

Supplementary response for Deadline 6:

Comments on Botley West public examination hearings, 8–10 October 2025

Nigel Pearce, 13 October 2025, IP20052539

Further to my submission of 2 October, I would like to add some brief comments arising from the public hearings.

Flood risk

It was very interesting to hear, on Day 2, the continuing debate about flood risk, and whether or not the Applicant's proposals are sufficient to avoid exacerbating it in Cassington and elsewhere in the project site. The Applicant has been forced to address this major issue, and to make adjustments to help counter the risk, and has finally acknowledged the increased kinetic energy in runoff from solar panels. This is all a far cry from what one of their representatives said to me when I raised the issue at one of the public consultation meetings in late 2022. Responding to my question about runoff, the RPS man who, as a former planning officer with WODC should have known better, said that the solar panels would make "very little difference" to water flows, although they might create "a few runnels". This dismissive response is indicative of a seam of dishonesty that has run right through the Application from the very start. The issue of BMV land is another example (one of many).

Best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land

On Day 2, the Applicant's legal representative said that the reduction of the installation area in the Central Site would not affect the ability of Botley West to meet its 840MW target. So why did the Applicant propose such a large area? Was it a cynical negotiating tactic in anticipation of being forced to make some reduction, which could then be presented as a concession that proved that the Applicant had been listening responsibly to the local community? Or was it just greed? The 'necessity' for the disproportionate size of the project has never been fully explained.

In my submission of 2 October, I asked the ExA to check whether there will be a comparable reduction in the number of panels. Would some or all of the panels be relocated and squeezed into the other five-sixths of the Central Site (or elsewhere)? If the latter, there would be a significant impact on other issues, such as biodiversity, flood risk (runoff), visual impact, etc. The legal representative's 840MW admission makes this question even more relevant. [ENDS]