

Botley West Solar Farm: Deadline 7. 10th November 2025 – Closing Statement

My name is Jonathan Ford. I write as a local resident. I drive the local roads. I walk the local footpaths. I love these fields, woodlands, and rivers.

Examiners,

Climate change is the issue of our time. This Application has the potential to address the climate crisis at scale, at speed and at no cost to the public purse.

The Examination has understandably spent most of its time on local interests and impacts. It is important that national and global interests are also considered. I ask that you give appropriate weight to climate change when you make your recommendation to the Secretary of State.

Local Interests:

The Application would provide enough clean electricity for all the homes in Oxfordshire. It also offers more than 80% Biodiversity Net Gain. These landscapes must be restored to productive farmland. They must be richer in terms of nature, more beautiful and have healthier soils than they have currently. They must include more Public Rights of Way – for example footpaths and bridleways to connect our villages, Oxford and Hanborough Railway Station. They must include a landscape design that is not simply driven by mitigation of visual impact but an intentionally designed landscape – like Capability Browns design of the parks at Blenheim and Ditchley. These must be designed for posterity as common land open to the public at all times. The Applicants offer to build an interpretation centre should be accepted. It must be of a suitable quality to show the benefits of utility scale solar to other landowners and international leaders as well as local people and schools. Infrastructure must not only be functional but beautiful as well. Community benefits valued at £3 to £5 million per annum (or 2% of turnover) must be part of the design.

National Interests

Until recently a project of only 50 MW would have been designated a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. The Application will generate 840 MW. It will be almost seventeen times the size. It will be **very** significant nationally. It will move the country **very** significantly closer to our national targets for clean energy generation.

Done well this Application could raise standards of design both nationally and globally.

Global Interests

I approached the Oxfordshire Host Authorities asking why they have identified climate change as a 'neutral impact' in their Local Impact Report. They explained that as the benefit was not local it had been excluded. This is contrary to planning procedure. Every development must address climate change. They have even used climate change as a reason not to approve the Application. This is ridiculous. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has identified utility scale solar as the mitigation method that will have the greatest impact on climate change between now and 2030.

No one project can solve climate change. This Application is huge but a scheme this size will not solve the climate crisis alone. However, this Application is exceptional. It has the potential to be of national and international significance. Other large country estates are watching to see what happens before deciding whether to do the same. Hundreds of thousands of tourists visit Oxford and Blenheim Palace each year. Many future global leaders have been and will be students here. The Application will have global influence. This is a unique opportunity for us to make a global difference in tackling climate change.

Examiners, you have an important task. I encourage you to do it with extraordinary integrity, impartiality, love and wisdom. I ask that you remind the Secretary of State of the benefits nationally and globally as well as locally.

Thank you for your service in leading this examination on behalf of all stakeholders, present and future.

The graphic below was created by Prof. Ed Hawkins, University of Reading



Climate Stripes Global Temperature 1850 – 2023

This graphic illustrates how climate is changing. The Application gives me hope that humanity will make the necessary sacrifices to save the people and places we love.