

## **Botley West Solar Farm**

### **Closing Statement**

Freeland Parish Council 08.11.25

Freeland Parish Council, although not within the Order Limits of the proposed solar farm, lies within 1.5km of the boundary. Although not directly impacted, we share the concerns of other Parish Councils and the Stop Botley West Group. They have all very clearly highlighted these during the Hearing process.

Despite the amount of information submitted by the Applicant, the examination process has highlighted the numerous gaps in the evidence submitted and the lack of timely responses to the Examiners' requests for information.

### **Scale**

Firstly, the sheer scale of this project is a great concern, both in terms of size and the volume of documentation involved.

### **Need**

We agree that there is in urgent national need for clean energy, but do not consider that such large scale installations are the only answer and therefore they should not be approved at any cost. In our opinion the cost in terms of harm to the countryside and residents of the area is unacceptable for many reasons – not least the lack of rigour in assessing them.

### **Consultation**

We have noticed that the measured responses from the host authorities to the consultation have been largely ignored by the Applicant, and regret that more effort has not been taken to address their concerns, e.g. by removing larger areas of panel. Surely improved technology if and when this project is eventually implemented will allow similar output over a reduced area?

### **Visual Impact on residents**

Such a large scale industrial project blanketing swathes of countryside is completely unsuitable for the patchwork rural landscape of this area. Although residents of Freeland are not directly affected in terms of views from our homes, the area will be fundamentally altered for at least a generation – impacting our experience of a wide area of the countryside around us.

There has been almost no attempt to mitigate the effect on the many homes within and bordering onto the arrays, some affected so severely that surely the mental health of residents will be impacted.

### **Heritage**

Within this landscape lies Blenheim Palace, as well as numerous other Listed Buildings, Conservation areas and Archaeological sites. We are concerned that inadequate consideration has been given to how to reduce impact on these and the resulting cumulative effect.

The solar arrays will impact the experience of visitors approaching Blenheim Palace and Oxford, affecting the tourist economy of the area,

### **Green Belt and Farmland**

We agree with comments made by the CPRE, BYG and others concerning the precedent and impact of such a massive development within a Green Belt that is truly a green, rather than “grey” belt. We also regret the loss of potentially productive farmland which could potentially be used for regenerative farming rather than solar arrays.

### **Other concerns**

Freeland Parish Council also have the following concerns:

Safety at Kidlington Airport.

Lack of clarity over the siting of the connecting substation and any battery storage, and consequently the degree of visual impact on Cumnor Hill.

The issue of increased risk of flooding at Cassington, which is a serious concerns to residents there.

We would also like evidence to show that one massive project such as this is more responsive to the climate emergency than a number of smaller, more agile installations – potentially community run.

Would the CO2 emissions from manufacturing all this hardware be offset in time to have any impact on the immediate threat to global warming? To us this is an important consideration.

In conclusion, we question whether this application can be approved when so many questions and unaddressed concerns remain.