

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Dan Levy, County Councillor and District Councillor for Eynsham and Cassington. I represent Cassington, the southern end of Lower Road including the area of the new Salt Cross Garden Village which will overlook the solar farm area in the Evenlode valley, and the northern bank of the Thames. Siemens is the largest employer in the division.

I would like to summarise and emphasise and expand the points made primarily by Cassington PC and Stop Botley West.

The approach of the Applicant, despite your pressing, has been to argue that the importance of the project means they are justified causing harm to residents and businesses, and that they can sort out the details after the secretary of state gives consent.

On the first point. Yes the country needs solar energy. But national policy doesn't give carte blanche for that production to happen wherever an applicant chooses. Let's be clear – the application is for this area solely because there is only one landowner to square off.

National policy does not shield the Applicant from having to minimise harms and ensure the benefits outweigh harms.

As an aside, the idea that there might be compulsory acquisition of this landowner's land doesn't pass the sniff test, does it. If the development and operation of the solar facility can't be secured

by a contract between Blenheim and the Applicant, what is going on?

The Applicant has failed to do the things required of it by you as Examiners, and by the community.

We have seen a casual approach to minimising flood damage to Cassington because of the assumption that solar panels can't make things worse. The scientific evidence provided by the hydrology expert commissioned by Cassington PC demonstrates that this is a false assumption.

We have seen a straight line on a flooding map that seems to assume that water will stop at the line.

We have heard that they have failed to deliver soil samples from round the various sites to prove the assertion that they aren't taking productive land out of food production. We heard today from CPRE Oxfordshire that much of the land in question is not of low agricultural productivity.

We have failed to be informed of how the Applicant intends to route its cables through Eynsham and over the river through the various sites of scientific and ecological interest. We heard from Siemens that a closure of their access would cost millions of pounds and a failure to deliver lifesaving equipment.

We have seen that they chose a few sites to demonstrate a reduction in visual impact – three I believe I heard – but ignored whole areas including the parts of Cassington that will be within very close proximity to solar panels on rising land.

We have heard about the lack of impact on views from the walled area of the heritage site. We have not heard about the huge

impact from views from the wider area towards the heritage site. The views from Church Hanborough or from Wytham Woods cannot be anything but damaged.

We have heard from the Applicant that, and I paraphrase the representative of the Applicant, the community isn't to be trusted to come up with good projects with community grants. As a member of two councils and in my regular discussions with community groups and parish councils, and seeing the crying need for investment in local infrastructure like bike paths, the Applicant's approach is shameful. It is shameful both in the scale of the benefits being offered and the structure proposed.

I could go on.

Finally we heard on Wednesday that the funding for this project is normal. I used to work in project finance for an investment bank. This is not normal. If you built an oil platform or a railway, you know who the client is, who is going to benefit and who is going to operate the project and in the case of an oil facility, who will be around to decommission it. We know none of this in this case.

Nobody is against solar energy. My county council division already has 3 major sites built or consented. The County Council is committed to decarbonising the county. But I trust this examination to ensure that this application demonstrates substantially more care than has been taken to date or else is recommended for rejection.