

YARNTON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council
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Re: Yarnton Parish Council strongly objects to the planning proposal: Botley West Solar Farm.

Dear PINS

The following listed comments relate significantly to the 'Middle Site Area' in the proximity of Yarnton.

The very title of this planning proposal is deceptive to deflect attention from the reality. By far the largest installation impact will be in the villages of Yarnton, Begbroke, Bladon, Long Handborough, Eynsham and Cassington surrounding an area some 4.5 miles from Botley West.

The proposal will transform an area of Green Belt into an industrial complex. The Parish Council feel that the scale of the development is disproportionate to the available green space between the villages listed above and will destroy the countryside amenity currently enjoyed by residents for leisure and mental health benefits.

This area north of Oxford recently lost a significant proportion of local green belt protection to accommodate 2500 homes for Oxford City. The very fact that 2500 homes are planned between Yarnton and Begbroke should be cause to locate thousands of solar panels on property roofs – not on valuable farm land.

The proposal flies in the face of the former Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak's position on solar farms when this development was initiated: "On my watch we will not lose swathes of our best farmland to solar farms. Instead we should be making sure that solar panels are installed on commercial buildings, on sheds and properties."

The proposal seeks, without regard to Green Belt or the openness of the countryside, to be an application based on a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) thus avoiding normal democratic planning processes. This is an agricultural area producing what is believed to be vital food for human and animal food chains reducing 'food miles' and saving energy.

The area is criss-crossed with public rights of way that would no longer offer the freedom and visual panorama of Oxfordshire countryside. Security fencing will increase risks to those walking alone in the countryside as sight-lines and escape routes will be obscured/prevented.

Wildlife diversity will be adversely affected. Security fencing will prevent the normal roaming nature of mammalian life. Whilst mono-culture farming may not encourage diversity of natural flora, solar shading large areas of land causes altered micro-climate where rainfall and sunlight loss prevents growth of beneficial plant life. Ground feeding and breeding birdlife will be adversely affected.

Contrary to proposal claim that "Botley West will add to Oxfordshire's biodiversity by helping to protect and rebuild habitats on land currently used for agriculture". There is evidence that consequent to the loss of biodiversity, flora and insect life necessary for pollination is greatly reduced.

There are also concerns about the impact of soil compaction, and flood-water runoff from the site, which is directly connected by its watercourses to Yarnton, which as per the recent S.19 flood report from Oxfordshire County Council, suffers from regular flood events. Solar panels are also known to create soil contamination during deconstruction and subsequent recycling/disposal.

London Oxford airport, and Brize Norton flight paths pass over the area and solar glare is recognised as a hazard to aircraft safety thus creating additional risk to local communities.

Yarnton Parish Council would greatly appreciate your support in raising our concerns in the House of Commons, and to the Planning Inspectorate directly, as the much louder voices of the land owner and the developer are overshadowing our own concerns.

Best regards,



Parish Clerk

Yarnton Parish Council