

Rosemary Lewis, speaking on behalf of the many local residents registered as Stop Botley West (SBW) supporters, OH3 10/10/2025

**Explanatory Note:** *All my previous submissions (and those of many other Resident IPs) have attempted to be factual, technical and fully evidenced pieces of work. You already know all of our well founded and well argued concerns. This submission is different. It is to help you understand the sense of loss, frustration and mental anguish that this proposal has forced on us. It comes from the heart.*

The Evenlode river has flowed through Oxfordshire for many centuries. This beautiful river together with the many springs arising from Spring Hill near Begbroke provided the water which drew people to settle here. People lived and worked here, built beautiful houses and glorious churches, grew their food and raised their children. They walked the footpaths and enjoyed this countryside. 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 over-development. The Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site Revised Management Plan 2017 (REP1-183 and 184), overseen by a steering group including UNESCO, Dept of Culture, Media & Sport and West Oxfordshire District Council protected the setting of Blenheim Palace.

Until that is, in November 2022, when 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 3 years many in the affected communities, whilst in favour of sensible renewable energy schemes, have actively opposed this ill thought out and poorly designed proposal - not blindly or loudly - but in a well informed, measured and responsible way at consultations, meetings and events. SBW's Community Impact Report (REP2-081) explains the impacts of the proposal on local residents and businesses. The Forever Fields book (REP1-101) records, in the work of over 100 local artists, the cherished countryside that could be lost.

Over 1000 residents registered as Interested Parties and have engaged seriously in the examination. 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!

I have personally met 100s 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 taking the time and trouble to do this.

The Applicant's failure to carry out a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment 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, 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.