Summing up statement
Botley West solar Power Station
NSIP Examination May to November 2025

My Name is Harry St John and I am a resident in Eynsham. I have made a representation at every stage of this Examination and would like to thanks the PINS admin team and the four Inspectors for running the whole process so efficiently and even-handedly. Everyone who has wanted to has had their say.

I wish to comment firstly on the applicants Soil Management Plan updated at Deadline 6.

In particular, having read the applicants latest iteration of the SMP, put forward in support of the construction management plan, it confirms that industry guidance says that soil handling is best carried out in the months of May to August in this part of England, to avoid damage to soil and its structure.

If the So S approves the scheme in the spring of 2026, it is unlikely that work can actually start on site until at least the autumn of 2026, at which point no soil handling should be undertaken until about May of 2027. That will surely delay the estimated construction programme significantly.

Any tracking of heavy vehicles across the land to deliver the tens of thousands of tonnes of materials, erecting tens of thousands of fencing posts, installing tens of thousands of panel table spike foundations, constructing haul roads,
digging trenches to lay cables etc etc will all potentially damage soil structure, compact soil, damage land drainage systems and make separating top soil from subsoil more difficult.
(Scientific papers written by Messrs Duncan, Braisden and Reeve on these technical issues are widely quoted in the guidance).

If, therefore, work is carried during the winter of 26/27, in

seasonally wet conditions, untold long term damage could occur to soil in the panel and other fields affected.

I suggest the applicant simply has not taken all this into proper account with no contingency in the case of periods of adverse weather and soil conditions throughout the construction period.

The appointment of a soil manager to supervise work raises the question of whose orders will take precedence - the applicants contract manager with his own deadlines or the soil manager? Having seen, personally, time and again the building of numerous large scale projects, soil damage and soil restoration generally tend to get low priority. Ask the operators of any of the machinery involved all of whom will be incentivised to get their task done as soon as possible. Preserving the soil is and unlikely to be not high on their agenda!

MY SUMMARY of the salient points that this Examination has revealed during the last few months are as follows:-

General Remarks on attendance.
Firstly is extremely disappointing that neither [redacted] nor [redacted] (equal owners of the applicant and agents acting for the applicant) have made the effort to appear in front of the Inspectors, to explain how their applicant Company will be fund this c.£900 million project, and were it approved whether their Company will still actually be involved delivering it to the timetable proposed. The financial accounts produced seem woefully lacking in information on capital funding and are not recent.

Our local MP Calum Miller has posed a number of pertinent questions in Parliament to the relevant Ministers on the financial status of NSIP applicants.

Secondly, in the same vein, NGET have been conspicuous by their minimal attendance during the Examination hearings - yet they are the people who operate the National Grid into which all the electricity, this solar farm is claimed might generate, will be flow.

As a result of their absence, there remains substantial confusion (disconnect?!) over the respective completion dates for the main connecting Sub Station (let alone who will actually build it) and the solar farm itself.

Moreover the ability of the applicant to construct such a vast engineering project in the short (barely credible) timescale claimed to meet the current Licensed connection date, remains in serious doubt. As yet we have not seen a definitive signed agreement between the applicant and NGET on any revised connection licence date.

Potential Investors will surely fight shy of any scheme that has such yawning elements of uncertainty and thus added risk - evident here.

I list the key issues raised or perceived during the Examination process below:-

I am one of many others **but particularly the Inspectors**, who have repeatedly pointed out the numerous gaps and inadequacies of the application and the frankly continued obfuscation in many deadline responses from the applicants team to serious points raised by the Inspectors, the Host Authorities and IPs.

Lack of proper consultation and disregard for measured comments from many bodies and people with local knowledge

- Inadequate initial public consultation with much key information missing - eg damaging photo montages conveniently omitted.
- Ignoring rational comments on the sheer scale and impacts of this proposal on the WHS setting, the Green Belt, local historic

landscapes and listed buildings, public rights of way, the hundreds of dwellings blighted in various villages, Oxford airport safety and so on - made by the Host Authorities, HE, ICOMOS and many local IPs prior to November 2024 and then repeated after the application was made.

- **BMV soils and national food security**

- **Being disingenuous about BMV stats and claiming the BMV land is exhausted/depleted - which is clearly not the case as evidenced by IPs, who have actually farmed the land for many years.(In particular IPs, [redacted] and [redacted] both of whom have hands on experience of farming much of the land in question).**
- Policy guidance advises applicants to avoid BMV land and yet over 40% of the applicants site is BMV.
- The soil management plan, by its length, obscures the limited May to August window recommended for handling of soils in this part of England; to avoid damage to soils, especially BMV soils during the initial construction, subsequent panel and fence replacement (at around 25years) and then finally decommissioning period in about 40 years time.
- Producing zero evidence as to what condition the soil, shaded from direct sunlight for 40 years by up to 2 million panels, might degrade to. They claim its condition will be enhanced! Others beg to differ.
- Minimal consideration has been given to national food security and the need to produce food from our most productive land in the UK rather than relying on imports, especially in the light of the current febrile state of world politics and trade in the medium to long term.

- **Funding**
- Lack of transparency required over funding and interrelated company structures of the applicant Solar Five Ltd and PVDP their agents in this application. The apparent lack of obvious ready

funds to meet compensation claims - let alone construct the whole project, and secure adequate guarantees for the substantial reinstatement costs after 40 years.

- It became clear that the site selection was largely driven by the existence of willing landowners - the main one being the Blenheim Estate's various trusts. Having secured deals with these owners, the applicant has sought to exercise CA powers over any other land they may need to deliver the scheme.
- Whilst we all understand renewable energy projects are important to wean ourselves off fossil fuel energy sources and reduce global warming, that need is not so great that large tracts of internationally/nationally important landscapes, listed buildings and BMV land should be sacrificed as proposed here.

- **Local residential impact**
- Little regard has been given to hundreds of residents homes affected in what comes across as an example of thoughtless and unneighbourly land use in pursuit of profit.
- At a very late stage, some land round Bladon has been removed from the application but in many other sensitive areas near other villages or more isolated dwellings or groups of dwellings, no similar concessions have been made - **which approach has lead the Inspectors to suggest, quite rightly, that there should be a minimum 250 metre buffer zone for all dwellings unless a good case is made to reduce that distance in certain cases.**
- The absolute fiasco over the missing/withheld residential impact assessments revealed at the October hearings highlighted the shocking lack of consideration for others in pursuit of private profit, masquerading as public need/benefit.

- **Wildlife impact**
- The ill thought out or worse lack of any suitable mitigation for various species - eg farmland birds especially larks, swans, owls, and other raptors threatened by over 50 miles of 2.1 metre high wire net fencing and so on.
- Little or no thought is given to deer movements which will be channeled by all the miles of new fencing, potentially increasing the chance of RTAs.

- Inexplicable disregard for users of public footpaths and bridleways and permanent alteration of local views by new hedge planting and management - in many cases resulting in permanent loss of existing timeless views eg along the Evenlode Valley.

- **Timing**
- Continued lack of clarity on the Licence to connect granted to the applicant by NGET - is it October 2027, 2028 or 2029? The point raised above about soil conditions, could easily delay completion of the solar farm itself if wet weather prevails during the construction period, especially the May to August window.

- **Power delivery**
- Most solar farms are now having battery storage assets to store inevitable surplus power in midday summer sun, for use later in the evening and morning peak demand spikes. This proposal makes no such provision, so power could go to waste if the grid is at capacity on such days.
- It is unclear if solar arrays on this scale can be turned off, as wind turbines can be. It cannot be right to pay solar farm operators not to generate power as its happening in the wind farm sector at present.

- **Planning balance**
- The public need and benefits set against (in the planning balance) these public losses, are far outweighed by the losses, let alone the obvious private gain to the applicant and the main landowners - whose land will not actually need to be acquired compulsorily despite the applicant requesting powers to do so in the draft DCO.
- The application stretches everyones credulity in claiming that using farm land for solar arrays for c. 40 years is a temporary use, when we all know that is most people's mind that is a permanent use. In planning law, ten years is enough to establish a permanent use.

- There are clearly many other places large or medium sized solar farms could be provided without the irreparable damage on so many fronts as threatened here.
- If no other reliable source of renewable power has been discovered or established in forty years time, surely the landowners and operator will seek planning consent extension for another 40 years, before the initial consent expires, and the reinstatement conditions kick in.

In the light of all the above reasons, I ask the Inspectors to recommend to the Secretary of State that he refuses consent of this NSIP application.

Harry St John
9th November 2025