

Please find below, the Text as requested at the hearings including an answer to the question posed by the inspectors.

Please Note

We will send a separate response after a comment was made about Sustainable Woodstock by Mr Bojan Ivanovic (virtually) during the Preliminary hearing on Tuesday 13 May 2025
(01:14:30:22 - 01:15:08:18 and 01:15:08:29 - 01:15:45:00)

Start of Presentation

Hello, my name is [REDACTED] and I am representing a community action group called Sustainable Woodstock. We were established in 2008, 17 years ago, and have a following of several hundred that include residents, organisations and businesses in the area. We are all volunteers and our aim is for our local community to become more aware and deepen its understanding, and take action and work towards reducing the impact of the climate and nature emergency. We are not alone ... we're one of a 117 community action groups registered with the Community Action Group Network Oxfordshire, known locally as CAGs (CAG Network Oxon are supported by Oxford County Council).

Sustainable Woodstock is in favour of the Botley West project because of the need for clean renewable energy and the climate emergency.

However, we think it is important that further attention should be considered regarding its size, loss of habitats, biodiversity net gain, the impact on tenant farmers and many communities in the vicinity. If managed correctly, it can be used as a framework for how to build and manage a solar farm of this size for others in the UK. Of course, this is the responsibility of the Inspectors.

We wish to use this time to focus on community benefits. It is clear to us and to many others that the Government needs to introduce guidelines, if not regulations, on the levels of community benefit for installations of this size ... and should **NOT** be left up to the developers.

We are aware that the developers have no obligation to offer community benefit. During the course of our engagement with the consultation, we would like you to note that the amount of community benefit offered has moved from 0 ... to £50,000 and then to £200,000 per annum. But this is still a woefully low amount for a proposal the size of Botley West ... and the large number of affected communities.

Over the lifetime of this project ... communities could lose out on ... literally **millions** of pounds.

We strongly support the petition of Low Carbon Hub on this matter, who will be speak tomorrow. Their proposal of 2% of revenue of Botley West could amount to 1-2 million pounds annually for the affected communities. Money that could be used to help insulate homes, help residents in fuel poverty and improve local community facilities.

There is also an emerging benchmark for community benefit from installed or proposed large solar farms of £1200 per MW installed.

BUT ... No matter how the benefit is calculated,... it still amounts to much more than is currently being offered by the developers of Botley West. Is this fair ... or another example of utilities, such as out local Thames Water, making huge profits off of the backs of residents.

It is also clear from our attendance at meetings and numerous discussions that this is a new experience for our MPs, councillors and officers at all levels, be it parish, town, district and county levels.

The focus for many has been on objecting to Botley West being built. We feel there **IS** a real danger of the community benefit being neglected.

We appreciate that community benefit is not part of this hearing but nevertheless would like to have on record our frustration at the process of calculating community benefit ... or I should say there is a complete absence of process here in England, ... and as others also commented on this morning should be amongst the principal issues ... due to the impact on people.

FINALLY, this proposal is a great opportunity to NOT ONLY generate clean renewable energy ... in a part of the country where it is certainly needed ... BUT ALSO, an opportunity to have a significantly positive impact on local communities over the next 30-40 years.

End of Presentation

Inspector asked me:

How do I react to hearing from the applicants and Blenheim that £500,000 rent will be paid to Blenheim per year?

My answer was and still is - that Blenheim is a business and I see no issue. I would expect that they would be paid for the use of their land whether for farming or otherwise. It was pleased to hear the CEO (Dominic Hare) confirm the rent would all be ploughed back into the Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation.