

## Botley West Solar Farm application: closing statement

Nigel Pearce, [REDACTED], 3 November 2025

My responses hitherto have concentrated mostly on Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, to which the Applicant has displayed a consistently cavalier attitude. However, this is just one issue of many that have received similarly dismissive treatment. Throughout the planning process for Botley West Solar Farm, the Applicant has proved to be evasive, obfuscatory and “economical with the truth” – an approach that hardly inspires confidence that commitments made, should the project go ahead as proposed, will actually be fulfilled.

The Applicant’s motive, and it seems Blenheim’s too, has been the *absolute* maximisation of profit for the Applicant and income for Blenheim (though which part of ‘Blenheim’ is not clear). Profit-seeking is natural enough; everyone has a right to make a living. But problems arise when the principal goal is to make a killing, at the expense of others, as in the case of Botley West. We the public should not be obliged to accept a deeply flawed proposal simply because the Applicant has *presented* it as furthering one aspect of national policy (while consistently downplaying other equally important considerations).

When it comes to the vital issue of best use of our land, subject as it is to competing demands, the maximal economic approach will almost certainly result in sub-optimal decisions. Environmental and social issues are paid lip service, but only to chivvy the application through the planning process. In the UK, we can no longer afford this approach. Botley West, if it goes ahead as envisaged, will result in an industrial monoculture over a large area of land, and one which is *massive* in the local context.

Blenheim is in an excellent position to be much more imaginative in the use of its land. Solar could still feature to a limited extent, but there is a far more thoughtful, varied and positive approach available. As the American agrarian writer [REDACTED] [REDACTED] said in his essay *The Way of Ignorance* (2011):

“I don’t think there are solutions commensurate with our problems. I think the great problems call for **many small solutions.**” [My emphasis.]

Some of these solutions have been suggested in earlier submissions by several IPs. So think again, Blenheim.

## Ownership of Botley West Solar Farm

The ExA will know about the alleged link to Russian money via [REDACTED] an “individual with significant control” over both Photovolt UK and SolarFive.

According to an article in *The Observer* of 21 September 2025, “A Photovolt spokesman said that the case against [REDACTED] deceased] had been dismissed by a Russian court in December 2023 and ‘the matter was closed’.”

Given that the independence of the Russian judiciary is likely to be somewhat restricted, some kind of deal may have been made between [REDACTED] and the Russian state over recovery of the money that [REDACTED] was alleged to have [REDACTED] from a Russian bank. This surely needs to be looked into carefully before any decision is made by the ExA and SoS. It is possible that the Russian state – *de facto*, if not *de jure* – will have indirect significant control over Photovolt UK and SolarFive, Botley West and, potentially, a large area of the Blenheim estate. Would approval of this proposal be a case of the UK government breaking its own sanctions?