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**Sent:** 02 June 2025 16:49  
**To:** Botley West Solar Farm  
**Cc:** Vincent Goodstadt; George Smith; Dan Levy; Karen Squibb-Williams  
**Subject:** Dead line 1 Submission Botley West Slar Professor Emeritus John Dowling, Eynsham Oxon

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To HM Planning Inspectorate Examining Authority on the Application of West Botley Solar. This is a Deadline 1 Submission following my earlier submission of a Pre-Application Submission.

My main concern in this Submission is to emphasize that the Examining Authority is now facing a dynamic policy context changing in many dimensions at the same time . The turbulence of the context reflecting the urgency of policy change places particularly difficulties before the EA in positioning itself among the multiple strands of change all affecting the substance of the Application. My thoughts are written to help explicate a number of these and draw some anticipatory conclusions among them.

Let me start with the meaning of the term Energy Security. As it is used in the setting up of the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero it primarily expressed the need for home produced energy to reduce dependence on foreign resources and this has been done on a remarkable scale. However, this term Energy Security has taken on a more explicitly alarming meaning as national security has come to be threatened by hostile acts by foreign actors in a newly heightened situation of Russian aggression, the possibility of US lessening of international defence commitments and an enormous increase in cyber attacks, data acquisition, mis-information, and explicit ransomware. Examples are numerous from cable destruction, to the hacking of national food retail, M&S and the Co-op for example. This is the work of the National Cyber Security Agency and its Centre. In this environment Energy Security in its strategic sense would seem to

require a specific referral to the NSCA given the likely sourcing of the panels and control and connecting equipment from China and the Financing ultimately from Russian sources according to the relentless reportage from Private Eye, which is incorporated here by reference. While national security has been primarily secret, it has more and more become a relevant consideration in public affairs and demands more explicit referral, at least, I feel.

The second stream of policy concerns Ofgem, the expansion of the national Grid and the way the increase of energy production affects the consideration of Applications such as the largest of them all - Botley West Solar. The two most central themes are that nationally the Grid has to expand enormously and secondly that on-shore solar production has brought the possibility of an enormous increase in the amount of agricultural land being offered for solar energy production. Taken together these have already caused Ofgem to abandon the queueing 'cab-rank' principle of first-come first-served in their attention to Applications.

This then clearly undermines the rhetorical urgency of each Applicant ; they are a uniquely significant and marginally essential solution to the energy crisis. The selection of sites should become in short order: those who meet the twin criteria of the geography of emerging Grid expansion and reasonably minimal disruption of national and local life. The plethora of Applications and the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders puts Ofgem in the role of being able to, in effect, plan for the expansion of the Grid as a guiding principle in the selection of the more appropriate, or at least in the avoidance of the less appropriate, sites for solar energy generation. This dynamic rests on the unique characteristic of solar that there are an enormous quantity of possible sites so that no one is critical but rather all should serve the efficient expansion of the Grid. This case has not been advanced by Botley West, at least in their engagement with the public, and indeed they have put forward the obsolescent case of the rhetoric of urgency, the adoption of the 'if

not now, then when' principle of the expansion of the Grid on the now-abandoned 'cab-rank principle'.

While the Planning Application is rhetorically suspect, the EA response in advice to the Secretary should not accept their outdated assumptions.

A third strain in policy development facing the EA is the rapidly changing policy for Local Government. District Councils are to disappear, Unitary Authorities to be adopted and Mayors directly elected. This enormous change is to be done to recognise major or important centres of population as critical to economic development. It is the redrawing of the country's economy around independent cities and within them increasing investment, building housing, related transport and other infrastructure, and fostering employment and local training opportunities. This is an enormous professional opportunity for British town planning and being, so-to-speak, the last people to die before peace is declared is not a metaphor one can comfortably live with. A completely reformed planning prospect lies before you urging no pre-determining final act of the old regime, but rather the preservation of the new possibilities now visible ahead of you. In cautious anticipation lies prudence urging non recommendation.

This general case is even more pointed in Oxford and Oxfordshire where the Application would, if approved, seriously limit by pre-determination such new possibilities and, indeed, plans already sketched out. Oxford together with London and Cambridge have for some long time been one of, if not the most, concentrated and well developed sources of scientific and technological research, talented human capital and investment infrastructure in the world. It is a resource so formidable that it demands careful nurturing and space for development. It may be the code-breaking hub of the future, not incomparable with Bletchley Park in WW II and explicitly compared with Silicon Valley of the 80s where the combination of Stanford and start-up

investment sparked the new digital age. This is our major UK response without deprecating other UK universities and cities.

Unitary forms for Oxford and Oxfordshire are to be decided by the DHLGC but the Oxford-Cambridge Arc completing the Golden Triangle is clear and given strength by the national appointment of Neale Coleman as Chair of the Oxford Growth Commission who is to work with the Cambridge equivalent. The body for "Oxford and" [significantly] "the surrounding area" with its prominent membership, will surely be a powerful influence on the future shape the unitary local governance takes. Having lived in Eynsham for 25 years and, earlier in my academic life, at Stanford's Graduate School of Business, later at Templeton College, Oxford, I have urged the policy taking place in and around Oxford, not least in Grosvenor Estate's research park with 2,200 homes in Salt Cross, the bus lanes along the A40, the H2 bus service to the Witney and Oxford hospitals, in summary in the better integration of Eynsham with Oxford along the A 40, the major road to the west. This work in progress is the preparatory infrastructure for a growth plan for the Greater Oxford which seems to be realised more fully. Contrary to these plans, the Application from Botley West Solar is an unwelcome opportunistic initiative incompatible with the common good expressed in the whole set of policy shifts I have been outlining to you here. By considering the Oxford Growth Commission a relevant statutory body and calling for its considered Submission as essential, it might not only provide sound grounds for pausing recommendations to the DFSNT but it might then be possible to consider the Application of Botley West Solar within the priorities of the most senior Government body for the future of "Oxford and the surrounding area".

There are, as you know, many Planning reasons for this Application to be rejected and each of them strengthens the others in a overpowering, cumulative case; these include inappropriateness of scale of the energy installation to

the landscape, the inadequacy of the Green Belt argument, the visual impact on so many Villages, and harm to one of the country's greatest Heritage settings which, paired with Oxford and the Cotswolds, is important for the tourist economy for English identity and future homes. A Thames cable crossing with the awfulness of ploughing thousand-year-old meadowland would be inconsolable; the terrible effect on farmland from all the wire fencing and piling with technical noise, construction disruption and much else would seem irreparable and hence permanent, I dare say.

**But even with all these and other sound grounds for a Recommendation of Denial of the Application within these planning concerns, the case has also to be consistent with the larger evolving context of Government policies in place or under notice to be put in place. Above all, it should not hinder or pre-empt developments of vital importance to national security and to the Government's declared and well advanced highest priority, its strategy for national economic development.**

In developing this I am indebted to the stimulating appearances before you of Vincent Goodstadt, George Smith, Dan Levy,, Karen Squibb Williams and Harry StJohn to each of whom I am copying this. Its errors, of course, are my own.

Respectfully submitted,

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