



Specialising in Landlord & Tenant, Forensic Science, Expert Evidence and Procurement

FAO: John Wheadon

Head of Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery

Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)

3-8 Whitehall Place

London

SW1A 2AW

1st June 2026

Via Email Only: BotleyWestSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Mr Wheadon,

BOTLEY WEST SOLAR FARM (EN010147)

Fifth Submission on behalf of Mr Dustin Dryden, [REDACTED]

Construction, Access, Easements and the Practical Operation of Goose Eye Farm

(Further submission in response to the Secretary of State's Request for Information dated 14 April 2026, as amended 28 April 2026)

Introduction

I have previously made submissions concerning landscape design, residential visual amenity, compulsory acquisition and the justification for the scale of the Proposed Development.

This fifth submission addresses a different but equally important question.

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Put simply:

how is Goose Eye Farm expected to function in practice if the Proposed Development proceeds in its current form?

That question has never been satisfactorily answered.

Throughout the Examination, considerable attention was given to policy issues, environmental assessments and strategic benefits. Far less attention was given to the practical realities of occupying and operating a property situated within the middle of a nationally significant infrastructure project.

For Mr Dryden, however, those practical realities matter.

The planning system is concerned not only with whether development can technically proceed, but whether places continue to function properly for those who live and work within them. In the case of Goose Eye Farm, that issue remains unresolved.

Goose Eye Farm is More Than a Residential Receptor

One of the recurring difficulties throughout the application has been the tendency to treat Goose Eye Farm as a point on a plan or as a residential receptor within an assessment methodology.

It is neither.

It is a home, an agricultural holding and an operational property with established access arrangements, infrastructure, services and day-to-day management requirements.

The question for the Secretary of State is therefore not simply whether people can continue living at Goose Eye Farm.

The question is whether the property can continue to function properly during:

- construction;

- operation;
- maintenance activities; and
- eventual decommissioning.

The application provides surprisingly little comfort on that point.

National planning policy consistently emphasises the importance of sustaining existing communities, homes and businesses. That objective cannot be achieved if the practical consequences for those most directly affected are left uncertain.

Construction Phase

The construction period has the potential to be one of the most disruptive aspects of the Proposed Development.

That is not controversial. Large infrastructure projects inevitably create disturbance.

What remains unclear is how those effects would be experienced by an occupier whose property lies within the centre of the development area.

The Environmental Statement describes construction effects in broad terms. What it does not do is explain, in practical terms, how Goose Eye Farm would operate whilst substantial works are taking place around it.

Questions that remain unanswered include:

- how access would be maintained in practice throughout the construction programme;
- how conflicts between construction traffic and existing farm activity would be managed;
- how temporary restrictions or diversions would affect the operation of the holding;
- how prolonged construction activity in close proximity to the property would affect daily use and occupation.

These are not minor matters.

They are the ordinary realities of living and working within a construction zone.

Good decision-making requires an understanding of how development affects people in practice, not merely how it appears in plans and assessments.

Access

Access is frequently discussed as though it is a binary issue.

Either access exists or it does not.

In reality, the issue is more nuanced.

A route may remain technically available whilst becoming substantially less convenient, less reliable or less safe to use.

For a working property, that distinction matters.

The Applicant has provided assurances that access can be maintained. What remains absent is a clear explanation of how access arrangements will operate in practice throughout the life of the project and how conflicts will be resolved when they arise.

The Secretary of State is being asked to authorise a project that may affect this property for decades.

The practical consequences for access therefore deserve closer attention than they have so far received.

Planning policy places considerable emphasis on safe and suitable access. That principle should be applied not only at the point development is constructed, but throughout the operational life of the project.

Easements, Services and Existing Rights

A similar concern arises in relation to easements and existing rights benefiting Goose Eye Farm.

The farm does not operate in isolation.

It relies upon infrastructure, services and legal rights that have developed over many years.

The application seeks extensive powers over surrounding land, yet there remains little detailed explanation as to how existing arrangements will be protected in practice.

This is particularly important because disruption to an easement or service may have consequences far beyond the area physically affected.

The issue is not simply whether rights continue to exist on paper.

The issue is whether they continue to function effectively in reality.

That distinction has never been fully addressed.

Where compulsory powers are sought, there is a particular need for clarity as to how existing interests will continue to operate without material prejudice.

Life Inside an Operational Solar Development

Even after construction has finished, the relationship between Goose Eye Farm and the Proposed Development does not end.

The development would remain in place for decades.

It would require:

- inspection;
- maintenance;

- vegetation management;
- equipment replacement;
- security measures;
- ongoing access to infrastructure.

The cumulative effect of these activities has not been adequately examined from the perspective of those expected to live and work within the development area.

Much of the discussion has focused upon whether visual impacts can be mitigated.

The more fundamental question is whether it is reasonable to expect a property to function normally whilst surrounded by the infrastructure, activity and operational requirements associated with a major energy project.

That question remains unanswered.

Planning policy increasingly stresses the creation and stewardship of places that function well over time. The long-term relationship between Goose Eye Farm and the Proposed Development has not yet been adequately examined through that lens.

Why This Matters

This submission is not intended to duplicate the points already made concerning residential amenity or scheme design.

Rather, it highlights a different concern.

The previous submissions have explained why Goose Eye Farm occupies a uniquely exposed position within the scheme.

If that is correct, then the practical consequences of occupying and operating the property also deserve careful consideration.

The Secretary of State's decision will not simply determine what the development looks like.

It will determine how people live and work within it.

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That is ultimately a question of planning judgement, but it is a judgement which should be informed by a clear understanding of real-world consequences rather than assumptions.

Opportunity to Comment on Further Information

Mr Dryden proceeds on the assumption that any material submitted by the Applicant in response to the Request for Information will be made available for comment before a decision is taken.

Given the importance of the issues discussed above, it is difficult to see how affected parties could engage meaningfully with the process unless such an opportunity is provided.

Conclusion

The application contains extensive technical assessment of environmental effects.

What it contains far less of is a convincing explanation of how Goose Eye Farm would function in practice during the life of the Proposed Development.

The issue is not whether access can theoretically be retained.

Nor is it whether existing rights can theoretically survive.

The issue is whether a home and agricultural holding situated within the development area can continue to operate effectively and reasonably over many years.

That question has never been fully answered.

Before development consent is granted, the Secretary of State should be satisfied that the practical implications for Goose Eye Farm are properly understood and properly addressed.



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We are sending this response, as requested, to the PINS Botley West email address and would request that whoever receives it passes it immediately to John Wheadon at DESNZ. We are sending email copies to relevant public representatives and interested parties.

Yours sincerely,



Karen Squibb-Williams - **Barrister – Authorised to Conduct Litigation (BSB)**