

FURTHER SUBMISSION TO BOTLEY WEST SOLAR FARM EXAMINERS
By C H Atherstone (Interested Party No [REDACTED]), 9 November 2025

The environment in which people live affects their health, wellbeing and enjoyment of life. Governments take this into account. Architects, landscape designers and town planners give attention not only to the functionality of buildings and installations, but also to their aesthetic appearance and impact on people. In contrast, the promoters of this solar farm have shown little concern for the impact that it would have on the lives of local residents, assuming that the need for carbon-neutral generation of electricity simply trumps any 'subjective' concerns. It is hoped that the Secretary of State will give thoughtful consideration to environmental concerns expressed by those who would be living in proximity to this project.

1) The promoters have not shown why so large a solar farm must without doubt be located exactly here (on productive agricultural land, so close to numerous villages, historic sites and places of cultural significance), rather than a sum of smaller solar farms, dispersed and thus impacting less on any particular environment. Nor have they shown (other than alluding to profits) why almost every square meter of land here available to them (apart from some minor concessions) must be placed under solar arrays, rather than allowing open spaces here and there that would lessen the impact of the project on local communities.

2) In previous submissions I have urged that solar panels should not be installed on the fields on the slopes to the north and north-west of Cassington. To do so, turning countryside into an industrial complex, would severely impact not only the outlook from the village, but also the view of this historic village with its distinctive church spire, set in the valley of the Thames, from the 'track' up to Purwell Farm which is so frequently walked by residents and visitors, often with their dogs, for exercise and fresh air so conducive to their health. A study submitted by the Oxfordshire Host Authorities supports this plea.

3) It has been argued that an open buffer zone at least 250 meters in depth should be assured between the outer margin of solar arrays and any existing residence. The promoters dismiss this concern by arguing that existing hedges or trees in gardens, or wooden fences, would obscure sight of solar panels from homes, or that the panels would only be seen from upstairs windows, or that houses face outwards towards the road. Such arguments fail to take into account views of imposing solar panels that would open up to residents and visitors when moving about within those gardens or properties, if those panels were installed within a closer range, creating an overall impression that homes were dominated by the adjacent solar farm. Given points made in preceding paragraphs, it seems entirely reasonable to argue for a ruling that all buffer zones should be at least 250 meters in depth.

4) Similarly, it would seem reasonable to insist that hedges or fences alongside public-right-of-way footpaths should be at least 15 meters apart. If less than that, walkers would find themselves moving down narrow passages dominated by tall boundaries, hardly conducive to an enjoyable 'walk in the country' (taken for exercise and mental health) (bearing in mind that already views of the countryside will have been obscured or replaced by vast arrays of imposing solar panels behind high wire fences).

5) Along with other respondents, I disagree with the promoters' assertion that no flocks of birds have been seen in the fields to the north of Cassington in recent years. I and others have much enjoyed watching a large flock of swans settled there, as well as flocks of seagulls and crows (in addition to hares and deer), which would be lost if those fields were filled with solar panels.

I have strong misgivings about many other aspects of this project (including its place in the national grid, its proximity to Blenheim Palace, its conflict with necessary food production, its lack of obvious benefit to local communities, its funding, and its assurances of eventual decommissioning), but I leave it to others who are more qualified than I to respond to these. I, with many others, have been disillusioned by the promoters' apparent disregard for, and reluctance to engage with, reservations and objections raised by local residents.