Botley West Solar Farm: Deadline 2. 1st July 2025 – Comments on the Local Impact Reports

COMMENTS ON THE JOINT LOCAL IMPACT REPORT OF CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL Submitted for Deadline 1

My name is Jonathan Ford. I am motivated by a desire to love the God who loves us all and to love my neighbours, whether local or global. Humankind will only resolve climate change if we choose to love the neighbours we do not know. I speak as a member of the public. I am also a father and environmentalist.

Dear Examiners,

I understand this document to be primarily a list of the negative impacts of the development as currently designed. It also identifies additional work that is required. It does not intend to address the positive impacts of the development.

I understand that you will apply the principle of planning balance when you consider the development.

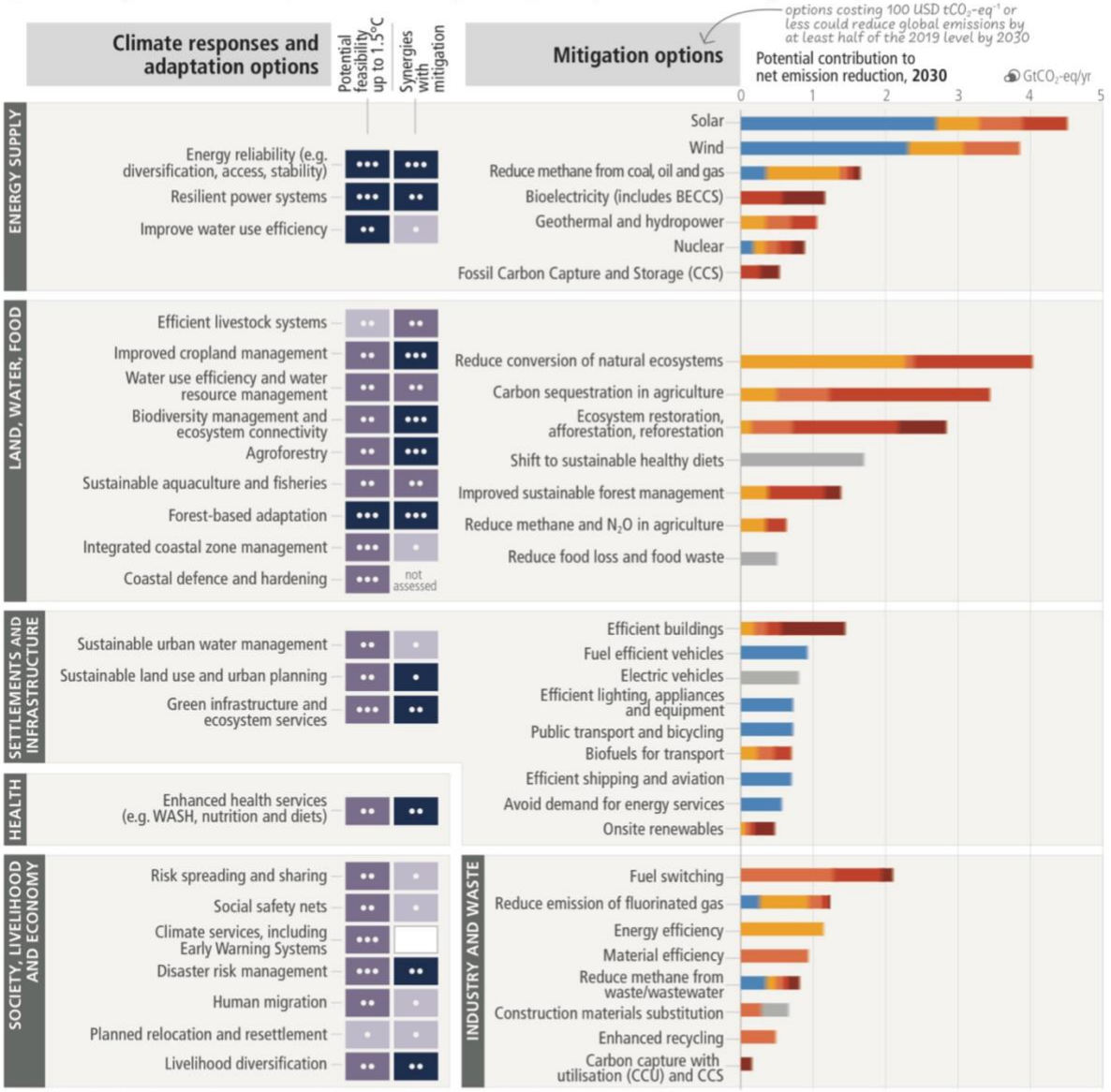
My desire is that the JLIR will result in a better designed development, one which better embraces the requirements of "commodity, firmness and delight" (as described in Gov.uk Guidance: Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Good Design updated 16th April 2025). My hope is that the development will maximise the benefits it can offer and minimise the negatives. The strap line for my business for the last thirty years has been "… the needs of people … the laws of nature and of building … the desire for beauty". Let us aim for this.

I draw your attention to my representation made at the Open Floor Hearing on 14th June.

In my representation I pointed out that climate change is the issue of our generation. I now draw your attention to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's AR6 Synthesis Report Climate Change 2023 figure SPM.7 below. Please note – in the top right of the bar chart – how solar is identified as having the most potential to mitigate climate change between now and 2030. It is also proven, quick to deploy at large scale and cheap.

There are multiple opportunities for scaling up climate action

a) Feasibility of climate responses and adaptation, and potential of mitigation options in the near term



b) Potential of demand-side mitigation options by 2050

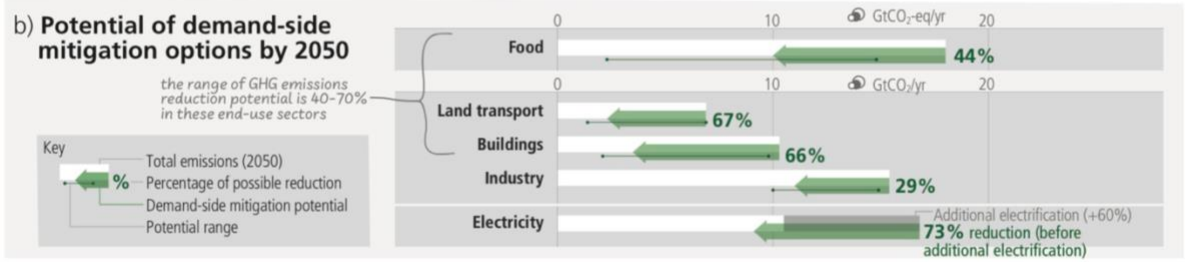


Figure SPM.7: Multiple Opportunities for scaling up climate action. Panel (a) presents selected mitigation and adaptation options across different systems. The left-hand side of panel a shows climate responses and adaptation options assessed for their multidimensional feasibility at global scale, in the near term and up to 1.5°C global warming. As literature above 1.5°C is limited, feasibility at higher levels of warming may change, which is currently not possible to assess robustly. The term response is used here in addition to adaptation because some responses, such as migration, relocation and resettlement may or may not be considered to be adaptation. Forest based adaptation includes sustainable forest management, forest conservation and restoration, reforestation

How important is climate change mitigation at the scale offered by the development? What does it weigh in the planning balance?

Our local councils describe climate change as an emergency. Surely an emergency provides weight in the planning balance.

Climate change is the issue of our time…… There is no solution…big, fast and affordable…that can resolve it better than large scale solar.

For each reduction in the scale of this development there will be a proportional reduction in the climate change mitigation benefits. I am not suggesting that this means the scale of the development is immutable. However, I am saying that climate change benefit is a very significant benefit not just for what is achieved on this site but because of the impact on other sites both in the UK and around the world. (I refer you to my Open Floor Hearing representation on 14th June 2025.)

The second most important issue facing the world is biodiversity. In Table 21 it is suggested that the development has a 'negative' impact on Ecology, Nature Conservation and Trees. This may well be the case if only existing species are considered. However, the planning balance needs to address the benefits. Charity Plantlife advise that over 97% of the UK's species-rich grassland has been lost in less than a century and it now covers just 1% of land. As a result, the government is currently paying farmers to put 10% of their arable land to species-rich grassland. My local farmer has put 250 acres into this scheme. It appears contradictory to suggest that a project putting in the order of 1,500 acres of single species arable land to grassland has a negative impact.

Blenheim are a good neighbour when it comes to biodiversity. I have seen some of the work that Blenheim have already done and are proposing to do throughout their estate. The work done on adjacent land will benefit ecology and nature conservation within the solar farm as wildlife corridors are formed and both plant and animal species move between the two. Blenheim have planted tens if not hundreds of thousands of trees adjacent to the north site. They plan to plant 300,000 more trees on their estate. Blenheim are proposing to reestablish Combe Marsh. I understand there are plans to increase the biodiversity of the Evenlode Valley in partnership with Evenlode Catchment Partnership. Work has already been done in the Dorn Valley. Blenheim have staff who's sole responsibility is ecology, and the development of the estate's natural capital. High Park is dominated by one of the best collections of veteran oaks in Europe. I recently met one of their staff who was delighted that he had found several fully mature elm trees that appear to be resistant to Dutch elm disease. Blenheim have a track record of caring for Ecology, Nature Conservation and Trees. They are good neighbours.

JHFord 829 words 27th June 2025