

As a resident of Bladon, whose property backs directly onto the proposed Botley West Solar Farm, I am deeply concerned about the impact of this industrial energy site could have on our homes and our community. The idea of renewable energy is one we support, but not without due consideration for local residents. Recent consultations with the energy company PVDP have failed to address local concerns. Despite PVDP's claim that they have made changes, these are minor and tokenistic and insufficient to avoid significant impact on the landscape and the community, and further work is required to minimise these concerns.

Basing a 2,471 acres Solar Farm with 2.2 million solar panels, one of the world's largest, limited to land owned by Blenheim Estate was always going to bring major issues due to the historical nature of the villages and land, supporting Blenheim Palace, and its rightful position of being a World Heritage Site, and a jewel in the crown for the UK. The overall proposal will overwhelm 15 villages, penned in by solar panels, security fencing and power converter plant, on good agricultural land, which is 75% Green Belt. The loss of open spaces and the impact on amenities for recreational activities such as footpaths for walking and other exercise, and communal spaces, only to be replaced by 'corridors' between the panels with views of the solar farm, will turn a rich, beautiful rolling landscape, into an industrial estate, never to be walked.

The area supports a diverse range of wildlife: deer, hares, birds, including red-listed farmland birds, and small mammals. There is insufficient evidence that the development will adequately safeguard local habitats or provide real ecological benefits. The loss of their natural environment, the removal of mature hedgerows and the large-scale industrialisation of the landscape poses long-term risks to local biodiversity.

The removal of local habitats will have an impact on the surrounding areas due to the migration of these animals seek alternative habitat. Birds will move to Oxford Airport, increasing risks to planes. Small mammals will move to residential homes, as they do in the winter months. Suitably sized alternative wilded meadows close by may minimise this impact.

The effect of this loss of this green belt land is over generations, not a short term period, The impact on mental health can only be estimated but will be substantial. Add to that the considerable disruption and noise to these villages and their limited, precious, infrastructure, over a prolonged period during the building of the solar farm the size of Heathrow Airport.

**The Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site Revised Management Plan 2017** best describes the environment and the importance of the surrounding land of Blenheim. The report prepared by Historic Landscape Management Ltd on behalf of the Blenheim Management Team, describes 'the setting of the Blenheim World Heritage Site (WHS)' and guidance on the ways in which it contributes to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the site. It describes the value of the setting and 'the importance of the village clusters, farmed countryside and woodlands/trees in enhancing local distinctiveness and fostering a sense of place'. It lists the Bladon area as contributing to this with; 'prominent slopes and valley sides interrupted by a number of small, narrow V-shaped valleys'; 'Large arable fields on the gentler slopes, small pasture fields on the steeper slopes and steep-sided valleys'; 'a well defined pattern of tall hedges and hedgerow trees'; 'small woodland copses and belts on steep slopes and along watercourses in the minor valleys'; and small unspoilt villages with rural character'. The report addresses the importance of biodiversity around the WHS site, the importance of the farmed landscape and arable habitats that support nationally important assemblages of arable birds including small breeding numbers of lapwing, snipe, curlew and redshank, and large wintering numbers of lapwing and golden plover.

The report includes an catalogue of pictures of the surrounding fields to reinforce the key visual linkages between Blenheim and its setting - to Bladon church in the south and from Old Woodstock to the Column of Victory in the east, concluding 'these significances are important individually and together in achieving a strong sense of place, which helps foster a sense of community through pride in the WHS and connecting it with the local area. Landscape character, views and the historic environment, together with recreational opportunities and biodiversity are all important parts of feeling connected and belonging within the local community'. The report concludes 'Tall developments on the skyline, or large-scale development (particularly those of a non-residential nature which tend to be bulkier and non-vernacular, for example industrial development; wind turbines; solar farms etc) could detrimentally influence the character of the adjoining rural areas'. Hear Hear!

If Blenheim Management have changed their core values due to personal financial gains offered by PVDP shares, a better alternative option might be to consider the flatter land in the northern part of the Blenheim Estate, within the grounds of the Palace. This will affect fewer people and will be less visible compared to the nature of the rolling hillsides to the south outlined in their report, and maintain their shares and income profit from the Solar Farm that Blenheim Management seek.

Having reviewed the overall capacity required by the UK Government, it is now clear that the Very Special Circumstances allocated to Botley West Solar Farm is no longer valid. UK government aims to have 70 GW of solar power by 2035, and the current queue of applicants is for 400GW, well over five times the amount needed, therefore no need to disrupt precious villages and use valuable farmland and green belt.

Farmland. Food security is very important, with securing home grown crops, which in a time of climate change is environmentally friendly compared to importing food, and to maintain the farming jobs which are at risk. The land within the proposal is Good to Moderate but has produced good crops over centuries, and certainly over the 30 years I have lived here. I do not welcome the current claim from the CEO of Blenheim and PVDP that the land is poor, to satisfy their arguments.

If the Botley West Solar Farm is to progress, there needs to be a substantial change to the proposal. There needs to be a substantial increase to the buffer zones for properties who back directly onto the proposed Solar Farm. The current proposal seems to vary considerably (for my area of Grove Road, Bladon, only has an 85m buffer zone and 25m elsewhere) and is not acceptable considering the size of the proposed development. Each property affected by the solar farm needs to be assessed but a Buffer Zone of 500m to cover all properties facing directly onto the solar farm should be considered based on solar farm research (<https://gosolarfloridastate.org/blog/what-is-a-safe-distance-to-live-from-a-solar-farm/#:~:text=It's%20a%20good%20idea%20to,when%20evaluating%20the%20safest%20distance>) .

Grove Road and Orchard Field residents are some of the most impacted on the proposed scheme and therefore ardently request government and PVDP consider a suitable buffer zone from the Botley West Solar Farm. I have a signed petition for Grove Road and Orchard Field residents whose house is facing the solar farm, for a buffer zone of 275 meters (Appendix 1). This is based on the local layout and draws a line up to the current path crossing the field. We believe this increased buffer zone reduces risks to local biodiversity and reduces the day to day visual impact on residents. It will also reduce some of the impact of construction. It aims to maintain our residential quality of life. However, feedback from the petition wanted the 275m increased to 500m based on the greater biodiversity, minimising animal migration, repositioning of footpaths and heavier use of these buffer zones due to limitations of local walks caused by the solar farm. An increase in the buffer zones to 500m for properties facing

the solar farm will have little impact on the scale of the 2,471 acres proposed by PVDP, and supports the overall view that the current development is too large for its environment.

I would strongly support that decreases in the development size by PVDP by increased Buffer Zones be considered within the Fair Community Compensation Package. The Buffer Zones will require maintenance by either Blenheim Estate or PVDP, and these costs should be accounted for.

#### Appendix 1:

Online Change Org Link: <https://chnng.it/DYydhJfZZs>

Hard Signed Copy on request

## **Petition Proposal:**

### **Establish a 275m Buffer Zone from Botley West Solar Farm for Grove Road and Orchard Field Lane, Bladon Residents**

#### **Why this petition matters**

Started by [David Foster](#) [REDACTED]

As a resident whose property backs directly onto the proposed Botley West Solar Farm, I am deeply concerned about the impact it could have on our homes and our community. The idea of renewable energy is one we support, but not without due consideration for local residents. Recent consultations with the energy company PVDP have failed to address local concerns.

Proposing an adequate buffer zone around the Solar Farm for properties who back directly onto the proposed Solar Farm, would ease our concerns, maintain our peaceful environment, and protect local wildlife. The current 85m buffer zone with high hedge row is not acceptable visually and will direct walkers close to the back of our properties. A larger proposed buffer zone will make little impact on PVDP power output but will have a massive impact on our daily lives.

We, the residents of Grove Road [REDACTED] and Orchard Field Lane, Bladon, believe a balance can be found between the benefits of renewable energy and maintaining our residential quality of life. Grove Road and Orchard Field residents are the most impacted on the proposed scheme and therefore ardently request government and PVDP consider a suitable buffer zone from the Botley West Solar Farm, for as outlined in this petition (Figure 1). Please show your support for this reasonable and responsible compromise. Can I please request the following:

- ✓ Sign our petition now. We can reference this united position to the Planning Inspectorate for their consideration. Please either send me your email contact address to: [REDACTED] and I will send you the electronic petition, OR simply fill in the hard copy and post it back to me (email would be very useful for future contact).
- ✓ Register as an interested party to the Planning Inspectorate: <https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010147/register/register-have-your-say>



Figure 1: 275m Buffer Zone to current footpath from Orchard Field Lane to the Quarry Pits



Picture 1: Taken from Orchard Field Lane X (Figure 1)

**Petition: Establish a 275m Buffer Zone from Botley West Solar Farm for Grove Road and Orchard Field Lane, Bladon Residents**

Name(s)	Address	Contact email	Contact phone number	I support the proposal for a Buffer Zone outlined in Figure 1: Signature(s)
Terry Castle				Signed Hard Copy
Mary & Ralph Blackshaw				Signed Hard Copy
Brain Sugg				Signed Hard Copy
Dr Janet Horrocks				Signed Hard Copy
Clive & Linda Oliver				Signed Online Petition
Dianne Parker				Signed Online Petition
Mark Furlong & Jenny Price				Signed Hard Copy
Sarah & Nolan				No response
Fiona Lewinton				Signed Online Petition
Galit Goldshmid				Signed Online Petition
David Foster				Signed Online Petition
Lucy Allen & Jean-Luc Schwenninger				Signed Online Petition
Michael Douglas & Paul Kirby				Signed Hard Copy
RENTAL				No response
Simon Leedham MBBS, PhD, FRCP & Dawn				Signed Online Petition Professor of Molecular and Population Genetics, Honorary Consultant Gastroenterologist, University of Oxford
Nicholas Horsley				Signed Online Petition
William & Miriam Burstow				Signed Online Petition
Sian Wallace				Signed Online Petition
Stephen Westaby				Signed Online Petition