

Planning and Strategic Housing

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By Email:

botleywestsolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Your Ref: EN010147

Our Ref: 20055291

Date: 04 June 2025

Dear Sirs,

RE: SUMMARY OF OPEN FLOOR HEARING STATEMENT 13 May 2025

WODC supports in principle the development of renewable and low carbon energy developments in the district, provided they are located and designed to minimise adverse impacts, with particular regard to conserving the District's high valued landscape and historic environment.

WODC announced a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and has identified measures required to achieve its goals of net zero carbon in the district by 2050 or earlier. Renewable energy development is identified as playing a key role in helping the district achieve its objective and the council has approved a number of standalone renewable energy projects in the district in recent years in accordance with local policy.

We welcome the opportunity to engage in the examination of the Botley West Proposals. A project of this scale would no doubt contribute greatly to the supply of renewable energy to the National Grid and contribute to the national aims of decarbonising the grid and achieving energy security.

We have engaged with the applicant through the pre-application and pre-examination stages and we have taken every opportunity to provide feedback on and to influence the proposals.

We do consider however that the proposals put before you for examination, particularly the size of the scheme and the location and extent of the proposals were determined prior to any consultation and that our engagement to date has had little bearing on the design of the proposed solar farm.

WODC consider that the applicant's evidence has been prepared in order to maximise the scale of development. We consider that this has had a bearing on the assessments presented to the examining authority, whereby the applicant has sought to downplay the significance of effects, particularly those related to landscape and visual impacts, heritage impacts and ecological impacts of the proposals.

The Applicant, in their Supplementary Statement of Need [PDB-014] explains that because land is available in close proximity to an existing overhead line, with potential to connect to the National Energy Transmission System, that it is rational to propose a scheme that delivers the greatest possible decarbonisation and energy security benefit from the land and available grid connection.

The applicant explains that the project has been designed to deliver the greatest possible benefit from the available land and the available grid connection.

To this extent, West Oxfordshire District Council consider that the design and location of the proposal has not been shaped by an understanding and appreciation of the local topography and

features of the landscape, the impact on the environment, nature and communities, but that it has been designed to maximise the extent of development throughout the landscape with little explanation of the iterative design approach.

Yours sincerely,



Planning Policy Manager
West Oxfordshire District Council