

From: Russ Tucker [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 November 2025 11:23
To: Botley West Solar Farm
Cc: Calum Miller MP
Subject: Interested Party Feedback

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From: Russell Tucker, IP Number: [REDACTED]

To: The Planning Inspectorate
Cc: Calum Miller, MP

10 November 2025

SUBJECT: Formal Objection to the Botley West Solar Farm Proposal Application Reference: EN010147

Dear Examining Authority,

I am writing as a local resident of Church Hanborough to register my strongest possible objection to the application by Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP) for the Botley West Solar Farm (Application Ref: EN010147).

While I object to this proposal on many grounds, including the irreversible loss of productive agricultural land, the industrialisation of our rural landscape, and the unacceptable harm to the setting of Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site, this letter focuses on two fundamental procedural failings that, in my view, make this application unsound and un-examinable:

1. **A profoundly inadequate, misleading, and non-compliant pre-application consultation process.**
2. **A clear and consistent pattern of poor, opaque, and evasive replies from the applicant to the Examining Authority's (ExA) requests during the examination itself.**

These failings are not minor administrative errors; they strike at the heart of the Planning Act 2008's requirement for a fair and transparent process. They have frustrated attempts at meaningful scrutiny and have shown a concerning lack of respect for both the local community and the Examination process.

1. A Fundamentally Flawed Pre-Application Consultation

The Planning Act 2008 rightly places a significant burden on the applicant to conduct a thorough and genuine consultation *before* submitting their application. The applicant's pre-application process for Botley West failed to meet this standard in both spirit and practice.

A. The Consultation Was a 'Tick-Box' Exercise, Not Genuine Engagement

From the outset, the applicant's consultation felt like a sales and marketing exercise rather than a process of genuine engagement.

- **In-Person Events:** The "drop-in" events were staffed by PR consultants, not by senior technical experts who could answer complex, specific questions. Enquiries about [e.g., construction traffic routes, specific grid connection impacts, fire safety protocols] were met with vague assurances or promises of "information to follow," which often never materialised.
- **Misleading Information:** The materials presented were, in my view, misleading by omission. They consistently downplayed the immense visual and industrial scale of the project, using carefully selected viewpoints and terminology. The sheer volume of documentation (thousands of pages) served to overwhelm, not inform, the public, making it impossible for ordinary residents, or even volunteer-run parish councils, to scrutinise the plans effectively.
- **Feedback Was Ignored:** I, along with many other residents, submitted detailed feedback during the statutory consultation. The subsequent Consultation Report submitted by the applicant simply bundled these concerns into generic categories. There was no evidence that our specific, substantive points were given any serious consideration or led to any material changes in the proposal. It confirmed our view that the project's design was already a foregone conclusion.

B. Failure to Consult Adequately with the Affected Community

The applicant failed to provide accessible information to the very people who will be most affected.

- **Inaccessible Documentation:** There was an over-reliance on a "digital-first" approach, which systemically excluded residents who are elderly, less digitally literate, or have poor rural broadband.
- **Poor Advertisement:** The consultation events themselves were not advertised widely enough, with many residents in my local area reporting they were unaware of the events until after they had passed.

This entire pre-application stage was not, as the Act requires, an opportunity to "shape the project." It was a one-way dissemination of a pre-determined plan, and the applicant has therefore failed to comply with their duties under Section 42, 47, and 48 of the Act.

2. A Pattern of Opaque and Evasive Conduct During Examination

My concerns about the applicant's lack of transparency have been validated by their conduct *during* the formal examination. I have followed the ExA's Written Questions (WQs) and the subsequent replies from the applicant with growing alarm.

The applicant's responses to the ExA's direct and probing questions have been consistently poor, evasive, and unhelpful.

A. Obfuscation and Lack of Clarity

Instead of providing clear, concise, and definitive answers to the ExA's questions, the applicant has repeatedly:

1. **Referred back** to thousands of pages of their original application without pinpointing the specific evidence requested.
2. **Submitted 'clarifications'** that are just as opaque as the original documents.
3. **Provided partial or incomplete information**, forcing the ExA and Interested Parties to "connect the dots" on highly technical matters.

A clear example of this is the applicant's handling of the **Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)**. The Botley West Solar Farm proposal is unique in its nature given that it is proposed in an area of high population density, and therefore an RVAA is of the utmost importance.

Despite repeated requests from the ExA and numerous Interested Parties for a specific assessment of the visual impact on residents' homes, the applicant resisted providing this crucial information. It was only at the '11th hour' of the examination that they were finally compelled to submit an RVAA.

This delay tactic itself frustrated the ability of residents to scrutinise the impacts on their own homes within the examination timetable. Worse, the document that was finally produced was, in my view, wholly inadequate. It appeared rushed, used a flawed methodology, and failed to properly assess the true, overbearing visual harm that "hundreds of properties" will suffer. It omits key viewpoints, uses inappropriate assessment criteria, and seems designed to underplay the industrial-scale impact rather than to genuinely inform the examination.

B. Undermining the Examination Timetable

This pattern of behaviour is not just an inconvenience; it actively undermines the integrity and fairness of the statutory examination timetable.

By providing poor and late information, the applicant places an enormous and unfair burden on the ExA and, crucially, on unpaid local residents and parish councils. We are forced to act as forensic auditors, spending dozens of hours re-analysing complex documents that the applicant should have provided correctly the first time.

This conduct suggests either an unacceptable level of disorganisation for a project of this scale or, more worryingly, a deliberate strategy to run down the clock, frustrating scrutiny until it is too late for a meaningful response. The ExA cannot possibly make a sound and reasoned recommendation to the Secretary of State when the primary evidence from the applicant is so fundamentally flawed, shifting, and opaque.

Conclusion

The applicant has failed in their duty to consult. They have now compounded this failure by obstructing the examination itself with a stream of unclear and incomplete information.

The consultation process was not fit for purpose and has, in my opinion, failed to meet the requirements of the Planning Act 2008. Furthermore, the applicant's conduct during the examination has prevented the robust and transparent scrutiny that a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project of this magnitude and destructive potential demands.

On these procedural grounds alone, in addition to the project's devastating environmental, agricultural, and heritage impacts, I urge the Examining Authority to find the application unsound and recommend that the Secretary of State **refuse** the Development Consent Order for the Botley West Solar Farm.

Yours faithfully,

Russell Tucker, Church Hanborough Resident