



# **Botley West Solar Farm**

## **Applicant's Written Summary of Oral Submissions at the Open Floor Hearings (OFH1 & OFH2)**

**June 2025**

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## Table of Contents

1.	Introduction .....	1
1.2	Summary of the Applicant's oral submissions at OFH1 and OFH2.....	1
1.3	Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions at OFH1 only .....	4
1.4	Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions at OFH2 only .....	6

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP), on behalf of SolarFive Ltd (the Applicant), submitted its application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Botley West Solar Project (the “Project”) on 15 November 2024 (the “DCO Application”). The DCO Application was accepted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate on 13 December 2024.
- 1.1.2 In relation to the Project, Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) was held at 3pm on Tuesday 13 May 2025 and Open Floor Hearing 2 (OFH2) was held at 10am on Wednesday 14 May 2025 as blended events, with some parties in attendance at the Kings Centre, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES, and others using the virtual platform of Microsoft Teams. The hearings provided an opportunity for registered Interested Parties (IPs) and other local people to make oral representations about the application for the Botley West Solar Farm (the Project). Each IP making an oral submission was requested to provide a written summary note to the ExA for Deadline 1 (4 June 2025).
- 1.1.3 Oral submissions were made by various IPs covering a range of topics. The running order included at Appendix 1 of [EV3-001] (for OFH1) and [EV4-001] (for OFH2) sets out those who had notified the Examining Authority of an intention to speak, although the Applicant notes that there were some alterations across both days. Full recordings and transcripts for the hearings can be found at [EV3-002 to EV3-005] (for OFH1) and [EV-4002 to EV4-005] (for OFH2) in the Examination Library.
- 1.1.4 Mr Toby Yeates, Associate at Pinsent Masons LLP who are the legal advisers on behalf of the Applicant, provided a response to the matters raised at OFH1 and OFH2 and it is his oral submissions that are summarised in this document.

## 1.2 Summary of the Applicant’s oral submissions at OFH1 and OFH2

- 1.2.1 Mr Yeates, on behalf of the Applicant, thanked the IPs at both OFH1 and OFH2 for making oral submissions and acknowledged the importance of such participation as part of the planning process.
- 1.2.2 Mr Yeates reiterated that many of the issues raised at the hearings are also raised in the Relevant Representations and a full response to those relevant representations would be provided at Deadline 1.

**Post-hearing submission:** The Applicant has submitted the Applicant’s responses to the relevant representations at Deadline 1, alongside this written summary of oral submissions.

### **Policy context / urgent need for renewable energy**

- 1.2.3 In response to concerns raised by IPs across OFH1 and OFH 2, including from Stewart Walker on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council, John Wynne, David Rogers and representatives of Cherwell Collective regarding alternative energy solutions and the broader context of government policy, Mr

Yeates noted that the determination of this Project must be made in accordance with the National Policy Statements for Energy (including primarily the Overarching National Policy Statement for energy (NPS EN-1) and the National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (NPS EN-3)). These statements establish a clear and urgent national need for large-scale solar projects. In line with this policy framework, the Secretary of State is required to give substantial weight to that demonstrated need when considering the application.

- 1.2.4 Mr Yeates acknowledged that, due to the nature of large-scale, nationally significant infrastructure energy projects, it is not always possible to avoid all adverse effects. It was emphasised that the role of the decision maker—namely, the Secretary of State, acting on the recommendation of the Examining Authority—is to weigh any such residual effects against the critical and urgent need for renewable energy infrastructure. This is supported by paragraphs 3.1.2 and 4.2.15 of NPS EN-1.
- 1.2.5 Mr Yeates acknowledged that several adverse effects were referenced by IPs during the hearing. Mr Yeates confirmed that the Applicant is aware of these concerns and takes them seriously. In response, the Applicant has ensured that such effects have been properly assessed within the Environmental Statement [APP-036] to [APP-224], enabling them to be considered as part of the overall planning balance.
- 1.2.6 Mr Yeates further explained that the Applicant's team has made concerted efforts to avoid, minimise and mitigate adverse effects and continues to refine the scheme design as the Project progresses through examination.

### **Size of Project**

- 1.2.7 In response to concerns raised by IPs across OFH1 and OFH2 including Andrew Thompson on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council, Hilary Brown on behalf of Sustainable Woodstock, Lisa Warren (director for Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in Oxfordshire) and by John Wynne regarding the overall size/scale of the Scheme, Mr Yeates emphasised that the development of the Project at its proposed scale, and with its associated benefits, represents a significant contribution towards meeting the urgent national need for renewable energy as identified in the National Policy Statements.
- 1.2.8 It was noted that, even if this Project and all other solar schemes currently within the consenting process were to be approved, the UK would still fall short of the Government's 2035 targets for decarbonising electricity generation. This underscores the importance of progressing large-scale solar infrastructure such as the Project to help close the gap and support national energy and climate objectives.
- 1.2.9 Mr Yeates referred the Examining Authority to the Planning Supporting Statement [APP-225] and the Supplementary Statement of Need [PDB-014], which provide further detail on the Project's contribution to national targets.

### **Landscape and Visual Amenity**

- 1.2.10 In response to concerns raised by IPs during OFH1 and OFH2 including Stewart Walker on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council, Councillor Dan Levy, Lisa Warren (director of the Campaign to Protect Rural

England in Oxfordshire), Miles Truly, and Roderick Cooke regarding the potential effects of the Project on landscape and visual amenity, Mr Yeates confirmed that a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken.

- 1.2.11 Mr Yeates explained that LVIA assessment evaluates the effects of the Project on both landscape character and visual amenity including baseline studies. Mr Yeates noted that that further detail is provided in Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment **[APP-045]**.

### **Agriculture and Land Use**

- 1.2.12 In response to several points raised by IPs across OFH1 and OFH 2 in relation to the potential effects of the Project on land use and agricultural impacts, Mr Yeates confirmed that Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) and soil surveys were undertaken to assess the quality of land within the Project site. The findings indicate that 38.35% of the site comprises Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, while the remaining 61.65% is classified as subgrade 3b or non-agricultural land.
- 1.2.13 In recognition of the value of BMV land, the Applicant has sought to avoid its permanent loss wherever practicable. As a result, only 5.5 hectares of BMV land would be subject to permanent loss, a level which is not considered significant in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) terms.

### **Green Belt**

- 1.2.14 In response to several concerns raised across OFH1 and OFH 2 regarding Green Belt and appropriate development, Mr Yeates noted that the appropriate policy framework for the Project is set by the National Policy Statements (NPS) and referred the Examining Authority to paragraphs 4.2.16 and 4.2.17 of NPS EN-1. These paragraphs confirm that, for the purposes of decision-making, the Secretary of State will treat nationally significant infrastructure as having met the relevant policy tests, including those relating to harm and the demonstration of very special circumstances (VSC).
- 1.2.15 Mr Yeates also noted this approach applies specifically to development within the Green Belt, and that the starting point for the Secretary of State is a presumption in favour of the VSC test having been met. He further directed the Examining Authority to Annex 8 of the Applicant's Planning Supporting Statement **[APP-225]**, which provides more detail on the Applicant's position in respect of the Green Belt.

### **Design life / Decommissioning**

- 1.2.16 Mr Yeates confirmed that the operational life of the Project is 37.5 years, with decommissioning anticipated to commence from 2066. This commitment is secured through Requirement 14 of the draft Development Consent Order (DCO) **[AS-009]**. Mr Yeates noted that this operational lifespan is consistent with NPS EN-3 which acknowledges that "*An upper limit of 40 years is typical, although applicants may seek consent without a time-period or for differing time-periods of operation*" (paragraph 2.10.65).
- 1.2.17 Mr Yeates added that similar schemes, such as Gate Burton, have included similar drafting that secure a longer operational period of 60 years but that has been accepted by the Secretary of State as being temporary in planning terms.

## **Community Benefits**

- 1.2.18 In response to the submissions made by several speakers across OFH1 and OFH 2, Mr Yeates clarified that, while community benefits are often raised in the context of nationally significant infrastructure projects, they do not form part of the formal planning balance or the basis for recommendation and decision-making. As such, questions relating to community benefit are more appropriately considered within the broader context of planning policy and the future direction of planning in the UK, rather than as a determinative factor for this Scheme.
- 1.2.19 Mr Yeates also noted that there is a distinction between benefits arising from the Blenheim Estate and those being proposed by the Applicant. He confirmed that this distinction would be clarified at Deadline 1.
- 1.2.20 Notwithstanding the above, Mr Yeates reiterated that the Applicant is aware of local concerns regarding community benefit and, despite the Project's national significance, recognises its local context. Accordingly, the Applicant is proposing a community benefit package, with further details to be provided in due course.

***Post-hearing submission:*** Once operational the Project will set up a Community Fund which will receive £440,000 from SolarFive Ltd every year over the lifetime of the project. That is the equivalent of approximately £16,500,000 over the lifetime of the Project (expected to be approx. 37.5 years). The Fund would be administered by a body comprising representatives from PVDP, Blenheim Estate and local community leaders. It is expected that grants will be made to local causes and organisations. The Community Fund will be delivered as part of a Community Benefits Package agreed outside the scope of the DCO application, with relevant local authorities.

*The details on other benefits to the community arising from the Project along with explanations on how those benefits are secured through the DCO are set out in the Applicant's written summary of oral submissions made at the Issue Specific Hearing 1 (on DCO and Strategic Matters).*

*The Applicant understands that Dominic Hare (Chief Executive Officer of Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund, the Vanbrugh Unit Trust and Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation) has separately made a Deadline 1 submission to clarify the nature of the community funding benefits arising as a result of the Project, in respect of the Blenheim Estate.*

## **1.3 Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions at OFH1 only**

- 1.3.1 Mr Yeates addressed the following key thematic points raised by IPs at OFH1.

### **Location**

- 1.3.2 The Applicant noted the concerns raised by Andrew Thompson on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council and Julie Collins on behalf of Stop Botley West, in relation to the extent to which the location and design of the Project have been informed by an understanding of the local topography.
- 1.3.3 Mr Yeates outlined that the selection and design of the proposed site have been informed by a range of key factors in line with national policy. Mr Yeates

referred the Examining Authority specifically to paragraph 2.10.25 of National Policy Statement EN-3, which recognises that applicants may choose a site based on the availability of nearby grid export capacity.

### **Cultural Heritage**

- 1.3.4 The Applicant acknowledges that several speakers expressed concerns regarding the potential effects of the Project on heritage assets within the locality.
- 1.3.5 Mr Yeates confirmed that the potential impacts of the Project on both designated and non-designated heritage assets have been assessed and that the Applicant continues to engage with Historic England and other relevant statutory bodies on these matters. Mr Yeates noted that that further detail is provided in Chapter 7: Historic Environment **[APP-044]**.

### **Ecology**

- 1.3.6 In response to concerns raised by Cavanaugh Parish Council, Mr Yeates acknowledged that although the target of 10% BNG in the Environment Act 2021 does not yet apply to nationally significant infrastructure projects, the Applicant considers this framework to be a helpful benchmark.
- 1.3.7 In that context, Mr Yeates noted that the Project intends to achieve a 70% biodiversity net gain for habitats, which significantly exceeds that statutory target. This commitment is secured through the DCO via Requirement 7 (Biodiversity Net Gain) which is tied to the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan **[APP235]** which includes reference to the Project's 70% target.

### **Crown Land**

- 1.3.8 Mr Yeates provided clarification in response to comments by Tim Sumner regarding the presence of Crown land. It was confirmed that Crown land had initially been included within the application on a precautionary basis due to a restriction on title number BK120529 as shown on Plots 13-01 and 13-03 in the Book of Reference **[AS-028]** in favour of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). However, following discussions with Defra, it was confirmed that the land in question is not considered Crown land for the purposes of section 135 of the Planning Act 2008 which is the relevant legislation governing Crown land. Instead, the restriction is understood to fall within the regulatory framework of the Water Industry Act 1991, specifically section 156, and is therefore understood to be a regulatory constraint rather than a Crown interest. As such, the Order land does not include Crown Land.
- 1.3.9 On that basis, Mr Yeates confirmed that the land has been removed from the scope of Crown land within the DCO, as it does not meet the statutory definition of "Crown land" under section 227 of the Planning Act 2008.
- 1.3.10 Mr Yeates also acknowledged wider points raised regarding potential mortgage arrangements or other restrictions. It was noted that a thorough land referencing exercise has been undertaken by the Applicant, as documented in the Book of Reference, and the Applicant is unaware of any charges, mortgages or restrictions that prevent the relevant land from being leased to the Applicant for the purposes of the Project.

## **Conclusion**

1.3.11 Finally, Mr Yeates acknowledged that there were other issues raised at OFH1 which cannot be responded to in full due to the time available, such as:

- Human Health
- Cumulative effects
- Flooding
- Land Ownership
- Compulsory Purchase
- Food security
- Intermittency

***Post-hearing submission:*** *The Applicant has submitted the Applicant's responses to the relevant representations at Deadline 1, alongside this written summary of oral submissions, which responds to any points raised in relation to each of the topics listed above.*

## **1.4 Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions at OFH2 only**

1.4.1 Mr Yeates noted that several matters were raised at OFH2 which had not been raised at OFH1. A summary of the Applicant's oral response to those matters is set out below.

### **Policy context / urgent need for renewable energy**

1.4.2 In response to concerns raised by David Rogers about the benefits of wind being more beneficial than those of solar, Mr Yeates emphasised that while wind energy is a critical component of the UK's energy mix, the NPS makes clear that both wind and solar are essential. Paragraph 3.3.22 of EN-1 states that ensuring affordable system reliability requires wind and solar to be complemented by technologies that can supply electricity or reduce demand when the wind is not blowing, or the sun is not shining. This reinforces the position that wind and solar are not alternatives but complementary technologies within the national energy strategy.

1.4.3 In response to the concerns raised by David Rogers regarding the varying calculations and the Project's ability to achieve the proposed 840MW capacity, Mr Yeates confirmed that calculations would be submitted as part of the Applicant's post-hearing written submissions to support the position that delivering the 840MW output is both realistic and feasible within the scope of the Project.

***Post hearing submission:*** *The Applicant is submitting the calculations referred to at the hearings. The photovoltaic plant, with a 1,300 MWp DC capacity and a 936 MVA inverter output, is expected to deliver a maximum of approximately 840 MW AC at the 400 kV grid connection point. This estimate accounts for cumulative transmission, transformation losses, and self-consumption energy of approximately 9.9%, including 156 step-up transformers (0.4 kV to 33 kV), 120 km of 33 kV cabling, and additional high-voltage infrastructure. These values provide a realistic basis for grid integration and utility-scale solar farms and are backed by simulations done*



by trusted solar industry software (PVsyst), where results showed that the 840MW AC was reached in 8 months over one year, as shown in the table below.

The simulation integrates precise site-specific meteorological data with technical system configuration. Using hourly values of global horizontal irradiance (GHI), ambient temperature, wind speed, and albedo, PVsyst computes plane-of-array irradiance based on system orientation, tilt, and shading conditions.

Due to software limitations, a smaller version of the project was initially simulated, and then the results were scaled up to the Botley West size.

	0H	1H	2H	3H	4H	5H	6H	7H	8H	9H	10H	11H	12H	13H	14H	15H	16H	17H	18H	19H	20H	21H	22H	23H
January	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	144	289	347	376	347	274	87	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43	202	376	578	679	693	520	390	260	101	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
March	0	0	0	0	0	0	58	289	534	751	852	852	852	852	823	636	390	130	0	0	0	0	0	0
April	0	0	0	0	0	58	274	549	737	852	852	852	852	852	852	751	520	274	58	0	0	0	0	0
May	0	0	0	0	29	130	361	607	823	852	852	852	852	852	852	809	607	361	130	29	0	0	0	0
June	0	0	0	0	29	159	376	621	838	852	852	852	852	852	852	823	621	390	173	43	0	0	0	0
July	0	0	0	0	29	130	347	563	780	852	852	852	852	852	852	823	621	404	173	43	0	0	0	0
August	0	0	0	0	0	58	231	491	708	852	852	852	852	852	852	737	506	303	101	14	0	0	0	0
September	0	0	0	0	0	14	130	347	578	780	852	852	852	852	794	636	404	159	14	0	0	0	0	0
October	0	0	0	0	0	43	246	506	708	823	852	823	650	491	303	116	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
November	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	130	274	361	390	361	303	231	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
December	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	72	188	274	260	144	72	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year	0	0	0	0	29	159	376	621	838	852	852	852	852	852	852	823	621	404	173	43	0	0	0	0

Hourly maximum values for Energy injected to the grid [MW]

## **Flood Risk, Hydrology and Water Resources**

- 1.4.4 The Applicant acknowledges the concerns raised by Lisa Warren, (director for CPRE in Oxfordshire) and by David Sherratt about surface water runoff and land drains damage.
- 1.4.5 Mr Yeates reassured the Examining Authority that appropriate mitigation measures are in place, including the implementation of sustainable drainage systems to manage surface water runoff and to ensure that both construction and operational activities do not adversely affect water quality or increase flood risk. Mr Yeates confirmed that the assessment of these matters is set out in Chapter 10: Hydrology and Flood Risk **[APP-047]**.
- 1.4.6 Mr Yeates also noted that Requirement 9 of the Draft Development Consent Order **[AS-009]** secures the need for written details in relation to water and drainage systems, which must be submitted substantially in accordance with the conceptual drainage strategy.

## **Agriculture and Land Use**

- 1.4.7 The Applicant acknowledges that several speakers expressed concerns regarding the potential effects on food security and the use of arable farmland.
- 1.4.8 Mr Yeates noted that amendments to the National Planning Framework (NPF) introduced in December 2024 clarified that food production is no longer a required consideration in land use planning terms. This is relevant for nationally significant infrastructure projects, as paragraph 5 of the NPF confirms that such considerations may be treated as material in the planning balance.

- 1.4.9 Mr Yeates also referred to evidence provided by local farmers during OFH1, which indicated that the land in question is not consistently high-quality arable land and can be difficult to farm productively.
- 1.4.10 Mr Yeates further noted that government data confirms the existence of surplus arable land across the country that is currently not in use, thereby supporting the position that the use of this particular site would not constrain national food production capacity.

**Post-hearing submission:** *In response to a representation from Mr. David Sherratt that the ALC results within Chapter 17: Agricultural Land Use and Public Rights of Way [APP-054] related to a previous iteration of the Project, the Applicant can confirm that the study of the ALC undertaken has considered land within the current red line boundary.*

*In relation to food productivity, the Defra Government Dataset for Agricultural Land Use in the United Kingdom and the Defra publication for Agriculture in the UK 2023 provides historic data on trends in agricultural land use since 2010. This data shows that the total area of agricultural land has remained stable across this period with the utilised agricultural area varying between 70 and 72% of the total area of the UK. The Oxfordshire Food Strategy (2022) identified that approximately 74% of Oxfordshire land area is agricultural being mainly cereals. The total croppable area has also remained consistently around 6 million hectares. Despite variations in yields from year to year, often affected by weather or particular market conditions, or the implementation of changes in land use related to individual developments, the cropped area of land has remained stable within the UK and the implementation of this Project would not change the overall stability of the UK situation.*

*The use of agricultural land is not static within individual areas and is subject to decisions by individual landowners and farmers which can change over time as market circumstances and farm enterprise objectives change. Whilst there would be a change in the current pattern of agricultural production within the Project from the mainly arable productivity to a system of conservation sheep grazing with sheep, there would still be an agricultural use of the land beneath the panels. Blenheim Estate, which owns much of the land within the Project, already has sheep flocks, including suitable breeds for this type of conservation grazing available within the wider estate and therefore suitable livestock and farming experience to be able to establish the proposed conservation grazing land use within the area is already available in the vicinity of the Project.*

*This change in use of the land would be implemented in accordance with the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [APP-235], which would bring biodiversity benefits at a landscape scale and can also benefit soil health through the increase in soil organic matter and benefits to soil structural development during the operational period.*

### **Traffic**

- 1.4.11 In response to submissions by Rosemary Lewis concerning uncertainty around the traffic assessment, Mr Yeates confirmed that this matter is addressed within the Applicant's Environmental Impact Assessment, specifically in Chapter 12: Traffic and Transport [APP-049].

- 1.4.12 Mr Yeates noted that, for reassurance, the assessment includes a commitment to a Construction Traffic Management Plan. While the specific reference was not provided during the hearing, Mr Yeates confirmed that it would be included in the Applicant's written submission.

***Post hearing submission:*** Requirement 11 of Schedule 2 of the draft DCO includes a pre-commencement requirement to submit a Code of Construction Practice for approval. As part of that process, Requirement 11(2)(a) ensures that the Code of Construction Practice must include a Construction Traffic Management Plan.

- 1.4.13 Mr Yeates further explained that the Project includes embedded mitigation measures designed to prevent or reduce potential adverse effects associated with construction traffic on local roads. These measures are secured through the Draft Development Consent Order by way of a commitment to a Code of Construction Practice.

#### **Panel replacement**

- 1.4.14 In response to concerns by Hanborough Parish Council, Mr Yeates addressed the point raised in relation to the replacement of solar panels during the operational lifetime of the Project. He noted that Chapter 14: Climate Change [APP-051], confirms that the service life of the panels is expected to be 25 years, and accordingly, it is assumed that they will be replaced once during the 37.5-year operational period. This assumption has been incorporated into the Environmental Impact Assessment.

- 1.4.15 Mr Yeates further referred to Table 3-1 of the outline Operational Environmental Management Plan [APP-234], which is secured under the Draft Development Consent Order through Requirement 12. This document outlines that regular planned maintenance will be undertaken to optimise the efficiency of the Project infrastructure, including the replacement of photovoltaic panels and power converter stations where required. These measures form part of both the assessment and the mitigation strategy secured by the Applicant.

#### **Land Rights**

- 1.4.16 Mr Yeates responded to concerns raised by Squibb Williams speaking on behalf of Dustin Dryden in relation to engagement, to confirm that the Applicant has engaged with Mr. Dryden from both a consultation and land perspective. For example, one of the founders for the project, Peter Gerstmann, has met with Mr. Dryden personally on two occasions.

***Post hearing submission:*** In additional response to Ms Squibb Williams' comments, the Applicant's land agent team can confirm that Dustin Dryden is included in the Book of Reference [AS-028] as a subsoil owner in respect of one of the cable routes proposed to run beneath the public highway, and also in relation to various rights affecting neighbouring land adjacent to his registered title(s).

*The Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker [AS-013] contains details of negotiations with all freeholders of land that fall within the Order Limits and are required for the delivery of the Project. As Mr Dryden does not have a freehold interest in land within the Order Limits, and no infrastructure—such as solar panels, cables, construction access, haul roads, compounds, or other*

*temporary uses—is proposed on his land, it is intentionally not included in the tracker.*

*Notwithstanding this, the Applicant did engage with Mr Dryden to request access for ecological surveys, specifically in relation to Great Crested Newt (GCN) habitat assessments. Mr Dryden received statutory consultation correspondence and was further engaged in relation to survey access. This confirms that the Applicant has fulfilled its duty to consult Mr Dryden on the proposals and has provided appropriate opportunities for feedback.*

*Additional discussions have also taken place between members of the Project team and Mr Dryden, which have contributed to the Applicant's understanding of his interests and concerns. For example, the Applicant is aware that Mr Dryden has an easement over a water pipe at Plot 8-27. The Applicant is aware that Mr Dryden has an easement over this water pipe. The design of the installation area for panels has taken the water pipe into consideration.*

### **Compulsory Acquisition**

- 1.4.17 Mr Yeates addressed comments raised in relation to compulsory acquisition. He confirmed that the Applicant's full case on this matter is set out in the Statement of Reasons **[AS-015]**, which aligns with national policy and establishes the national need for the Project. On that basis, the Applicant considers that the use of compulsory acquisition powers is in the public interest.
- 1.4.18 Mr Yeates clarified that the Applicant's continued preference is to secure voluntary agreements with all landowners and confirmed that the Applicant has already successfully concluded several such agreements.
- 1.4.19 Mr Yeates confirmed that compulsory acquisition powers are sought only as a fallback mechanism, to be used in circumstances where voluntary agreements cannot be secured or where land interests remain unknown or unregistered following due diligence and land referencing. Mr Yeates emphasised that this is a standard and accepted approach across Development Consent Order applications, including the vast majority of recent solar DCOs.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.4.20 Finally, Mr Yeates acknowledged that there were other issues raised at OFH2 which cannot be responded to in full due to the time available, such as:
  - Public Rights of way
  - Funding and decommissioning
  - Ecology and veteran tree surveys
  - Draft DCO
  - Heritage and Site selection
  - Noise and Vibration

***Post-hearing submission:*** *The Applicant has submitted the Applicant's responses to the relevant representations at Deadline 1, alongside this written summary of oral submissions, which responds to any points raised in relation to each of the topics listed above.*