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DRAFT

BY E-MAIL ONLY: botleywestsolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Your Ref
Our Ref: 702288.07000/GP06.

Secretary of State for Energy Security & Net Zero
Department of Energy Security & Net Zero
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22 May 2026

Dear Secretary of State

Planning Act 2008

The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Botley West Solar Farm – Application for an Order granting Development Consent

Applicant's Initial Response to a Request for Information

1. This firm acts for the applicant, SolarFive Limited, and its parent company, PhotoVolt Development Partners, in respect of the application for an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed Botley West Solar Farm ("the Proposed Development"), bearing the Planning Inspectorate's reference EN010147.
2. We refer to your request for information from the Applicant by letter dated 20 April 2026 (the "RFI"), in respect of the Proposed Development. The Applicant welcomes the opportunity to respond to the matters raised and has instructed us to respond on its behalf.

Summary

3. The Applicant has met with the OHAs three times since the date of the RFI, to discuss matters relating to the RFI and Proposed Development, and how best to respond to your questions. They have agreed on a collaborative approach to an updated landscape and visual impact ("LVIA") assessment, with a view to reaching agreement. To undertake that exercise properly, including additional meetings with the OHAs and potentially other consultees, the Applicant requests an extension of the time to respond in detail to the RFI. Accounting for summer holidays and the recess of parliament, the Applicant proposes the deadline for response is extended from 23.59 hours on Tuesday 9 June 2026, to 23.59 hours on Friday 25 September 2026.

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Reasons for extension of time

4. On receipt of the RFI, the Applicant and its project team of consultants considered how it might respond and the likely timescales involved. Whilst some requests are relatively straight forward to respond to, the LVIA queries will take a significant amount of time to comprehensively address, allowing for time to engage with consultees, including the OHAs.
5. The RFI includes the suggestion to re-examine and, where necessary, produce an updated LVIA assessment (paragraphs 24 to 25 inclusive). The Applicant is willing to do so and, to facilitate agreement with the OHAs, has appointed an independent firm of LVIA consultants, Icen Projects, which has extensive experience of solar NSIP examinations. Icen has been instructed to apply that experience to undertake an objective assessment of the Applicant's evidence and corresponding submissions by the OHAs and Interested Parties during examination. Icen met with the OHAs last week to understand their concerns, and to identify the next steps and scope for the updated assessment.
6. Similarly, in response to the matter in paragraph 26 and 27, more time is required to consider with the OHAs, the scope of an updated residential and visual amenity assessment ("RVAA"), which includes a property-by-property assessment of residential visual amenity for dwellings within 250m of the edge of any part of the proposed operational solar array. We have in mind here: (a) the relevant comments from Interested Parties provided at Deadline 7; and (b) the responses by the OHA's [REP7-191] and Cumnor Parish Council [REP7-077], which refer to the omission of specific residential properties, e.g. Upper Whitley Farm and Filchampstead, from the RVAA. This exercise would include:
 - 6.1 identifying the dwellings considered and the criteria used to select them;
 - 6.2 explaining the likely visual effects of the Proposed Development on each property; and
 - 6.3 identifying any mitigation measures (including buffer distances or layout changes) that could reduce those effects.
7. The Applicant has already commenced this RVAA exercise and entered into discussion with the OHA's on this matter.
8. As anticipated in the RFI at paragraph 71, all of the above work may well produce changes to the Proposed Development requiring amendments to the documents listed referred to, including:
 - 8.1 updated Works Plans;
 - 8.2 updated Land Plans;
 - 8.3 appropriate modifications to the dDCO;
 - 8.4 any necessary updates to the ES, describing the potential for new environmental effects, or effects of different significance, that could arise from the amendment;
 - 8.5 an updated outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan;



- 8.6 a Skylark Compensation Strategy, as requested within the Ecology and Biodiversity section within this letter, which reflects how changes to the array may alter the opportunity for onsite mitigation for ground nesting birds;
 - 8.7 an updated Book of Reference, Status of Negotiations, Statement of Reasons, Schedule of Changes and Lands Rights and Negotiation Tracker;
 - 8.8 an updated Outline Decommissioning Management Plan;
 - 8.9 confirmation of total proposed reduction in land and generating capacity (if any); and
 - 8.10 any other additional or updated plans or documents deemed necessary that are impacted by the updated assessment.
9. These updates can only be done once the anticipated assessment work has been completed, thus adding more time to the end of this process, and the need for an extension of time.

Conclusion

10. Accordingly, the Applicant requests an extension of time to 23.59 hours on Friday 25 September 2026 to respond to the RFI. If this request is accepted, the Applicant is confident that: (a) more common ground can be achieved with the OHA's; (b) the concerns of Interest Parties could more satisfactorily be addressed; and (c) ultimately clarify the information before the Secretary of State on the effects of the Proposed Development.

The Applicant can be available to discuss or clarify any of the points raised in this letter but otherwise looks forward to receiving a decision on its request.

Yours faithfully

Pinsent Masons LLP

This letter is sent electronically and so is unsigned