



Department of Energy Security and Net Zero  
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*Attn.* Head of Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery & Innovation  
C/o [botleywestsolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:botleywestsolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

20 April 2026

Dear Mr Wheadon

BOTLEY WEST SOLAR FARM (BWSF)

I refer to your letter EN010147 of 14 April (amended on 20 April) to various addressees and relating to the `REQUEST FOR INFORMATION` in respect of the BWSF project.

I write on behalf of the Begbroke and Yarnton Green Belt Campaign (BYG), a registered Interested Party taking an active part in the Examination of the Proposed Development that closed on 14 November. We are not one of the IPs directly addressed by your letter. However, we submitted over 40 extensive representations to the Examination. We believe those contributions were helpful to the Examining Authority (ExA).

You have chosen not to publish the ExA's Report to the Secretary of State (SoS) on the Proposed Development. The content of your letter cannot therefore be placed in full context. It is not too late to do that; we recommend you should do so in order to allow the next stage of enquiry on BWSF to be completely transparent. However, and even without publication of the Report, it is quite clear that it does not contain the information necessary for the SoS to be able to confirm the Development Consent Order to which it relates.

Your letter indicates that more information is necessary for the SoS to be able to make his decision. Is this really the case? Given the scale and fundamental nature of the missing information now being requested, it seems quite clear that the Applicant has failed to make the case for its scheme. The SoS could - we say, should - simply refuse to make the Development Consent Order.

The requests set out in your letter do not seek to clarify detailed uncertainties, which would be reasonable. Rather, they give the Applicant another opportunity to provide fundamental information about the scheme and its impacts which it failed to provide during the Examination. Furthermore, your letter invites the proposal of what is effectively an entirely new scheme through the `Without Prejudice Offer` in paragraph 68 and following.

The Applicant is being given 8 weeks to provide the relevant detailed information, evidence, constraints and `updates` appropriate to a newly designed project. The Examination had the statutory time of 6 months for completion.

Our view is that the SoS is effectively reopening the BWSF Examination. He is doing so with neither the benefit of proper consultation nor the benefit of independent inspectors, familiar with the Examination, assessing what the Applicant submits in response to your requests. With the greatest of respect to you and your staff, the only people capable of fully assessing and properly contextualising the large volume of material that will inevitably be submitted by the Applicant and others are the members of the original Examining Authority.

In view of the great scale of the requests for information, and the extraordinary introduction at this stage of a potentially new scheme, the consultation process set out in your letter is entirely inadequate. The way in which the without prejudice offer has been raised, and the way in which you propose to deal with it, are highly prejudicial to BYG and other IPs.

The procedure your letter sets out is different from that described by Martin McCluskey (Minister for Energy Consumers) in his statement to the House of Commons on 26 March 2026 (UIN HCWS1471). The Minister indicated therein that the Secretary of State's decision on BWSF was being delayed "...to enable my Department to seek further information from the applicant with sufficient time to allow for consideration of this information by other interested parties."

Your letter indicates at paragraph 4: *`To assist in reaching a timely conclusion on these matters, the SoS is allowing a period of 8 weeks for the Applicant and Interested Parties to respond to the issues set out in the letter. All parties are encouraged to engage constructively to ensure that the necessary information and clarifications are provided within this period, to inform the SoS's final determination of the application.`*

Your approach differs fundamentally from the Minister's in providing no opportunity for IPs to see or comment on the responses from the Applicant

before submitting their own. The Minister committed DESNZ to facilitating this. It is prejudicial to the case of all IPs for them not to be able to comment on the Applicant's responses.

Before we decided to send this letter, I contacted the BWSF PINS case officer about this issue. He replied in an email dated 17 April that: *`The position of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is that the Secretary of State's information request is directed only to the parties named in the letter. Other parties will have an opportunity to comment on the responses received through a consultation process to be undertaken in due course. In addition submissions falling outside the scope of the Secretary of State's Request for Information would be forwarded to the Department, whether received before or after Tuesday 9 June 2026, for them to take a decision on whether they are willing to accept it or not as a post-examination submission.*

This is not what is set out in your letter of 14 April (amended on 20 April).

If the SoS were to proceed on the basis of the process described in your letter we believe it would be necessary for the Minister to make a further statement to the House explaining why the consultation process he described on 26 March has been abandoned by DESNZ so that IPs will no longer be given the proper rights of consultation and response .

To avoid this, we suggest that you should change the process set out in your letter in order to enable IPs to comment on any material produced by the Applicant, and to allow them sufficient time to do so. We suggest this should be until 9 September so as to accommodate the summer holiday period. Publishing the ExA Report now would also contribute to making this process fair and transparent.

We are sending this response, as requested, to the PINS Botley West email address, asking that whoever receives it passes it immediately to yourself at DESNZ, and a copy to Martin McCluskey, Minister for Energy Consumers.

Yours sincerely,



Chair, Begbroke & Yarnton Green Belt Campaign (BYG).