

From: Maggie <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 05 November 2025 19:58
To: Botley West Solar Farm
Cc: Layla MORAN; Clerk
Subject: Botley West Solar Farm

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- Dear Sir/Madam,

My main objections to the Botley West Solar Farm are its massive scale and the impact on the local landscape, biodiversity, and agricultural land. These harms greatly outweigh the benefits of locally sourced solar energy, especially since the proposal is located in sensitive areas.

I am sure you are aware that at the Open Hearing, PVDP's whole attitude made a mockery of the Planning system by failing to respond in a timely manner to or, in some cases completely ignoring, the Examiners' questions or requirements. Hence "This left a significant gap in the knowledge and data available on which the ExA was required to make a robust recommendation." In addition, there has not been a valid consultation with local people.

The enquiry process and therefore its conclusions are surely invalid.

My main objections are listed below.

Landscape and visual impact**Scale of development:** Spanning 3,450 acres across 15 parishes, the sheer size of the project is seen as "entirely inappropriate" for the region by groups like the Stop Botley West campaign. No solar farm on such a scale near an urban centre yet exists. The dangers and disruption in doing so are substantial.

Limited mitigation: While the developer, Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP), proposes screening measures, opponents contend these will be insufficient to hide the development, especially given the area's hilly and undulating terrain.

Damage to character: [West Oxfordshire District Council](#) has said the project would cause "very significant" landscape effects that would fundamentally change the visual character of the countryside.

Heritage concerns

Blenheim Palace: A significant portion of the proposed site is within 100 meters of the boundary of Blenheim Palace, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Campaigners warn this proximity could damage the site's setting and historic significance.

Other heritage assets: Local councils and Historic England have raised concerns about the potential impact on other nearby historical assets, conservation areas, and archaeological sites.

Agricultural land and food security

Loss of high-quality farmland: Approximately 45% of the proposed site is on "Best and Most Versatile" agricultural land. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and other critics argue that sacrificing this productive farmland risks UK food security. It is certainly not 'poor' quality as the applicant suggests.

Precedent for future use: Opponents worry that land leased for 40 years for the solar farm may never be returned to productive agriculture.

Green Belt development

Threat to openness: Much of the site is within the Oxford Green Belt. Campaigners claim that exploiting the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) process to build on the Green Belt is to avoid any local democratic say and sets an unacceptable precedent. The land in question is used by many residents from Oxford as well as local communities for regular walking for health benefits. This is increasingly important as West Oxford is increasingly taken over by the University to build laboratory space, resulting in a loss of amenities for the local community. The proposed width of the public rights of way are completely inadequate.

"Very special circumstances": Critics argue that the developer has not satisfactorily proven the "very special circumstances" needed to justify this "inappropriate development" in the Green Belt.

Environmental and ecological concerns

Impact on wildlife: Natural England and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust have raised

concerns about the potential risks to local wildlife and habitats. Specific fears include insufficient protection for endangered bat populations and losses to ground-nesting birds like skylarks.

Flood risk: The site is located in an area with complex river catchments, and campaigners believe the large-scale development would increase the risk of flooding. Given the already higher risk of flooding in West Oxford and other parts of the proposed area this is significant.

Ecology claims questioned: Critics challenge the developer's biodiversity net gain claims, suggesting that re-engineered habitats are not equivalent to the naturally existing ones.

Social and economic impacts

Limited community benefits: Some councils have noted that the community benefits initially offered by the developer were woefully inadequate and in no way comparable to what other communities have received for the project's scale, though negotiations are ongoing.

Potential property value decline: Studies have suggested that large solar installations may have an adverse effect on local house values.

Traffic and infrastructure: Concerns have been raised about the impact of noise, construction traffic, and the installation of connecting cables on local residents and the landscape. Access to the site is only along small country B roads where there have been cycling fatalities. A weight limited toll bridge at Swinford is also in the local road network.

Concerns about the company itself

There have also been local authority (Vale of the White Horse) concerns about the company itself and whether the land will be sold on to a further company once any planning permission is obtained.

I would be grateful if you would take this information into consideration when arriving at your final informed decision.

Yours etc.

Dr Margaret Lawrence MRCGP



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