forgive us if we are reminded – and Oxford is the home of Lewis Carroll and Alice in Wonderland – of the White Queen, who said that with practice she could believe 6 impossible things before breakfast. We've tried, but we can't.

In this Alice in Wonderland world, where all adverse impacts are minimal, all harms can be mitigated, and where temporary means 4 decades, we're asked to believe this is all fine and all reversible.

It isn't fine and it won't be reversed.

Given the topography of Cumnor's Locally Valued Landscape, we would lose the openness and permanence of the Green Belt, and the hard-won protections of the Important Views policy in the Parish's made Neighbourhood Plan.

This will be – especially in the case of the National Grid substation - permanent industrialisation of the Oxford Green belt, with concomitant loss of productive farmland, biodiversity, ecology and amenity.

Our residents want you to know that the substations; the High Voltage cable routes passing dwellings, Farmoor village hall and a children's nursery; the CCTV, security fences, shipping containers and solar arrays etc. proposed for this parish, should be removed from the application.

But, please come and see for yourselves. We'd like to invite you to visit our Parish, experience our Important Views, walk the Oxford Greenbelt Way with us, and see the impacts on wildlife, and on Hill End, the award-winning outdoor education centre in the Parish, that last year played host to 24000 visitors of which nearly 16000 were children.

Let's not pretend, as PVDP does, that this can be mitigated by planting some hedges. That's risible, unless the hedges are also planted at the top of all the hills, in which case they will not preserve the openness and views but will simply obliterate them.

That's just one of dozens of pieces of evidence we've assessed, illustrating why the southern power station is the wrong answer in the wrong place for the wrong reasons.

Thank you.

(767 words c 4'45")