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**FAO: John Wheadon**

**Head of Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery**

**Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)**

**3-8 Whitehall Place**

**London**

**SW1A 2AW**

**3<sup>rd</sup> June 2026**

**Via Email Only:** [BotleyWestSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:BotleyWestSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

Dear Mr Wheadon,

**BOTLEY WEST SOLAR FARM (EN010147)**

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

**Agricultural Holding, Farm Viability and the Long-Term Consequences for  
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)*

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Introduction

Much of the discussion surrounding Botley West has focused on the effect of the Proposed Development on land.

Less attention has been paid to its effect on farming businesses.

That distinction matters.

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Land can be measured in hectares and classified by agricultural grade. Farming businesses are more complicated. They depend upon access, flexibility, management efficiency, operational freedom and the ability to adapt over time.

This submission concerns the long-term implications of the Proposed Development for Goose Eye Farm as a working agricultural holding.

The relevance of this issue is reinforced by the Secretary of State's request for further information regarding scheme scale, alternatives, viability and land requirements. Those questions recognise that the extent of development proposed remains an important issue in the determination of the application. The effect of that development on an existing farming enterprise is therefore a material consideration which should be assessed alongside the broader planning impacts of the scheme.

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#### A Working Farm Is Not Simply a Collection of Fields

Throughout the Examination there has been a tendency to treat agricultural impacts primarily through the lens of land classification and land take.

Whilst those matters are important, they do not tell the whole story.

A farm is an operating business.

Its viability depends not only upon the quantity of land available, but upon:

- how land can be accessed;
- how land can be managed;
- how activities can be coordinated across the holding;
- how future decisions can be taken without undue constraint.

The practical consequences of a major infrastructure project therefore extend beyond the simple loss or retention of agricultural acreage.

The relevant question is not merely whether farming can continue.

The relevant question is whether farming can continue efficiently and viably.

## The Effect of Long-Term Encirclement

Previous submissions have described the unusual position of Goose Eye Farm within the Proposed Development.

Unlike many neighbouring properties, Goose Eye Farm would not simply overlook part of the scheme.

It would sit within it.

The significance of that distinction increases when the project is considered over its full operational life.

A temporary disruption can often be accommodated.

A forty-year alteration to the environment in which a farm operates is a different matter.

The practical effect of being surrounded by solar infrastructure, security measures, maintenance activity and associated operational requirements has never been properly examined from the perspective of an existing farming business.

That omission is striking given the duration of the development proposed.

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## Operational Flexibility

One of the strengths of any farming enterprise is flexibility.

Markets change.

Cropping patterns change.

Technology changes.

Management practices evolve.

The ability to respond to those changes is often critical to long-term viability.

The Proposed Development introduces a substantial and long-lasting physical framework around Goose Eye Farm.

The question which has received insufficient attention is whether that framework would constrain the future operation of the holding.

A business expected to operate alongside a major energy project for decades may not enjoy the same freedom to adapt as it does today.

That issue becomes particularly important if the Applicant is now being invited to explain why a smaller or differently configured scheme could not achieve the project's objectives. If alternative configurations are genuinely under consideration, the consequences for existing agricultural businesses should form part of that assessment.

That is a legitimate planning consideration.

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#### The Cumulative Effect

Many of the individual impacts identified by the Applicant are presented as manageable.

That may be so when each issue is viewed in isolation.

However, farming businesses do not experience impacts in isolation.

The reality is cumulative.

Access arrangements, operational restrictions, maintenance activity, landscape change, construction impacts and land rights issues all interact with one another.

The combined effect may be greater than the sum of the individual parts.

It is not clear that this cumulative effect on the operation of Goose Eye Farm has ever been assessed in a comprehensive manner.

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#### Existing Rural Businesses

National planning policy has long recognised the importance of supporting prosperous rural economies and existing rural enterprises.

That principle is particularly relevant here.

Goose Eye Farm is not a hypothetical future business.

The Secretary of State is currently considering whether aspects of the scheme require further justification. In doing so, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the impacts are not being experienced by abstract receptors but by existing businesses which already contribute to the local rural economy.

It already exists.

The Secretary of State is therefore not being asked to weigh the benefits of the Proposed Development against a theoretical agricultural use of land.

He is being asked to weigh those benefits against the impact upon an existing and established rural enterprise.

The practical consequences for that enterprise deserve careful consideration.

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### Looking Beyond Construction

Much attention is naturally given to construction impacts.

However, construction eventually ends.

The more difficult question is what happens afterwards.

The Proposed Development is intended to remain in place for many years.

Any effects upon the operation of Goose Eye Farm therefore become long-term effects.

The issue is not whether the farm can survive a construction programme.

The issue is whether it can continue to operate effectively throughout the lifetime of the development.

The application provides relatively little evidence addressing that question directly.

## Opportunity to Comment on Further Information

Mr Dryden assumes 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 addressed in this submission, and the long-term implications for the operation of Goose Eye Farm, such an opportunity would appear essential if affected parties are to engage meaningfully with the decision-making process.

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## Conclusion

The agricultural effects of the Proposed Development cannot be understood solely by reference to land classification, land take or the number of hectares affected.

The more important question is how the development would affect the operation and long-term viability of an existing farming business.

That question has received surprisingly little attention during the Examination process.

Goose Eye Farm occupies a distinctive position within the Proposed Development and would experience the consequences of the scheme on a daily basis throughout its operational life.

Before development consent is granted, the Secretary of State should be satisfied that those consequences are properly understood and properly assessed.

The issue is not whether farming can theoretically continue.

The issue is whether a working agricultural holding can continue to function efficiently, flexibly and viably within the environment created by the Proposed Development.

That question remains unanswered.

The Secretary of State's request for further information demonstrates that questions concerning scale, layout and land requirements remain under active consideration. In those circumstances, the effect of the Proposed Development on the long-term



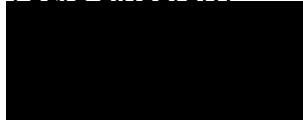
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viability and operation of Goose Eye Farm should not be treated as a secondary matter. It forms part of the assessment of whether the scheme has been properly designed, properly justified and appropriately balanced.

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)**