

As the examination process is nearing completion, I would like to express my continued strong opposition to the Botley West Solar Application.

The applicants have from the start shown a strategic disregard for fair process; lacking proper consultation with people in the local communities most impacted by their plans. Their misrepresentation of facts and/or lack of response to several of the challenges made during the examination open hearings totally undermines the credibility of the whole application. Relying on the 'national infrastructure' argument, their arrogance has resulted in them assuming plans would be rubber stamped without the need to fully risk assess, look at alternative options and justify why this particular proposal in its current form is essential.

The Botley West Solar Power Station would be colossal in scale and would come at a huge opportunity cost that has not been satisfactorily addressed by the applicants:

1,400 hectares of land (with solar panels covering 840 hectares) will be lost at a cost to local food production. Maintaining local food production is of strategic importance to national food security and contributes significantly to reducing the carbon footprint of transporting foodstuff.

The applicants suggest the land is of poor agricultural quality and that siting 2.5 million solar panels will improve soil quality. The evidence from soil testing and testimony from those families farming the fields, (some over generations) show the land is good fertile farm land that can maintain good crop yields. If the applicants are not being honest around this basic information, it would appear they are prepared to manipulate or omit detail that only supports their case in order to profit.

The impact on local greenbelt, multiple ancient woodlands, and on Blenheim Palace, would be devastating. There is a significant likelihood that if this application goes ahead, Blenheim Palace could be delisted as an UNESCO world heritage site. The disruption that would be caused during construction and the negative impact of miles of solar infrastructure on visual and physical amenity will impact thousands of people and come at a cost to local businesses too. It is unacceptable to say there are no better alternatives when considering such unique and currently protected landscape.

As mitigation the applicants say the 'solar farm' will be temporary, land being returned to current use. This gives the impression that visually and practically all will be returned to current state in 40 years. However, the applicant only provides for the removal of equipment above the land surface. They offer little in reassurance of the provision of funds to do even this when considering the project involves construction on a 'national infrastructure' scale. The applicant's budgeting for future costings in the proposal is sketchy to say the least. Common sense tells you that the 2.5 million panels and associated infrastructure must have significant impact both on and under the surface of circa ten square miles of countryside. It is misrepresentative of the applicants to put this forward as temporary use without a robust and fully funded decommissioning plan in place.

The risks associated with the proximity to RAF Brize Norton and to Oxford Airport appear initially disregarded or at best skimmed over by the applicant. The location and number of panels were only slightly revised after Oxford Airport's submission raising concerns to the Inspectors. It seems intangible that the applicants can guarantee safety when there are 2.5 million solar panels under flight paths that are essential for national security. The risks associated with interference with radar, glare, heat and bird strike, as well as questions around emergency landing have all been raised. These are known issues with solar installations and, given the enormity of the land area and terrain, it feels negligent of the applicants to pursue the application in its current form when there is a clear risk to national security and aviation safety. The applicants have presented their proposal without any credible consideration of alternatives. They cannot justify why the solar development on this scale and in this location is the only option. I would ask the inspectors to note that there is community support for more sustainable smaller solar projects and there are other more efficient and effective means of renewable energy such as wind over solar in the UK environment.

The misrepresentations and omissions by the applicant are obvious and serve to [REDACTED] the process. The motivation is simply to hugely benefit the land owner financially and profit investors that would appear to be from [REDACTED] origins.

I ask the Inspectorate to recommend refusal of this application and I sincerely hope that the Secretary of State will agree.