

From: Flora Hodson [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 November 2025 11:20
To: Botley West Solar Farm
Subject: Botley West Solar Farm

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Dear Planning Inspectorate,

I am writing to express my strong objection to the proposed Botley West Solar Farm. While I fully support the transition to renewable energy and recognise the urgent need for sustainable solutions, this particular development is inappropriate in both its scale and location. It threatens to cause lasting harm to the local landscape, heritage, and agricultural capacity of West Oxfordshire.

My family has lived and farmed in this area for generations. I grew up visiting my grandmother, June Hodson, at [REDACTED] near Woodstock, and I have a deep personal connection to this countryside. The fields, footpaths, and views that define this landscape are part of the community's shared identity. To industrialise it on such a vast scale would not only change how it looks, but also what it means to the people who live and work here.

Scale and Landscape Impact

At around 1,400 hectares, Botley West would be one of the largest solar developments in the country. Its immense size would transform a peaceful rural setting into an industrial zone. The site's proximity to the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site and to Green Belt land makes the visual and cultural impact even more concerning. Requests from local councils and professional landscape specialists for significant reductions in coverage have largely been ignored.

Heritage Considerations

The developer's focus on Blenheim Palace overlooks the many other heritage assets scattered throughout the area - historic churches, farms, and rural settlements that together form an important part of Oxfordshire's history. National planning policy requires a broader assessment of heritage settings, something that this proposal fails to provide.

Agricultural Land and Food Security

Much of the land proposed for development is high-quality, productive farmland. Turning it over to an industrial use would mean a permanent loss of valuable food-producing land. This directly contradicts government and local commitments to protect our best soils and maintain national food security.

Public Rights of Way and Community Access

The current plans would restrict public access, with footpaths narrowed to just 5 metres between hedgerows. This is far below the 15-metre width recommended by Oxfordshire County Council and the Examining Authority to preserve accessibility, biodiversity, and enjoyment of the countryside.

Archaeology and Environment

Archaeological surveys have already uncovered numerous sites and artefacts of significance, yet many are left without proper protection. In addition, several environmental assessments - including

flood risk and storm resilience - remain incomplete, meaning the full risks to the local environment have not been properly considered.

Community Benefits and Transparency

Proposed community “benefits” such as small food-growing areas are poorly defined and do not compensate for the loss of rural character or farmland. There also remains a worrying lack of financial transparency about the project’s long-term management and decommissioning.

Conclusion

This landscape holds deep cultural, environmental, and agricultural value. Once lost, it cannot be restored. Renewable energy is essential, but it must be delivered in a way that respects local character and community needs. The Botley West proposal, in its current form, fails to do so.

I therefore urge the Planning Inspectorate to reject this application and to encourage renewable energy projects that are better designed, appropriately located, and genuinely supported by local people.

Best wishes,

Flora Hodson

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Flora Hodson.