



Hearing Transcript

Project:	Botley West Solar Farm
Hearing:	Open Floor Hearing 3 (OFH3) Part 1
Date:	10 October 2025

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:03:05 - 00:00:34:29

So did disturb the hubbub. I do like I do like hearing it. It's good. Um. Welcome, everyone. It is a 9:30, and I'm opening this open floor hearing for the application by Solar five limited for an order development consent order for the Bottle West solar farm. Um, we'll introduce ourselves, of course, in a few minutes, but please bear with me while I go for you. A few housekeeping matters. First of all, can you all hear me clearly? Excellent. Good sign. And can I confirm the meeting's recordings have started? Thank you.

00:00:35:02 - 00:01:06:25

Have there been any requests for reasonable adjustments? No. Okay. Thank you very much. Once again, there are no fire alarm drills today. The emergency exits are behind you and then congregate in the car park. The facilities are all behind you as well. So if in doubt, run that way. My name is David Wallace. I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the lead member of the examining Authority to carry out an examination of the above application. I will now hand over to my colleagues to introduce themselves.

00:01:10:01 - 00:01:17:12

Hello, my name is Catherine Metcalfe. I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of the panel of inspectors to examine this application.

00:01:18:26 - 00:01:24:29

My name is Mukhtar Shaikh. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the member of a panel of inspectors to examine this application.

00:01:25:20 - 00:02:01:26

Conspicuous by her absence, our colleague, Miss Cassini is not with us today. She's convalescing. We wish her well, but rest assured she'll be watching this on the recording. So she'll be fully briefed as to what is said here today. Um, also present are members of the case team, the case managers. Simon Ray went over there. The other case team members are dotted around the room. I'm sure you're familiar with them. Um, by all means, if there's any queries or questions, um, by all means, approach

them. Um, I would like to welcome all attendees here today, both in person and those joining us online.

00:02:02:05 - 00:02:32:17

Um, we'll get you to introduce yourselves as and when you come forward to make your representation. And just on that matter, you'll see that there is a desk front and center here. And we'd prefer you to sort of come forward and give your, your, uh, testimonies to us from there. If you don't feel confident in doing that and you're prepared to stay seated where you are, there is a roving microphone, just draw your attention to a member of the case team, and they'll bring the microphone to you. And you can address us from from there.

00:02:33:28 - 00:03:14:19

Um, for those of you who are attending virtually, um, please rest assured you do have our attention when you're speaking to us. Our eyes may be cast down at your image on the screens in front of us, rather than directly at the camera. Um, but rest assured, you have our full attention. Just a reminder to everyone that this event is being live streamed and recorded, and therefore the General Data Protection Regulations apply. Therefore, please try and refrain from putting any sensitive personal information in the public domain. If you feel it is absolutely necessary to put that personal sensitive information into the public domain, please speak to a member of the case team first and we'll see if we can get that into the examination.

00:03:14:21 - 00:03:46:13

But in writing, in written form. Um, if for some reason you feel it is necessary to speak, then we'll explore options as to how that information can be redacted before it is published online. Um, for the benefit of those in the room, the applicant will be invited to respond to all parties, all points raised by parties today. But the applicant does reserve the right to respond in writing at the next deadline. Um, we'll confirm that with the applicant. Once everyone has spoken as to what approach they're looking to do.

00:03:47:16 - 00:04:19:27

The final point is for all speakers today, there are a number of you and we want to hear your representations. Um, we will impose a time limit of five minutes upon you. And I've got a countdown here that lets me know as you're speaking. Um, please don't feel it rude. If I interrupt and let you know you've got one minute left or 30s left. I just need to let you know, um, how you're, uh, how you're doing, basically. Um, so with that in mind, um, we will have the opportunity to ask questions of you.

00:04:19:29 - 00:04:50:22

If we are challenged by what you ask us. Um, and please answer them as best as you can. The final point to say is that if you do make an oral representation today, please do follow it up in writing a summary of what you said in writing at the next deadline. Which deadline? Six. And that's on the 20th of October. So then, without further ado, I do have a list of individuals and groups who, um, wanted to attend and speak today.

00:04:50:25 - 00:05:17:12

We did publish a hearing agenda On the 18th of September, capturing all those who wanted to speak. At that time, I'm aware that many more have come forward since then. Rest assured, I do have a list. I'll go through that list if I've missed anybody off. Please bring it to my attention. Alright, so without further ado, I'd like to call a representative from Sustainable Woodstock to come forward and to address. Thank you.

00:05:30:22 - 00:05:34:22

I just say there aren't any. Somebody is posting

00:05:36:16 - 00:05:38:28

this point on just a detail.

00:05:42:04 - 00:06:20:02

Morning, everyone. My name is Hilary Brown, and I'm representing Sustainable Woodstock. Thank you for the opportunity for being able to speak. and I'm a bit speaking on community benefits. We are part of the Community Action Group Oxfordshire Network. We encourage working together through community led projects so that we've become more informed, resilient to climate change, protect our local environment and promote nature recovery. We understand the urgent need for rapid reduction of greenhouse gases and for a development such as Botley West in Oxfordshire.

00:06:20:25 - 00:06:52:00

Solar energy UK is the trade association for the solar industry in the UK, and they recommend several good practices, including aiming for a community benefit fund that offers a lasting legacy for communities. We know that benefits are not yet mandatory. They are voluntary only given the massive scale of Botley West, the location and the vicinity to so many communities, there is an expectation of a community benefit that is proportionate.

00:06:53:03 - 00:07:26:03

Another recommendation by the trade association includes apportioning opportunities for community investment through a community ownership scheme. These schemes usually offer enhanced supplementary funds for communities. Allocating some community ownership has been suggested. So far, this has been rejected by the developers. Immediately after the May hearings, two things happened. First, a local press release announced that the community fund had doubled to £440,000 per annum.

00:07:26:21 - 00:08:00:05

People were curious and surprising. Most had no idea whether this was generous or not, and many asked my opinion. In truth, this is far from generous. The second thing that happened was the government published a consultation, a working paper on community benefits and renewable energy projects. They stated that all energy projects right across the country should have community benefits schemes that are as strong as possible when comparisons are made. The developers suggested fund is not as strong as possible.

00:08:01:24 - 00:08:41:19

Every project is clearly unique. Consequently, making comparisons has been difficult and not straightforward. And following a recent email to the CEO of Oxfordshire County Council and a

subsequent conversation with them, it is clear it hasn't been easy for the county council either. I sympathise. They have enough on their plate without having to manage a process that relies on a voluntary approach. However, it is unclear how Oxford County Council appear to have come to an agreement for such a low level of community benefit as the benefit is for the lifetime of the project the next 40 years.

00:08:42:18 - 00:09:16:28

If consent is given, the amount agreed now should be clearly very important to the communities in Oxfordshire on their request and that's. Oxford County Council. We were very recently sent a number. We were really sorry. I'll start again on their request. We recently sent Oxfordshire County Council a number of current examples that range from about £1000 to £2000 per installed megawatts, and these are currently being discussed as part of an 800 megawatt project in Newark.

00:09:17:11 - 00:09:38:06

Um, it's called the Great North Road. Apart from the price per megawatt installed, an alternative scheme has been suggested that would be fairer to investors. A percentage of income generated is likely fairer for developers because this is a constant based on reality and better reflects their revenue streams.

00:09:38:16 - 00:09:39:09

One minute left.

00:09:39:11 - 00:10:13:12

Sorry two. 2% seems to equate to a Danish example based on conservative estimates of bodily waste generating of around £50 million of income per year for the owners. This community benefit would be about £1 million per year, similar to £1,000 per megawatt installed. There is a compelling case for greater fairness than is evident so far. I am using this time to appeal directly once again to the developers. Yesterday, the applicant said they did not know what the community wanted in terms of community benefit.

00:10:13:14 - 00:10:46:16

This was very frustrating as we and others have been campaigning for a figure of £5,000 per kilowatt for installed megawatts. Sorry, but approximately two years now. Incidentally, the same suggested figure in the government consultation working paper answered no. The government set mandatory contributions for renewables will not be agreed before a decision is made by the Secretary of State. We would strongly urge the developers and ask Oxford County Council to reconsider the community benefit contribution.

00:10:46:18 - 00:10:59:09

We would like to see a more open process for the discussion of community benefit for Botley West. At the moment, it seems and feels like it has been done behind closed doors with no proper opportunity to comment.

00:10:59:11 - 00:11:01:12

So are you about to finish?

00:11:01:14 - 00:11:27:09

I've just got three questions and that's it. We have the following questions we'd like to ask the developers and Oxfordshire County Council what is happening on community benefits at the moment, and whether there will be any open consultation on it with the communities involved at any point. We'd like to also ask the developers and Oxford County Council, if present, if an agreement has actually been made.

00:11:29:21 - 00:11:42:14

While understanding is not part of the consent process. We'd like to ask the inspectorate team here today if they have any experience or understanding of when an agreement should be settled. And finally,

00:11:43:29 - 00:12:02:15

Time will tell. What is finally decided is fair community benefit figure. We just believe what the developers have currently offered is anything but fair. I would like to strongly urge Oxford County Council to continue the fight for a fair and just amount. Thanks for the extra time.

00:12:03:09 - 00:12:06:17

Thank you. Thank you for that. We've heard you.

00:12:07:15 - 00:12:12:23

Can I just add. South Hill Community are on the list and they've asked me if I could speak for them.

00:12:12:25 - 00:12:19:23

Yes, indeed. I understand you have a speech that they've given you. Yes. Um, yeah. You're you've got to wait a couple of minutes, but, yeah, you'll be off.

00:12:25:06 - 00:12:29:01

Thank you for that. Is, uh, Mister Bruce windward here at all?

00:12:33:25 - 00:12:44:27

Okay. Um. Mister Windward, if you watch the recordings, we'd welcome any representation you want to make in writing at the next deadline. Um, Mr. Jonathan Ford.

00:12:56:28 - 00:12:59:08

Take a seat and your time will start when you start.

00:13:11:02 - 00:13:47:17

My name is Jonathan Ford. Well, I speak as a member of the public. My career has been spent designing landscapes, including large scale infrastructure projects that meet the needs of people. Our sound and our beautiful I purpose this morning, however inadequately, is to align my words with the God who loves us all. This project has the potential to benefit people and nature both now and in the future. Examiners, I shall focus on two issues climate change and biodiversity loss.

00:13:47:29 - 00:14:21:13

What can be more important? Nothing deserves more weight in the planning balance. As you consider the merits of this application. But starkly, lives are in your hands. Examiners whether health, children, finances, even life and death, those things that are most dear to us all. I find it deeply concerning that we are hearing so little about the benefits of the application, and in particular, the benefits for nature and for people, ourselves, our communities, our global neighbours.

00:14:22:16 - 00:14:26:00

Climate change is the issue of our time.

00:14:27:29 - 00:15:06:00

Since we started this examination in public, the Met Office has released provisional statistics confirming that the summer of 2025 is the warmest summer on record. All five warmest summers in the UK have occurred since the year 2000. And what about our neighbours living in hotter and wetter countries? 100% humidity combined with temperatures above 35 degrees is life threatening. Tim Lenton OBE is chair of climate change and earth system science at the University of Exeter.

00:15:06:20 - 00:15:37:12

In his book, published since the beginning of this examination, he suggests that a 1.5 degrees of global warming that at 1.5 degrees of global warming, more than 400 million people will be exposed to unprecedented heat. This increases by five times to almost 2 billion people at 2.7 degrees warming, and includes more than 600 million people in India and 300 million in Nigeria.

00:15:37:14 - 00:15:37:29

Syria.

00:15:39:03 - 00:15:55:03

Has anyone given thought to the number of lives that could be saved by this application? What weight to these lives carry in the planning balance? What about the associated suffering due to lost livelihoods and the need to migrate to cooler locations?

00:15:56:21 - 00:16:26:21

Yes, of course this application should be the best it can be and it can be better in terms of beauty, biodiversity and community benefits. An exemplary project that will inspire other landowners and world leaders to do the same. The application is a temporary project that will leave the soil in better condition. It does not contradict Capability Brand's intentions. Well-designed could make the area more beautiful than it is now.

00:16:27:21 - 00:16:59:15

It moves us towards a world where climate and biodiversity are managed well, where we can look with hope to the future. This application is a temporary project that provides us with breathing space while we get better technology up and running, cleaner electricity for artificial intelligence, and green hydrogen to power cars, freight and aeroplanes, perhaps saving thousands of lives and disruption associated with extreme weather in a time of constrained national finances.

00:16:59:17 - 00:17:05:26

Utility scale solar cost, the national person nothing. We are looking a gift horse in the mouth.

00:17:06:09 - 00:17:07:23

Just over one minute.

00:17:08:19 - 00:17:22:20

In conclusion, examiners, as you prepare your recommendation to the Secretary of State, if climate change mitigation and biodiversity gain the planning weight that the emergency deserves.

00:17:27:08 - 00:17:33:08

Thank you very much, Mr. Ford. Points well made. Thank you. And thank you for attending the ACI earlier this week as well.

00:17:33:19 - 00:17:34:14

Thank you.

00:17:37:05 - 00:17:41:20

Okay. Is there a representative from Kensington Parish Council at all?

00:17:44:21 - 00:17:48:09

Okay. Um, Mr. Stuart Thompson.

00:17:52:16 - 00:17:56:24

Okay. Um, South Hill community energy.

00:17:59:10 - 00:18:00:23

Yeah. You're up again.

00:18:30:03 - 00:18:53:29

Thank you. I'm speaking on behalf of Liz Reason, who sent me a message this morning to say she wasn't able to to make it, and wondered if I could speak on her behalf. Uh, Liz, reason is one of the trustees, I believe, of the South Hill Community Energy, and she's one of the, um. Yeah, she's one of the trustees. So she's entitled this Appropriate Levels of community benefit.

00:18:55:18 - 00:19:26:02

Further, a further statement from South Hill Community Energy, the Botley West Solar Farm and SIP hearings were held during May in Oxford, and just days after the hearings, the Botley West developers doubled their community benefit offered to £440,000 per annum. This appears to have been in in a process that was not transparent and which did not reflect either government proposals nor examples of community benefit levels nearby.

00:19:26:25 - 00:19:59:02

The recent government working paper community community benefits and shared ownership for low carbon infrastructure compares with other projects, and proposes a figure based on £5,000 per megawatt for Botley West 840MW. This would be the equivalent of £4.2 million per annum. Consequently, settling for £440,000 per annum would mean that local communities may miss out on millions of pounds over the 40 year lifetime of the project.

00:20:00:00 - 00:20:32:26

A reminder that South Hill Community Energy pays out a minimum of £10,000 per megawatt per year, compared to that proposed level. Sorry, I'm just going. Compared to that, the proposed level of PV community fund is not proportionate or fair. Over 40 years, the community fund, at £5,000 per megawatt per year, would amount to £168 million, compared to just 17.6 1.6 million on offer from PVP.

00:20:34:08 - 00:21:15:06

A fair community benefit would be one that reflects the scale, impact and profits of the project. While community benefits are well established for renewable energy projects, there is no legal requirement in England for developers to offer a community fund, and so communities have to rely on voluntary offers from developers. PVP. In this case, if the proposed government level of community benefit is used, Oxfordshire would have an annual sum that could be used strategically to lower emissions and energy costs by, for example, training a cohort of builders and engineers to deliver high quality home energy retrofit.

00:21:15:11 - 00:21:16:21

And she ends there.

00:21:19:07 - 00:21:24:13

Thank you. Thank you for stepping in for her. And thank you to her for preparing that speech.

00:21:29:22 - 00:21:32:24

Next to my list. I have Cumnor Parish Council.

00:21:55:07 - 00:22:25:26

Here in May, we expressed our thanks to you for the opportunity to explain our concerns about this proposal and its cumulative impacts on our parish. Our first real opportunity to do so since this phase one community consultation leaflet in November 2022 landed on our doorsteps. But frankly, back in May, we were more than a little fearful. A concern growing out of the way the applicant had behaved to us and our residents in the prior so-called consultations.

00:22:26:15 - 00:23:01:23

Five months on our confidence that what we've been saying for the past three years has finally been listened to, has increased substantially. So we would like to amplify those, thanks to you and to your case team, who have been unfailingly swift and helpful in their replies to our questions. In contrast, though, any confidence we might have had in the assertions and claimed capabilities of the applicant has continued to decrease, a couple of evidential points to illustrate this might be helpful. We observed you here in May asking the applicant for without prejudice wording for a Grampian condition.

00:23:02:00 - 00:23:33:14

We then observed that you repeated that request in writing not once, but twice, and that you didn't get what you asked for. That struck us as odd behaviour. If the applicant were truly invested in this process, and not just going through the motions before the inevitable in their mind. Approval by the

Secretary of State. But that behaviour to you has been echoed by our own experience. In May we said that we were being asked to believe the unbelievable that the applicant was telling us, and few things about our parish that are impossible.

00:23:33:18 - 00:24:04:00

We likened this to Lewis Carroll's White Queen, who said that with practice she could believe six impossible things before breakfast. We couldn't. But since May, the applicant has gone even further. They've told you that there are, quote, substantial areas of newly planted woodland in our parish. There aren't they told you the power station in our parish would be invisible? For example, a 75 meter long, 15 meter high building would be invisible from a grade two farmhouse that sits on the hill above it.

00:24:04:14 - 00:24:41:28

Panels and shipping containers and fences and CCTV masts would be invisible from the similarly elevated Hill End Outdoor Education center you visited on Tuesday. Harry Potter's invisibility cloak has clearly spread to Cumnor from the film's locations here in Christchurch and New College. In its response to your question about panel heights on the steeply sloping and shaded north facing hillsides in our parish, the applicant invoked another Oxford literary genre their response to you being an exposition on how sheep will safely graze under a panel just 0.8m off the ground.

00:24:42:03 - 00:25:14:24

Clearly a Tolkien inspired new breed of hobbit sheep, we presume, but certainly not the sheep that feature on the home page of the applicant's website. They are the concrete native to southern France and bred for their milk used to make Roquefort. Now the applicant will surely say that this picture on their website is merely indicative. We agree it's indicative of their blasé attitude to commitments, evidence and facts that's been apparent throughout this three year old document. Set the tone for that which has continued, as we saw yesterday.

00:25:15:07 - 00:25:46:24

One final example. As you know, this parish council has repeatedly asked about the proposed fencing, its impact on the landscape and visual impact and its deterrents to criminal activity in isolated rural locations such as ours. All that we've learned can be summed up in this photograph from three years ago, which shows a mother, a father and a toddler sitting underneath a panel with the toddler touching the panel. We assume that this is the applicant's answer to Mr. Wallace, whose question on Wednesday about children.

00:25:47:02 - 00:26:19:22

But either we're expected to forget the 100 plus kilometres of security fencing and the danger of death. Keep out notices that adorn it, or the applicants asking to believe that this family is both stupid and criminal stupid since they've endangered their child, and criminals since they must have come equipped for breaking and entering as they are clearly inside the applicant's fence. Just one minute. Back in May, we said that this proposal was the wrong answer in the wrong place for the wrong reasons. We asked you to recommend that the southern site be removed from the application.

00:26:19:24 - 00:26:45:10

We restate that now, as does the Vale of Whitehorse District Council and Icomos over the summer. That position has grown, has gained cross-party support from commoners to Oxfordshire county councillors and our MP Layla Moran. They and cumnors 7000 plus residents. Look forward to your evidence based decision and that of the Secretary of State. Thank you.

00:26:46:10 - 00:26:48:27

Thank you very much, sir. Thank you very much for that.

00:26:58:21 - 00:27:03:04

And may I ask Mrs. Rosemary Lewis to come forward? Thank you.

00:27:15:27 - 00:27:45:29

Rosemary Lewis, speaking on behalf of the many local residents Registered as Stop Bodley West supporters. The Even Lode River has flowed through Oxfordshire for many centuries. This beautiful river, together with the many springs arising from Spring Hill near Big Brook, provided the water which drew people to settle here. People lived and worked here, built beautiful houses and glorious churches, drew their food and raised their children. They walked the footpaths and enjoyed this countryside.

00:27:46:05 - 00:28:19:29

They cared for the heritage, wildlife and landscape around them. Today, over 22,000 people call this area home, but it retains its rural feel thanks to Oxford's green belt planning rules and other regulations which safeguard it against overdevelopment. The Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site Revised Management Plan 2017, overseen by a steering group including Unesco, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and West Oxfordshire District Council, protected the setting of Blenheim Palace.

00:28:20:08 - 00:28:58:10

Until that is. As my previous spokesman speaker mentioned in 2022. An infamous yellow booklet landed on our doormats and we were plunged unwillingly into the Botley West solar farm proposal, which ignores all these safeguards and has the potential to devastate this unique area with little regard to its impact on landscape, heritage, food security or people. For the past three years, many in the affected communities, whilst in favour of sensible renewable energy schemes, have actually opposed this ill thought out and poorly designed proposal.

00:28:58:16 - 00:29:30:02

Not blindly or loudly, but in a well-informed, measured and responsible way at consultations, meetings and events. Stop Botley West Community Impact Report explains the impacts of the proposal on local residents and businesses. The Forever Fields book records the work of over 100 local artists. The cherished countryside that could be lost. Over a thousand residents registered as interested parties and have engaged seriously in the examination.

00:29:30:04 - 00:30:11:09

We would like to express our thanks to the examiners who have listened carefully to us and read all our submissions. We are delighted that so many key stakeholders have joined us in raising serious concerns about many aspects of the proposal. We are horrified by the applicant's unwillingness to

answer the examiners in writing or at the hearings, and by the number of still unanswered questions and incomplete surveys or agreements. The greatest frustration is that while the applicant has finally, as required, carried out some archaeological digs and surveys of birds and bats, they have consistently refused to carry out a survey of people.

00:30:11:29 - 00:30:42:14

I have personally met hundreds of the most impacted residents in their homes and understand the dreadful consequences for them if the proposal went ahead. The applicant has largely ignored these people, visited none and offered a buffer zone of just 25m and oppressive hedging to obliterate their outlook. This is totally unacceptable. In contrast, the examiners have made numerous visits to the site and to key properties to see the situation for themselves, and we thank you for that.

00:30:42:28 - 00:31:20:17

The applicant's failure to carry out an RVI AA, despite repeated requests, was discussed yesterday, and we were not surprised to hear the examiners expressing their disappointment on this matter. The applicant simply cannot be trusted, but we do trust that the examiners will give very serious consideration to whether it is appropriate or even safe to recommend approval of this application. For the many well argued reasons given during the examination. I would just ask on behalf of the many local people who I'm now proud to count as friends in our common cause.

00:31:20:19 - 00:31:35:24

Please don't forget those whose residential amenity would be so seriously compromised, and the many who, like myself, would not live to see the restoration of this historically beautiful and productive land. Thank you.

00:31:36:06 - 00:31:46:15

Thank you very much. Thank you for that. And thank you for persevering with the the noise that's coming from behind it. I don't know if you're in the room, but whoever's fiddling behind us, can you stop it, please?

00:31:48:28 - 00:32:11:23

I don't know. We'll deploy someone to see if we can stop that. But thank you very much, Miss Lewis, for that. Um, whoever comes next, you may just have to endure that until we can find out how to stop it. Um, yes. Um, next up, I've got Mr. Harry Senjem. I believe you are joining us online. Is that correct?

00:32:11:27 - 00:32:14:27

That is correct. Can you hear me?

00:32:15:07 - 00:32:18:27

Yes, I can hear you. When you next start speaking, your time will start, sir.

00:32:20:04 - 00:32:59:20

Thank you. Um. And indeed, I'd like to reiterate the thanks to all the inspectors and the Pins team who have administered this examination. Um, in an exemplary fashion. Um, however, um, I noted your clear exasperation yesterday, uh, on the failure of the applicant to produce information in a timely

fashion. Uh, and I think all of us share that frustration in the way that the application team, um, have consulted, communicated and contacted people.

00:33:00:07 - 00:33:36:09

Um, truly affected by the scheme or rather, their claims to have done that when in reality they either haven't or have done so only half heartedly. One is left with the distinct impression that much of the work done has been done on a on a desktop, not out on the ground. Um, a lot of important information, uh, is still outstanding. And at this stage of such an examination, it seems to me extraordinary that that's still the case.

00:33:36:17 - 00:34:11:19

Uh, leaving everybody, including yourselves, minimal time to consider, uh, whatever is finally produced. Um, I was particularly shocked yesterday to hear about the lack of residential amenity assessment because, um, one of the serious problems that many residents face is under the Land Compensation Act rules. Um, if they were not losing any land under the part one of the act.

00:34:12:01 - 00:34:44:27

Um, when you make a claim for, um, damage to your property. One of the things you cannot take into account is the loss of your view. And I've always thought this is an absolutely extraordinarily unfair rule, but that is the fact. So, uh, to to to hear that little consideration is being given to mitigating these impacts. Um, it really is disappointing. Um, and going to the on to the words minimal and maximum.

00:34:45:20 - 00:35:36:14

These seem to be a constant theme in the applicant's approach. Uh, any impact is either minimal or minor, but the extent of the project is the maximum. Any concession made, for instance, on community benefit when we started off was minimal. They have at least improved it slightly, likely that it's still not very much. I could go on. Um, you rightly pointed out yesterday that such significant changes so late in the examination process indicated the applicant had not listened to what experts and councils and residents were saying, and taking their views into account when assessing impact mitigation.

00:35:36:27 - 00:36:07:00

Uh, indeed. I sent, uh, a copy of an email I sent to PBP back in February 2024 with many issues that have since been covered in this examination. Um, I repeat these points, uh, as I feel it potentially relevant, um, to the question of costs incurred by local councils and local residents impacted by the November 2024 24.

00:36:07:06 - 00:36:37:27

DCO application. Um, I think, uh, it should be said that. Why haven't we heard, uh, in person? Someone from, um, National Grid, um, giving their side of the story. Um, we've heard constant, um, references to what they are meant to be doing or not doing. Um, whether it was going to be a battery storage by their substation and so on, but we haven't heard them.

00:36:37:29 - 00:36:44:08

So actually all that evidence is hearsay. Uh, completely unacceptable as far as I'm concerned.

00:36:44:11 - 00:36:46:17

You've got about 40s left, sir.

00:36:46:23 - 00:37:30:03

Um, from a practical point of view. Um, to build the panels, you've got to, um, save the land to grasp at first. And you won't be able to do that until the autumn of next year. Um, I assume most of the arable land in question will be sent to an Arab. Crop this winter or coming spring, and therefore he won't be able to sow the grass until sometime next year. Otherwise, how will you show the the lands of grass on which the panels stand? And the sheep again to apparently graze? Um, so I don't think the applicants have thought that one through at all.

00:37:30:22 - 00:37:32:09

Well. I'm welcome.

00:37:32:22 - 00:37:35:15

Sorry, are you about to wrap up? If possible, please?

00:37:35:17 - 00:37:53:28

Whilst I welcome the land being removed around Blaydon and the airfield and in other locations, one of the issues is that it increases the proportion of BMV land that will be used. Thank you.

00:37:54:29 - 00:38:00:03

Thank you very much, sir. Thank you for that. Much appreciated. You're joining us today.

00:38:03:06 - 00:38:09:15

Okay. Next I have on my list is a representative of Canberra Parish Council.

00:38:25:20 - 00:38:26:20

Thank you very much.

00:38:27:07 - 00:39:01:13

I'm Richard Devereux cook. I'm chair of Hamburg parish council. I'm also chair of the group of parish councils which surrounds or is embraced by this solar farm development. Um, and I hope I'll have the chance to be involved in discussions about community benefit aspects as well, because that has been a very large part of what we've been concerned with. Um, uh, perhaps surprisingly to some people. Um, I hoped to come here to hear good news.

00:39:03:20 - 00:39:41:24

Especially yesterday. I sat and was just amazed at what was so negative about what was so predictable from where we were back in May. I hoped it would have been better, but it wasn't. It was worse, and all it did is to mirror what a lot of us said back in May. Myself included, but by no means in the minority in that, in that, in that respect, I don't know why the developer has proceeded in the way it has, but it has, and I'm afraid that's for you, the examining authority to work out in due course.

00:39:43:03 - 00:40:15:19

Pembroke Parish Council has supported the views of a number of other people in Church Hatboro in particular, about the suggestion that land just to the east of the church has to be used for community food growing. It is a ludicrous decision to do that. One has to ask what is the sense? What is the commercial sense of doing? What we're told by the developer is going to amount to a large scale onion farm.

00:40:16:12 - 00:40:47:19

Why onions? Who knows? But what that demonstrates is that the land has a better value than one might have expected. But I'm sure that was known to the residents of Church Hanbury, if not to anybody else, because they're there. So the parish council supports and sent in a representation at rep 5093. I'm sure you've seen it. It was very brief. It really mirrored what a lot of other people in the Hambro parish has already said to you, and we're happy to do that, obviously, because they are there.

00:40:47:21 - 00:41:11:18

And although we try to be apolitical as a parish council, we also recognise that we are there to speak for residents, as is every other parish councillor. Who's here? We're volunteers, of course, and that means that we've borne a great load in this process. So, um, we do it because we do it. That's why.

00:41:14:24 - 00:41:47:14

The issue of community benefit keeps on rising to our surprise, because we know it's not a planning issue, but it's there. Um, you've heard reference to the designated document about community benefits and low carbon generation. Uh, I've taken the liberty of forwarding that to your team because I don't think you've seen it. Or at least I haven't been told you've got it. And I thought it might be useful, given the number of times it's been referred to so early this morning.

00:41:47:16 - 00:42:21:19

I'm afraid I sent it off. And it'll land with a request that you use your discretion to look at it. It's being misquoted, unfortunately, and I do suggest indeed. I urge those who want to refer to it. Read it. Don't just pick and choose the words that you want to. I'm afraid that's me as a lawyer speaking. Um. And of course, our life is spent trying to distinguish or to adopt things that support the case we want to make. But I'm afraid people who want to use that document a it's guidance.

00:42:21:22 - 00:42:54:28

And b nothing is being proposed as fixed or certain. See, the figure of £5,000 per megawatt comes from guidance for Scottish renewable proposals. Principally, wind power onshore are not solar and c a d a lot of work went into coming up with the figures that have now been landed, and suggested 140 £441,000 per megawatt, as has been arrived at with the development.

00:42:55:06 - 00:43:30:09

Um, I commend what we send to you. And really what we're saying is simple. We don't want this. If and this is the parish council point of view, if we're having something of it, then we'd need the community benefit. We've engaged with the district council, the county council, and with respect to councillors sitting behind me. We chose to engage with officers, not the elected members, because we wanted to avoid getting caught up in any political arguments.

00:43:30:11 - 00:43:40:26

So we thought that was the best way it worked. We're still talking. Nothing's been fixed. There is no solid deal yet. We wait to see what happens. Thank you.

00:43:41:22 - 00:43:47:06

Thank you very much for that. And yes, I appreciate the approach that you've taken. So thank you for that.

00:43:54:14 - 00:43:57:13

Next on the list, I've got, uh, Mary Canning.

00:44:03:06 - 00:44:14:10

Oh, okay. Did you not want to speak? Okay. Fair enough. Not a problem. I just had you on the list, that's all. Okay. Uh, next. I have a stop. Botley West, please. Thank you.

00:44:24:03 - 00:44:59:13

Good morning. Sir. Mr. Mohammed of Council, on behalf of stop Botley West. Let me start my clock on my phone. Um, thank you for allowing me to say a few words on behalf of the community. It's a pleasure to be here and speak on their behalf. Um, I'd like to specifically also associate myself with the comments of Rosemary Lewis, who had spoken to you before. Somebody who has been incredibly engaged with this issue for a very, very long time. The the areas that we've tried to focus relate to community voice and lack of consultation.

00:44:59:15 - 00:45:51:01

The landscape issue obviously heritage issue, residential impacts. And then I want to say something about what you should do next on the issue of landscape. In summary, what you will have heard is really fundamentally summarized in one sentence. If you can't see it, it can't be harmful. And that's the approach that the applicants have taken to this issue. They've always known what the answer they wanted to hear. And then they worked back to the question. And when you read their evidence, as we have said, as Miss Boland's evidence shows, they have failed to follow through on so many of their own judgements and analysis simply because they have always wanted to show that the harm will not be possible and it cannot be seen, and woefully and disingenuous conclusions reached on the question of heritage.

00:45:51:06 - 00:46:26:08

Uh, Miss Hamilton Rutter had spoken to this pretty convincingly and powerfully. But you've got a World Heritage site, less than 20 of them in England. You've got a number of listed buildings in churches, you've got a registered parking garden and all of the other issues. And for me, the one really galling thing about this whole process is you have probably one of the most sensitive, clustered locations to put such an incredibly sized development of this scale.

00:46:26:12 - 00:46:59:24

And yet the quality and the standard of evidence is of such poor level and simply not commensurate to the level of harm that is at risk. And that really is quite shocking. And on the question of national policy, Mr. Yates's best efforts to keep telling you that national policy is where it's all going to be found in. The answer is also quite offensive, because this proposal is an abuse of what the national policy is trying to achieve.

00:47:00:08 - 00:47:32:08

The national policy government has made clear that we are trying to meet our net zero commitments, but you still have to show your workings out, and you need to be satisfied that the harm that's going to be caused is a price worth paying. And on the question of the residential amenity, it's a quite astonishing disregard on this front. And Miss Lewis has explained to you where we are on this, but this is another example of the opposite of what they've done here. They know what the answer is going to be and they haven't done the work.

00:47:32:19 - 00:47:44:02

They know the harm that's going to come to residential amenity, and yet they haven't provided you with the evidence to be able to reach your own view. Another example, this time we know the answer. Don't ask the question.

00:47:45:18 - 00:48:16:10

The lack of the gap in the evidence is the other part that I wanted to touch upon. The gap in the evidence here is also quite extraordinary. There's the gap in the failure for them, the applicants, to do their work. There's the gap of the statutory consultees who are not here. And of course, there's the gap of being able to respond to anything comes along. And I was quite struck by Oxford City Airport yesterday saying we wouldn't have an opportunity to do a peer review of anything that they come up with at this stage, given where we are. And that's quite incredible.

00:48:16:12 - 00:48:20:20

And that's just dealing with the issue of safety at the airport.

00:48:22:12 - 00:48:54:24

Finally, three components. The first is that I'm strongly urging you to get round to writing your letter, to say you're minded to refuse this. You have the Hinkley example from March of this year under the Planning Act, to show how you approach that. The minded refuse letter came out last September and the decision came out March of this year. The second is also we will be as a community action group, inviting you to make a cost decision against the applicants.

00:48:54:26 - 00:49:28:03

Given what we where we find ourselves and given how much we've had to respond and deal with. And of course, there's guidance to support that. And so we will be making a cost application against the applicant's shoddy approach in due course. And finally, an apology. An apology to you as a panel, a distinguished examining authority that has had to face what you have faced. But crucially, you now have to go on and find yourself in the most invidious situation to have to report to the Secretary of State.

00:49:28:15 - 00:49:41:15

This development and what you have had to listen to in that context is an apology from the Stop Botley West community, uh, that you find yourself in this position. Thank you very much.

00:49:43:14 - 00:49:49:21

Thank you, sir, and thank you for all those comments. and, uh, yeah. Well made.

00:49:58:16 - 00:50:10:20

Okay. I believe that came to the end of the published agenda. Um, with the names there. But I will now move on to the the next names that I have here. Um, I believe next is Mr. Stewart Brooks.

00:50:16:04 - 00:50:17:16

Mr. Brooks here at all?

00:50:19:25 - 00:50:23:25

Okay. Um, we'll move on then to Mr. Graham Brown.

00:50:27:07 - 00:50:41:10

Uh, okay. Is there a representative from the Churchwell Collective at all here? Excellent. Come forward. You're, uh. You'll have five minutes, and your time will start when you start speaking. Thank you.

00:50:43:10 - 00:51:18:15

Thank you. I'm doctor Emily Connelly Connolly from Terrible Collective. I. We've made our official position clear previously, so today I'm just here to explain the community benefit of food forests and provide a bit more clarity on what those are. They're proposed to go into the margins around the solar farm. So I'll explain a bit about how they work and the effect they have on the people involved. And for anyone who might doubt that effect, I brought some case studies you can look over in your own time. I also want to reiterate, the increased access to fresh produce is a top priority for this region.

00:51:18:17 - 00:52:02:28

As part of our countywide food strategy, which supports social justice and public health, aims for Oxfordshire and food. Forests could be a critical component to support that strategy. At Tribal Collective, we serve approximately 650 households who would directly benefit from food forests around the proposed sites. So what is a food for us? For those who do not know, it's the same thing as a forest garden. You mimic how food would grow naturally in nature. You place it strategically in a series of tiers or levels. So that means instead of having a flat, growing space that needs to be refilled and reprocessed every year like a traditional allotment, you have trees and shrubs and shade loving plants and a canopy, and you develop an ecosystem over time and it increases biodiversity.

00:52:03:02 - 00:52:19:25

And in the sunny space, you grow your regular tomatoes and summer annuals. In a food forest, you can fit more plants into an area without without causing failure due to competition from the plants. One acre can feed a family of four for a year,

00:52:21:14 - 00:52:23:18

even over farmed land

00:52:25:06 - 00:53:01:29

such as some of that proposed, can be improved using a no dig method, where you increase mulch and you strategically build up the health of the soil through a food forest. This approach also conserves water, prevents erosion, and supports biodiversity, And in the end, you have a lower maintenance food

production system that is still a forest ecosystem and has all the benefits of a typical forest that you all understand the benefits of. But again, relative to an allotment, food forest are more sustainable, more resilient to climate and pests, more productive, and yield a higher variety of nutrients and require less maintenance.

00:53:03:15 - 00:53:40:13

How does it work? Through companion planting, through symbiosis and the species benefit one another as they would in a natural woodland. And you can also grow medicinal herbs. Culturally relevant food and ground covering plants can prevent moisture loss. You can have nitrogen fixing plants that will restore soil health in a place that is an arable desert. And because the planning involved, you can have different types of food forests in different areas depending on the pH levels of the soil. A lot of planning goes into this. The most important thing for the community and for the people we serve, is that a food forest does not have to be replanted year after year.

00:53:41:21 - 00:54:12:07

Once it is established, it's very, very resilient. And this is important because a lot of the vulnerable people we work with cannot work on an allotment. They do not have the time to dig and dig and dig. They do not have the health to dig and dig and dig and their existing in poverty and need access to fresh food they do not currently have access to. If we can set up these systems, they can simply maintain it, which is a much higher rate than of continuance in the programs that benefit our people.

00:54:12:20 - 00:54:22:02

And a very different part of the population would use these food forests than people who have the luxury to use current allotment systems or have their own gardens.

00:54:23:20 - 00:54:59:20

I just want to briefly mention the effect that something like a food forest has. We have trialled this in multiple areas in Oxfordshire already. As you all know, hopefully the act of gardening does help keep us fit and connect us to one another. And the NHS since January 2019 has included social prescribing in the long term plan, it is critical for preventative health measures to have these types of programs. We will collective or social prescriber in Oxfordshire, and we have multiple growing sites where people use gardening and working in a food forest.

00:54:59:22 - 00:55:29:26

In order to have health gains, a decreased need to be completely dependent on the system, decreased visits to the doctor, reversing type two diabetes, getting off of metformin, and costly medication. We see increases in wellbeing. We see decreased stress, we see decreased loneliness, we see decreased depression, anxiety, and we see improved social and cognitive functioning as a result of participation in programs like the one we are proposing the food force that go around the farm.

00:55:29:28 - 00:55:51:13

There is considerable community benefit to these programs. It is supported by public health. It's low maintenance. The no dig system also means you have a very low impact form of exercise that is more suitable even than traditional gardening, which is already a low impact and very accessible form of exercise.

00:55:52:05 - 00:55:53:14

So are you able to?

00:55:53:23 - 00:56:23:02

I am, that's my last sentence. So thank you. So increased access to these nutritious programs to this produce is key for our long term strategy for social equality and food equality and reducing food poverty here in Oxfordshire. And these food forests could be a critical component to helping us get there. As I said, I do have a case study and a little bit of information if people care to read more details on what the food forests are and how they work. Okay. Thank you.

00:56:23:05 - 00:57:00:22

Two very quick things. First of all, obviously, thank you for your time that you've come today to speak. And yes, those documents, um, if you want us to see them, please speak to a member of the case team. Get them into the examination. I just have one quick question, if I may, and it was just something you said about having the pH levels. And we've been told in this examination that the soil around the area is poor quality. If you're looking for certain pH levels, a certain quality of soil to make the project work is the soil of the land that you're being offered that you're discussing? Is that of a good quality?

00:57:02:17 - 00:57:34:00

So some of it is of better quality than other. One of the beauties of a food forest is that the quality of the soil is improved by the system, so you can take land that is not actually very useful for crop production. You use a no dig method where you build up onto the existing soil and create another layer with mulch with comfrey, green manures like clover. And you build that health slowly over time and that regenerates the soil health for the the ecosystem. So you can do this in a desert.

00:57:34:02 - 00:57:55:24

You can do this over clay. And it's a way, a permaculture method that has been used worldwide to improve soil health in places where it has been deteriorated through over farming, over production, over digging, you know, quarries and things. I mean, it's used in a lot of different ways throughout the world and sort of well documented way to improve soil health in poor areas.

00:57:56:24 - 00:58:00:08

Thank you very much. Thank you for clarifying that. Thank you for your time.

00:58:01:15 - 00:58:02:11

Thank you.

00:58:08:06 - 00:58:11:19

Okay. Next is, uh, Mr. John Collett here.

00:58:17:21 - 00:58:26:18

No problem. Thank you very much. Next, I have CBRE, Oxfordshire. I believe you may be joining us online. Yes.

00:58:26:24 - 00:58:29:19

Yes I am. Good morning. Can you hear me?

00:58:30:02 - 00:58:35:01

Yes, indeed, I can hear you. And your five minutes will begin when you next. Next. Begin.

00:58:35:16 - 00:59:06:18

Thank you. Lisa Ward, director for CPR Oxfordshire. Um, so today I wish to raise three areas. Concern regarding the application. Um, they cover best and most versatile land greenbelt and the missed opportunity for proper public engagement, each of which is undermined by a serious gap in the evidence, despite repeated requests for further information. These omissions make it impossible to reach a fully informed and robust decision at this stage. Food security is a growing national issue, particularly in light of global instability.

00:59:06:27 - 00:59:45:09

CBRE Oxfordshire strongly believes that the use of productive farmland, especially BMV land grades one and two, should not be used for solar panel and instead farm to feed the nation. The applicant has not demonstrated compliance with the requirements. NPS three, which clearly states that developers must justify why the land are being, why the use of BMV land is necessary and, where feasible, to locate the scheme on lower grade agricultural land. Despite repeated requests, the applicant has not provided adequate soil sampling or evidence to support their claim that the land is degraded or of low productivity.

00:59:45:15 - 01:00:18:10

In fact, the proportion of BV land has actually increased from 38 to 42% during this process. This is deeply concerning and contradicts the applicant's claim that low grade land has been prioritized. I refer you to my letter dated the 17th of July, of which we asked for detailed data on soil quality. These requests have not been met. We also referenced Defra standards, stated the land was of phosphorus. Level two cannot be classed as degraded. The partial data presented does not provide a complete or accurate picture.

01:00:18:12 - 01:00:51:24

This is a critical evidence gap that makes it impossible for you as an examining authority to make a fully informed decision, and at worst, it appears misleading. Worse still, this selective presentation of data downplays the land's true value. We believe the degradation of the land is not due to underlying geology, but instead poor management land management practices. Neighboring tenant farmers have demonstrated strong yields well above the national average. Describing the land as low productivity is simply inaccurate and misleading.

01:00:52:13 - 01:01:25:19

With appropriate regenerative farming methods, this land could be restored to its full productivity, playing a crucial role in feeding the nation. It's also worth noting that there's growing political concern around the loss of BMV land. And in my letter dated the 11th of September to you, I attached a letter from 30 ministers and lords sent to the Prime Minister in July 2025, calling for a ban on large scale solar installations on BMV land. Turning to the greenbelt. This is another fundamental concern where 75% of the proposal lies within the Oxford Greenbelt.

01:01:25:21 - 01:01:56:18

This represents the largest single loss of Oxford's greenbelt belt. And to date, we believe there's no existing solar development has been permitted on this scale within the Green belt. This proposal sets a dangerous precedent, undermining a core principle of planning policy that has protected Oxford setting and surrounding countryside for generations. And we believe the applicant has yet to justify why this site is suitable for solar development of this scale, especially given the significant loss of greenbelt best and most versatile land.

01:01:57:03 - 01:02:28:24

Both strong regions conclude that very special circumstances do not apply. And finally, I wanted to address the serious lack of public consultation. This project had the potential to be a positive example of how the UK can transition to renewable energy, with that respects local communities and landscape. Unfortunately, this hasn't happened from the outset. Local residents have felt excluded and ignored. The large number of change requests are clear evidence of this. As one senior member of the Blenheim estate, once told me.

01:02:28:26 - 01:02:58:28

It's amazing how quickly the community can turn on you, and sadly, this is so true. Instead of considering land more sensitively, prioritizing areas with lower landscape and community impact, the applicant has pursued a land grab approach backed by unscrupulous foreign investment rather than a strategically strategic, community led planning approach. Yes, there have been some improvements and that is the removal of the panels around Bladen and Bed Brook, but this is not enough to make the scheme even remotely palatable.

01:02:59:01 - 01:03:36:15

A far more significant reduction in scale is needed, particularly in respect to BMV and greenbelt land. In closing, I'd like to end this statement as I have all my previous ones on this proposal. Can it really be viable to build a solar farm of this size on productive arable land within the greenbelt between a world renowned historic city and World Heritage Site directly affecting the amenity of thousands of residents? We at CBRE Oxfordshire, and many across the community believe that in any reasonable judgment, this is perhaps one of the least places in the world you would choose to build a solar farm.

01:03:36:17 - 01:03:37:15

Thank you.

01:03:39:00 - 01:03:44:14

Thank you very much. And well, time's there as well. Spot on. Thank you for your for your time today.

01:03:45:05 - 01:03:46:14

No problem. Thank you.

01:03:49:03 - 01:03:51:24

Uh, next, I have, uh, Mr. Dryden.

01:03:57:03 - 01:04:08:17

So thank you. Karen Williams, I'm not able to speak on behalf of Mr. Dryden at this time. There's some further information that I would need if I managed to get that information before we close. Then I'd ask to submit it to you later.

01:04:08:29 - 01:04:11:23

Okay. Okay. Um. Fair enough.

01:04:11:25 - 01:04:12:20

Thank you.

01:04:18:16 - 01:04:22:20

The next entry I have on my list is a Gleam Valley.

01:04:35:25 - 01:04:37:15

So a bit of a yo yo, that wasn't it.

01:04:45:18 - 01:05:17:03

Thank you again, Mr. Wallace. Um, I'm just really going to introduce, um, John Wynn Grand Valley CIC rather than add anything in particular myself. One of the challenges is there's a very, very detailed visual map that is intended to support what Mr. Wynn wanted to address. Um, and it's my fault that I didn't get it. Um, a subject to your discretion entered in time, so it will make more sense when that map does.

01:05:17:05 - 01:05:22:00

If you agree to admit it into evidence. Um, support what Mr. Wynn wants to say?

01:05:22:20 - 01:05:32:16

Yes. No, I believe that that map has been received. Yes. But obviously it hasn't been published. So not everyone's had the benefit of seeing it. But rest assured, we we have that map. Yeah.

01:05:32:18 - 01:06:14:06

Thank you. So I think I'll hand it over to John to perhaps to summarize what the core points are. And I think the main heading is, is looking at alternatives, not necessarily in the strict this site or that site, but alternative approaches, um, to ensuring the government we support the government in reaching net zero targets, but most importantly, making sure that one of the harms that ends up being considered, um, during your deliberations and recommendations is the damage that would be done to existing long term in the present and going forward into the future.

01:06:14:08 - 01:06:38:27

Strategies that have been working towards providing local economic resilience or regional economic resilience. And renewable green strategies. I think we said before, I think yourself. Mr. Wallace asked Mr. Wynn what would be the effect of the many projects that he's been corralling. Were the DCO to be granted, and his answer was they would be squashed.

01:06:40:21 - 01:06:41:06

John.

01:06:41:23 - 01:06:42:29

And thanks, Karen.

01:06:43:01 - 01:07:19:13

Um, yeah. So this is a this is about, uh, alternatives. Um, and it's trying to look at the situation in which the proposal for the Botley West Solar Park is being put forward, whilst actually it's something of an eyes wide shut situation because there are lots of alternatives that are coalescing, uh, in our particular region. There are other regions that happen to have, uh, other coalescing initiatives, but we happen to have lots of private and government local government support for lots of what we're doing.

01:07:19:25 - 01:08:04:17

So to me, it's kind of a shame to not be able to see the, the, this coalescing of the alternatives. Um, so there are two in particular I'd like to mention. The first is to do with community renewables. Now, when I say that there's a convention of setting up community renewables in small clusters, in particular villages which are successful and have been successful. But together with the Department for Energy Security and net zero in our region, we have three initiatives financially supported by the Department for Energy Security and net zero for looking at how to scale community renewable.

01:08:05:29 - 01:08:44:15

Um, that's an incredibly important opportunity, particularly when one considers that once you get a five megawatt installation in one cluster of villages, Scaling that isn't particularly difficult. As long as you have the larger master plan in place. So when you're looking at 500MW that Botley West are pushing forwards, possibly more. It's not hugely difficult to see how, um, clustering community renewables can actually add up to a scale that is equally capable of achieving the same.

01:08:45:07 - 01:08:54:12

The other part of it is that yesterday we heard a lot about being being pushed by, um, Botley West.

01:08:56:00 - 01:09:26:19

That that also is an important that also is an important thing to look at. Because when you look at this, when you look at the scale of opportunity there, if they're looking at 3000 acres of whatever percentage of the 3000 acres for being, when you look at the scale of the work that we're looking at, that pales into insignificance to being potential from Wally West. Simply by looking at scaling the regional solutions that we're working with.

01:09:27:07 - 01:09:58:18

So that's the community renewables, again, supported by and financially supported by Department of Energy Security and net zero. There's a lot that's hyperlocal. There's a much bigger scale that we're looking at where we're putting forward a proposal for a regional park in North Oxfordshire. Exactly. In the area that the Botley West proposal has been put forward. One of the reasons we're looking in this specific area.

01:10:01:18 - 01:10:33:22

Is because there are protected landscapes of the Cotswold National Landscape. There's the World Heritage Site and there's the green belt all adjacent to each other, all of which have their own failings.

Um, The national landscapes, the national parks, the biodiversity gains that have been achieved. A report came out last year where it's confirming that they're not producing what was expected. They're failing quite considerably the World Heritage site. We're currently in conversation with Historic England.

01:10:33:24 - 01:10:53:18

I mentioned yesterday where the heritage site in Blenheim is not is not aligning itself with the community, which is what Unesco oftentimes expect, and the greenbelt. Of course, it's only narrative is about stopping urban sprawl.

01:10:55:13 - 01:10:59:25

So sorry to interrupt, but you think about starting to wrap up, if at all.

01:11:00:06 - 01:11:30:13

Yeah. So the conclusion to this with the regional park proposal is that we're working with local government and national heritage organisations in order to look at how the implementation of a scaled, um, protected landscape can look, bringing in lots of resilience. Um, which is required by the new Resilience Action Plan and the resilience framework from 2023.

01:11:30:19 - 01:12:02:00

So in addition to which the Local Plan 2041, in Oxfordshire, they've got an EAP framework and devolution is coming in. So we're bundling all that together, calling it next zero to sit over and above net zero. That is embedded in order that this understanding comes in, whereby the Botley West Solar Park is seen as something of a one dimensional solution to a much more complicated, complex and hyper local opportunity.

01:12:03:28 - 01:12:04:20

Thank you.

01:12:04:26 - 01:12:05:11

Thank you.

01:12:05:13 - 01:12:16:19

Thank you. Sorry. I'm also cutting John short just to confirm that the additional documentation that sits behind the concept that we're trying to re We reiterate will be will be provided and will. Thank you.

01:12:16:21 - 01:12:18:05

Excellent. Thank you very much.

01:12:28:19 - 01:12:29:27

Mr. John G.

01:12:51:18 - 01:12:53:11

Could you turn the microphone on, please?

01:12:55:12 - 01:12:56:29

There we go. Okay.

01:12:57:13 - 01:12:58:22

Thank you for letting me speak.

01:12:58:25 - 01:13:00:28

I I've spoken previously.

01:13:01:00 - 01:13:01:15

At a.

01:13:01:17 - 01:13:02:02

Talk.

01:13:02:04 - 01:13:02:19

And I've said.

01:13:02:21 - 01:13:03:06

About.

01:13:03:08 - 01:13:04:07

Environmental issues, which.

01:13:04:09 - 01:13:04:24

I.

01:13:04:26 - 01:13:05:27

Think it'll improve.

01:13:06:10 - 01:13:06:25

But the.

01:13:06:27 - 01:13:07:13

Current state of.

01:13:07:15 - 01:13:08:07

Farming

01:13:10:04 - 01:13:53:06

is, uh, is This diabolical weed. Our harvest didn't cover our costs. We made a loss last year, and we can't go on like that. Um, there is a surplus of wheat in the world in the farmers weekly, so prices aren't going to go up either. And we can't afford to keep feeding the people with prices so low we're told to diversify. And there is a special farming incentive. SFI for some farmers can go ahead and

apply to stick in Odd Acres and things like this, but some farmers in this area stuck two thirds of their farm into the SFI, which is a massive drain on resources of the government.

01:13:54:03 - 01:14:09:19

And um, photovoltaics want to produce homegrown energy and will make a profit. And we and will mean we will be paying taxes again, which the government is desperately short of money. So why not do this?

01:14:12:12 - 01:14:44:03

The France is getting a mess. We're getting a mess because we don't have enough industries going forward making a profit. Uh. Um. I don't think it will upset the people. You're upset the parish councils. Because whatever it is, they're against it. I recently put in for planning permission on a house next to mine. And a garden and a garden I thought it'd do for my pension. I thought if I have a couple of smaller houses. But the parish councils were against it, and I had to build one big house.

01:14:44:05 - 01:14:59:09

Now I've got to pay £80,000, which is a lot of money, um, to, uh, community infrastructure levy, which is again a way of, uh, um.

01:15:01:11 - 01:15:28:14

Backing up the county council. Um, then photovoltaics are going to make a profit. it. Pay taxes. All the rest of it. And I hope they appeal this if it doesn't go through. Because, um, I think it is essential that we make the countryside viable. And it isn't viable at the moment. Okay. Thank you for letting me see.

01:15:28:25 - 01:15:30:25

Thank you very much, Mr. G. Thank you.

01:15:41:15 - 01:16:13:10

We still have, um, seven or so people on our list. What I propose we do is we'll have one more, and then obviously we'll be going in sort of an hour and a half. I think a comfort breaks due. Um, so we'll have a break and then coming afterwards. So the next one I have on the list is, uh, Jean Glendinning. And then after the break, we'll have David Roger's mouse chili, the Oxfordshire Ramblers councillor Dan Levy, Oxfordshire County Council and Anthony Brown. But, um, if Mr. Glendinning, if you wanted to come forward.

01:16:17:12 - 01:16:26:08

Fair enough. Okay. I promise we'll have one more before the break then. So, uh, Professor Rogers, thank you.

01:16:40:20 - 01:16:41:14

David Rogers.

01:16:41:16 - 01:17:14:13

I'm speaking of the private individual and a member of the citizen science group. So I'd like to echo the thanks of others to the inspectors and to the case team inspectors. Yesterday, we heard a number of

times about the mitigation hierarchy in the structured approach to planning, avoid, minimize, compensate, enhance. Sitting through all the public sessions. So far, I feel the applicants have their own mitigation hierarchy to promote the U.S. proposal. This is to deny, dispute, declare and finally dissemble.

01:17:14:29 - 01:17:47:04

The first response is deny that certain things need to be considered at all, i.e. they should be scoped out. If that doesn't work, there's a dispute that they are important. When they are shown to be important, the applicant then declares them not a relevant consideration under some piece of legislation, for example the NPF, NPS or whatever on renewable energy. Finally, dissembling comes about through promises and claims that are either unlikely to be true or are factually wrong. I don't have time to go into details, but I'll give two examples of my written submission.

01:17:47:06 - 01:18:19:02

The first is the impact of solar farms on local house values, first denied, then disputed by the applicants, then declared irrelevant as a planned consideration. The second concerns the discussions yesterday on residual visual amenity assessment, having disputed the area over which the glint and glare amenity impacts might operate. The applicant finally dismissed the documents by quoting from NPF, A3 that, quote, it's unlikely that applications will be refused based on RFA.

01:18:19:20 - 01:18:51:20

Again, the same hierarchy. Deny. Dispute. Declare. Let's move on to dissembling. Two days ago, we had a discussion on the compulsory acquisition of the freehold of land on which the Botany West solar panels will be built. We were told that such rights were requested, but will not automatically be applied in order to ensure the full delivery. Botley was scheme as a contribution to our net zero. The applicant said that if they don't have these rights, they can't be sure the project will be delivered. Consider what is being asked here.

01:18:51:22 - 01:19:27:05

The power to purchase land outright just in case any alternative leasehold agreement falls through. But I put it to you from day one of any DCO based on a leasehold arrangement. That risk of leasehold default is real for the developers. The only way to remove that risk for the next 40 years is immediately to exercise the compulsory acquisition rights granted by the DCO, and compulsorily buy the land outright. Any major investor providing the 800 million to build out Botley West will require some collateral.

01:19:27:12 - 01:20:00:17

The best collateral of all is land. It's fixed, it's not going anywhere. And as Mark Twain pointed out, they're not making any more of it. Cleve Hill provides a precedent here. Its own DCO submission used more or less the same words as do the present applicants in requesting CA powers for a possible use for acquisition of the freehold. Not a definite use, but the condition for the loan by Lloyds, Santander and Queen Brooke, who financed the building out of Cleeve Hill, was that the land should be held freehold and it was.

01:20:00:19 - 01:20:35:15

Queenborough now owns the entire project for the next 40 years and the freehold forever. The same thing is likely to happen in the case of the US. And I wonder just how much the current landowner is aware that he, and more importantly, the Blenheim Estate and the Unesco World Heritage Site are highly likely to lose ownership of perhaps 1400 hectares of Oxfordshire countryside forever. Another example of dissembling concerns the actual performance of Botley West, despite its changing size in terms of hectares occupied.

01:20:36:00 - 01:21:08:06

Two constants remain. First of all, the installed capacity has always been 1307 megawatts. Last November and as recently as this September 2nd, we hear continuously about Botley West delivering 840MW of clean energy to the grid. In the first oral hearings, I showed that Botley West will never, ever deliver more than 127MW, which is near midday in July, the brightest day of the brightest month of the year. Yes, this is an average yes.

01:21:08:08 - 01:21:46:23

There are occasions, some days in some July's when output will exceed eight 40MW, but the average 627 is what we depend on in the long term. In December, that output falls to 217MW. Nowhere near 840, the average throughout the year. Look up load factors is about 10% of the installed capacity. That's about 140MW throughout the year, not 840. I challenged the applicants to identify any hour of the year, any hour in which the average output of Botley West will exceed 630MW.

01:21:46:25 - 01:22:18:21

If they can't, they really do have to stop talking about delivering 840MW of electricity, clean or otherwise, nationally. We are now on target to have 67.7GW of installed solar capacity by 2030. This is 44% higher than the National Clean Power 2030 target, 4,744% higher already. Oxford's journey to net zero as outlined in the pathways to a Zero carbon Oxfordshire.

01:22:18:23 - 01:22:29:06

The Pascoe report, signed up to by all the local district councils, requires a maximum a maximum of 868MW of solar capacity.

01:22:29:08 - 01:22:30:21

Are you able to wrap up, sir?

01:22:30:23 - 01:23:14:29

Yes. In July of this year, we had 1450 megawatts of just ground mounted solar in the development pipeline. That's 67% above the maximum Pascoe target. Even that Botley West, including Botley West, takes us to more than three times the target figure, more than three times. The county doesn't need Botley West to reach its own net zero targets. It, and I hope the examining authority should question whether the threat to the green belt, to the Unesco World Heritage Site, to the amenity of the households and properties that will be affected by Botley West and to the health and welfare of its inhabitants for the next 40 years, is a price worth paying to exceed net zero targets.

01:23:15:01 - 01:23:24:09

At some stage, someone has to say no to yet more soul over capacity, both locally and nationally. Thank you.

01:23:25:17 - 01:23:28:09

Thank you very much, sir. Thank you for that.

01:23:31:11 - 01:23:48:26

Okay. It's bye bye. My clock up here. It's 1052. Um, if we have a brief adjournment, a comfort break. Now, um, shall we say come back here at 1115, if possible? Um, the hearing is adjourned until 1115. Thank you.