

Wootton Parish Council (Northern Site) Additional Comments in Regard to Local Impact During the Examination Phase 22 July 2025

Built and Historic Environment

Built Heritage

The Northern Section of the development site is located within the wider setting of the Wootton Conservation Area with a number of Grade 2 Listed Buildings in proximity to the project boundary including a collection of listed buildings at Lower Dornford Farm, Milford Bridge Cottage and the Grade 2* Listed Hordley House.

With respect to “built heritage assets” we are, like OHA’s impact report, particularly concerned about development within the setting of Listed buildings at Wootton. We are concerned about the impact of proposed development to the south and east of Hordley House on the setting of the Grade 2* Listed Building, particularly as the setting of such assets can be appreciated from the Public Rights of Way network to the south and east. It is considered that the removal of PV arrays from this location could reduce the impact on these properties.

Conservation Area

As Wootton’s Conservation Area borders the edge of some of the Northern Site [REDACTED] we believe that the setting of Wootton’s Conservation Area would be impacted. An “industrialised landscape with glint and glare” does not compliment our Conservation Area’s key characteristics of a rural setting, once part of the Royal Wychwood’s Forest and later Wootton Park and farmland of the old estates of Glympton and Blenheim with buildings in the traditional, honey coloured stone and design famous in the Cotswolds.

Ideally, we would ask that arrays are placed in more suitable fields and were puzzled that this site was selected when we know Blenheim has other fields with less historical and environmental assets. At the very least, we ask that the applicant revisits their approach to our conservation areas, taking into account mitigation measures that preserve the Conservation area and landscape.

Archaeology

The Northern section also contains the significant archaeological sites with the ‘Roman Villa’, ‘Scheduled Ancient Monument’ (Policy EH15) near to ‘Sansom’s Farm’ to the south is a notable key site in relation to ‘pre-medieval’ history in the area. Samsoms Platt and the Roman Akeman Street has a circular temple and recently identified cemetery that is not yet excavated.

It is our understanding that there will be cabling, and a substation located near to this and we would prefer it to be located elsewhere. We request more information about this in terms of construction and operational activity and noise levels and what mitigation measures might be put in place.

WPC supports OHA’s request that there must be an archaeological written scheme of investigation and must be substantially in accordance with an outline written scheme of investigation, approved in advance by the relevant planning authority, and must be implemented as approved.

Historical Landscape Heritage

Wootton is recorded in the Domesday book and was in the top 10% settlements in terms of size. Unusually it had two mills, most likely one was a sawmill due to the location of the nearby two rivers, Dorn and Gryme, the royal Wychwoods reaching Wootton and **Dornford Lane** running to Woodstock Manor. **Dornford Grove**

& Dornford Lane might be the last connection to that historic landscape and we seek to preserve that landscape.

Wootton's historical public green pathways/bridleway will be impacted.

Dornford Lane, an ancient green lane and drovers' road was highlighted by the **CPRE** as a unique local heritage green pathway linking Woodstock to the Bartons for the past 1,000 years and the role the ancient route has played as a key local supply route to Woodstock Manor over the centuries. It will be used as an access road for operational access. In addition, the **Oxford Way** public footpath on the Northern site and is also a bridleway called the Cheval Way by the BHS. We are concerned that the arrays will transform this ancient green lane into an industrial alley with glint and glare.

We are concerned that cabling is proposed to be laid along Dornford Green and request more detailed information about how this will be installed and where and what the maintenance plans shall be.

We would like more information in regard to a substation that appears to be behind a hedge on the east corner of the Dornford Field. What will be its size, purpose, operational activity and noise levels? What mitigation measures might there be?

We also request that the applicant engages with the British Horse Society in regard to their requests for suitable widths, fencing and their concern over any noise from the substation mentioned above. It is our understanding that though BHS requested this, it has not happened.

Landscape and Visual Impact

At the Northern site area, both Dornford Lane and the Oxford Way are located on the site with the listed buildings of **Lower Dornford Farm**, **Hordley House** and there is also the rural **Dornford Cottage**. WPC remains concerned that siting arrays on this site along with the proposed mitigation methods such as metal fencing or hedges around Public Rights of Way that will fundamentally change the way the landscape and views are appreciated. This open green space bordering ancient woodlands with numerous perching owls, bats and biodiverse habitat and other species such as hares existing in open land would become an enclosed sea of glint and glare solar panels. The name Dornford illustrates links to the nearby rivers that enable a vibrant ecosystem to thrive and link the site to the nearby water meadows and wildfowl.

Ideally, we request that the arrays be removed to protect this unique, vibrant and ancient existing landscape.

We also request that the applicant provides more detailed visualisation data such as photography, field of view of the proposed development, single frame visualisations, modelling of visualisations, accuracy of visualisations, annotations of viewpoints, including the scheme layout on location plans.

Ecology, Nature Conservation and Trees

The most Northern field borders **Dornford Grove**, designated **Ancient Woodland** that is **rich with biodiversity** deemed important for the conservation of biodiversity and geodiversity in the area (policy EH3). There are numerous bat species and 2 or 3 perching pairs of barn owls. The adjacent rivers Glyme and Dorn and nearby water meadows have a water fowl and on occasion, otters. As part of Lower Dornford Farm's development in addition to their own solar park in the walled garden, they are undertaking mitigation measures to protect the biodiversity and it should be noted that a bat roosting box will be placed in the field where solar panels will be placed. See

https://publicaccess.westoxon.gov.uk/online-applications/files/A443037DDB0A1FC7FF717C363DE19CA6/pdf/24_00147_FUL-ECOLOGY_MITIGATION_SITE_PLAN-1325906.pdf.

We would like to more information in regard to how the solar arrays will mitigate for the protected bat population, it is our understanding that bats will not just fly along boundaries and where will the new field bat box on the above plan be moved to?

Current mitigation measures state a minimum of a 15m buffer will be retained to ancient woodland areas in line with NE guidance however it should be noted that The Woodland Trust recommends at least a **50m buffer** (Planning for ancient woodland: planners manual for ancient woodland and veteran trees, July 2019) unless otherwise justified. Therefore, **Wootton Parish Council also requests a 50m buffer from Dornford Grove**. This best practice will reduce the impact of edge effects and uncertainty of the impact of a solar farm of this scale next to woodland any deviation from best practice should be fully justified.

An assessment of the impacts of the proposed development on ancient and veteran trees is also essential.

We believe that the surveys and assessment submitted to date with regards to bats, hares, otters and water vole, great crested newts, water & farmland birds 'the lake effect', nature recovery, woodlands and BNG are not sufficient to consider the full impacts related to each of these receptors/issues. There is also a need to improve the enhancement methods proposed within the submitted documentation.

We would require additional enhancement/mitigation measures to be provided in relation to bats, hares, otters and water voles, great crested newts, water and farmland birds, nature recovery and ancient woodlands.

Cable routing should avoid the Root Protection Areas of all trees within and adjacent to the site boundary.

Individual tree protection plans must be provided for all the sites.

Human Health

Residential housing is located within and on the border of the Northern site. In particular, **Dornford Cottage** will be surrounded by arrays despite a small buffer. The fields will have no screening contradicting the Glint & Glare: assessment of "no impact" due to "existing/proposed vegetation" with no mitigation recommended. The industrialisation of a resident's environment to this extent, must have a serious impact on life, wellbeing, health and financial security. **Hordley House** will also be negatively impacted after centuries of pastoral serenity as a medieval house.

Ideally, we would suggest that the applicant selects sites that are more suitable and not put arrays so near to residents.

However, if this is not possible, we request that that detailed **Residential Visual Amenity Assessment** with relevant consultation bodies is conducted at the Northern Site and an **Accompanied Site Visit** is made to **Dornford Cottage** and **Hordley Manor**.

We believe that the proposed 25m offset for properties, settlements and communities requires consideration on a case by case basis, so that aspects such as topography and vegetation are fully considered. A standard 'buffer' approach is unlikely to be sufficient in terms of mitigation of significant effects at all locations. There is no evidence to support the justification of the 25m buffer to individual properties and settlements. Good practice would advise a minimum of **50m**, **but due to the size, scale and disparate nature of the proposals, we recommend 100m**.

