



The Rt Hon Edward Miliband MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

Our Ref: FN/LM63672
29 April 2026

Secretary of State's post-Examination questions – Botley West Solar NSIP

Dear Secretary of State,

I am concerned by the sheer extent of the gaps in information highlighted by your formal response to the applicant on 14 April 2026 in relation to the Botley West Solar proposal.

Most worryingly, the fundamental viability of the grid connection of the proposed National Grid substation at Farmoor is brought into question.

Given the scale of the project, significant transmission capacity is required, and the project's reliance on associated National Grid infrastructure was a concern raised repeatedly during the Examination without a satisfactory response.

I welcome the careful attention you are giving to this application and the seriousness with which you are approaching what is a significant decision for local communities. Throughout this process, local communities have diligently engaged with the Examination process. It is clear from the questions you raise that the Applicant has not engaged with the same level of forensic detail.

Many key issues remain unresolved, and key parties are being cut out of the post-examination process.

Matters that were examined at length during the Planning Inspectorate's Examination, including alternative site selection, grid connection and deliverability, impacts on the Blenheim World Heritage Site, landscape and visual effects, ecological mitigation, flood risk, aviation issues and compulsory acquisition, have had to be re-visited as evidence remains disputed or is incomplete. There is a complete lack of clarity on some of the most sensitive issues for my constituents, including site selection and the Landscape and Visual Impact and Residential Visual Amenity Assessments.

Local residents are especially concerned about transparency at this stage of the process. Unlike during the Examination itself, the Planning Inspectorate's website currently provides no clear information about how this extended decision-making phase will operate after 9 June, nor how the substantial volume of additional information you have requested will be assessed.

Layla Moran MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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By way of example, Cumnor Parish Council currently has no information about whether, or for how long, it will be given the opportunity to review and comment on further evidence submitted by the applicant after 9 June. Residents have already raised concerns with me about transparency, procedural fairness and public confidence at this stage, particularly given that much of the material now being sought was not fully tested during the Examination.

One resident said “Like many others I have completely lost faith in the examination process. If there are 70 different points outstanding for the applicant to answer, why was this application not refused.”

The lack of opportunity for engagement with the process now seems to me to be a deficit in democracy. To remedy this would you:

- Meet with Bicester and Woodstock MP Calum Miller and myself as MPs for the affected constituencies.
- Recognise Calum and I as “interested parties”.
- Confirm how constituents can make make representations at the post-examination stage.

Your requests for further information from Botley West implicitly acknowledge wide-ranging concerns. Given the clock is ticking on the 8 week timetable set out in the 26 March statement, clarity is urgently needed on how this next stage will be conducted. Affected communities need the opportunity to engage, so that confidence in the fairness and robustness of the process can be restored.

Yours sincerely,



Layla Moran MP
Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for Oxford West & Abingdon



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15 May 2026

Dear Layla Moran MP,

Thank you for your letter of 29 April to Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP regarding Botley West Solar Farm. I have been asked to respond on his behalf.

To confirm, your letter will be treated as a post-examination representation and will be carefully considered alongside all matters that are relevant to the decision-making on the application for development consent in accordance with the Planning Act 2008.

I would refer you to the clarification letter dated 28 April, published on the Planning Inspectorates project webpage: [Botley West Solar Farm - Project information](#). The clarification letter states that the Secretary of State's letter dated 14 April (re-issued 20 April and 28 April) constitutes a request for information only and that it does not replace an all interested parties consultation, where required, following the deadline for responses on Tuesday 9 June 2026.

Requests for further information are directed only to those parties from whom additional details are required. This ensures that the process remains focused and efficient, enabling the Department to obtain information from those best placed to provide it.

The Secretary of State cannot pre-determine or pre-empt the outcome or nature of the responses it may receive from the information request. Therefore, a decision will be made on whether consultation with interested parties is required once the deadline for responses has passed and all responses have been considered. However, should further comment from interested parties be considered necessary, then you and Calum Miller MP, as interested parties, will be able to take part in that process.

Overall, this approach is intended to uphold the principles of fairness, transparency, consistency, and procedural integrity, supporting confidence in the robustness and impartiality of the decision-making process.

Any further requests for information or consultations will be published on the Planning Inspectorates project webpage: [Botley West Solar Farm - Project information](#). Interested parties are advised to use the 'Get Updates' functionality, which will enable them to be kept informed of any requests and consultations during the decision-making stage of the process, including information on the process to follow to submit a consultation response.

In reference to your request for a meeting, I wish to highlight the Government's Planning Propriety Issues Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-propriety-issues-guidance> with particular reference to paragraphs 8, 20, 21, 55 and 56. As a registered interested party who submitted representations into the Examination, I would like to emphasise

that engaging through the established process is the most effective and appropriate means of participating in the planning decision process. As the guidance highlights, all interested parties should receive equal treatment and transparency.

Given the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in taking decisions on applications for development consent for energy infrastructure proposals, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on specific matters related to the proposals, as this could be seen as prejudicing the decision-making process.

Following the usual process, any post examination representations that are not directly related to a consultation will be published on the Planning Inspectorate's project webpage: [Botley West Solar Farm - Project information](#) and these will not be made public until the decision date, and only matters that are considered to be important and relevant will be considered in the Secretary of State's final decision. Your post-examination representation and this letter will be published alongside the responses to the further information request after the 9 June 2026 deadline.

Please find link below for further information on the decision stage of the planning process: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-the-stages-of-the-nsip-process-and-how-you-can-have-your-say>.

I trust that this is of assistance to you.

Best wishes,

MICHAEL SHANKS MP
Minister of State for Energy