Botley West Solar Farm

Proposed Address to OFH3, 10 October 2025

Dr Stuart Brooks

Context

Details regarding the venue and time of the meeting were sent on an email received at 21.08 on the 9 October, the night before the meeting, and the absence of any reference to my address in the previously circulated agenda meant that I was unable to attend due to a prior commitment.

The following address was therefore not delivered but is supplied for the formal record of the proceedings.

Address

"Although I am giving this address as a private individual I have over 30 years experience in the power industry. My career with the largest power generator in the U.K. included senior roles in operations and maintenance, environmental management, corporate strategy and the development and implementation of international power projects.

I have also been a district councillor for Freeland and Hanborough, serving on West Oxfordshire District Councils planning committee for a number of years.

In my opinion the Applicant has failed to justify building a solar power plant **of this size** in this location on productive farmland.

Landscape and associated issues have been raised by many parties and I support their stance. What I would like to highlight are the technical aspects of their proposal.
This address builds on previous submissions made at registration, the pre-examination stage and in relation to deadlines D1 and D3.

Solar power does not require installations to be located close to a fuel source nor a ready supply of water. This major change in technology means that the constraints that resulted in a strategy of building ever larger stations and linking them to demand centres through the 400KV system no longer applies.

The Applicant's approach is based on this strategy that is suited to fossil fuel generation not solar power. There are sound technical and social reasons not to build a single 800MW solar power plant but a network of smaller stations distributed around the country closer to demand centres. Plants of between 50-100MW could not only be linked to the National Grid but also to the lower voltage local area grid network that currently exists and will certainly need to be reinforced to cater for demand growth consequent on a carbon net zero strategy.

Before the National Grid was constructed these networks were used to transmit power from similarly sized coal and oil stations and they exist to this day.

The benefits of a strategy based on an element of distributed generation would result in a grid where generation losses due to long distance transmission would be lower, power flows could be more evenly managed, the potential impact of an unplanned outage on grid stability reduced and render the grid more secure, less vulnerable to terrorist acts, with the added advantage that local communities could be more directly involved through investment and domestic subsidies.

A smaller Botley West could be one such station. There are a multitude of other suitable locations across the country, many with existing grid connections and not on productive farmland. Brownfield industrial sites which by their very nature are close to demand centres.

50-100MW sites can be economic and the modular nature of a solar power station will make them easier to construct with less local disruption. By reinforcing existing grid distribution networks planning issues would be easier to overcome.

Large solar plants are not the way to go in the United Kingdom.

Thank you for your time.