

Simon Raywood

From: Frances Sunderland [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 July 2026 12:47
To: Botley West Solar Farm
Subject: Proposal for Botley West Solar Farm.

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]

Interested Party Registration Number [REDACTED]

Frances Sunderland ([REDACTED])
[REDACTED]

Dear Secretary of State

I am writing in response to the answers provided by PVDP to the Secretary of State's recent questions concerning the proposal for Botley West Solar Farm.

I live with my husband at [REDACTED] near the village of Cassington and own the field which abuts the [REDACTED] to the south. Our property is within 250 metres of the boundary of the proposed Solar Farm site. As an interested party (ref 20052948) I am writing to say that I hope the Development Consent Order will not be granted for Botley West. PVDP have constantly failed or refused to provide certain evidence and reports to support their application and even after a generous extension in time they have yet again failed to do so. It is difficult to see how permission could be granted in their favour without the appropriate and requested evidence and reports.

Throughout this process PVDP have made a mockery of the planning system and consultation process, arrogantly ignoring requests by residents, national bodies such as Historic England and the Examiners for specific reports, assessments and details. How can this be the 'proper process' required on which to base a decision which will affect a vast part of West Oxfordshire for many decades.

Strategic policy

Of course renewables are needed in the UK. But I cannot see how mega solar power stations such as Botley West are the way forward. They are being proposed without thought for location or local communities, in an uncoordinated, unstrategic way and overly concentrated on productive farmland.

I understand that the government aims to generate 85GW of renewable energy by 2030. Yet there is evidence that the combined energy output from solar on rooftops, car parks and brownfield sites could be as much as 117GW.

I think it is wrong to allow our countryside to be destroyed unnecessarily when there are better options available. A mega solar site such as Botley West built on productive farmland locks it out of food production for decades, decreasing our ever more important food security, massively impacting local communities, and causing harm to rural landscapes.

I would ask that the government pause mega solar approvals including Botley West until a clear strategic plan is in place, including the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) and that the government ban using any high grade BMV land for mega solar sites, preventing loss of farmland and rural character.

In particular I would like to highlight the following specific issues in the PVDP proposal for Botley West which are still of concern:

RVAA – Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

A detailed RVAA and Landscape Study have still not been completed by PVDP. This has been requested by the Examiners (and of course Interested Parties) since last summer. PVDP have simply arrogantly stated that Botley West will not affect living conditions in the area. This is obviously not true.

The Oxfordshire Host Authorities report has highlighted the inappropriate location of Botley West on open landscape, sloping and undulating land. The intrinsically rural character of the area will be destroyed and such a huge solar array will change the appearance of the historic landscape. The height of racks could exceed typical hedgerow heights and any rotation of racks would produce noise in this quiet rural area. All of this has been ignored by PVDP.

Lack of property by property assessment

PVDP have had plenty of time to produce a property by property impact assessment, but they have chosen not to do so. We live within 250 metres of the boundary and we have never received a visit from PVDP. Plot 2.60 abuts the edge of the group of the houses here at Jericho Farm Barns and 2.57, 2.58 and 2.59 are extremely close. We also own a field which abuts the Yarnton Road next to our house. There is a proposed cable route where the ancient hedge line meets the road. There are many huge mature trees on this hedge line and again we have not received any information about the potential impact of the route despite a specific request for information.

Buffer Zone

A larger buffer zone for some properties has now been included in the proposal. However, it should be noted that this is only provisional and PVDP do not give any assurances that this WILL actually happen. It seems that the precise sizes of the buffer zones will not be decided until after the DCO is granted. So obviously they will have no legal obligation to include these buffer zones and it looks like a cynical ploy on behalf of PVDP to suddenly include a little more green on the plans at this late stage. Why is this provisional when they have had months if not years to present such buffer zones accurately? Surely this is part of their attempt to push this through.

Isolated pockets of panels

Why are there isolated pockets of panels in the maps and plans which seems to make little sense. Yet again so much of the presentation by PVDP looks ill-thought through.

Loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural Land for food production

PVDP's statement that the land is poor is not true. Soil surveys and tenant farmers show this statement to be false. Food production and security is very important in our volatile world and with the challenges of climate change. The fact that our food security is much worse than most of our

European neighbours is of great concern. Surely every other option should be considered for solar array before productive farm land.

Mis-information about connection/Substation

PVDP state that Botley West would be linked to the grid in 2029. However, NGET say that this will not happen until 2031. There is no decision yet on exactly where the substation will be sited or whether it will get permission from VHDC. Surely these decisions are the wrong way around. If there is no substation the project will be worthless and destroy this beautiful part of Oxfordshire unnecessarily.

Cable Route

How can this project be given any permission without the final cable route being agreed? PVDP have failed to present a solution to crossing the Thames. There is also insufficient detail about the substations and their impacts.

Ecology and Protected species

Some of the reports requested are still missing or incomplete.

Flood Risk Report

Despite many requests PVDP has still not provided proper evidence about increased flood risk from panel run-off in an area with a history of surface water problems. PVDP's response is that "any changes to run off will be insignificant provided the ground beneath the panels remains vegetated". But they provide no evidence that this can be guaranteed. The response, again from PVDP is white-washing and wishful thinking.

Heat plumes

There has been a suggestion that large-scale solar power plants raise local temperatures, creating a solar heat island effect. Has sufficient research been completed on this as presumably such data is rare as there are so few solar farms of this proposed size anywhere other than in deserts.

Decommissioning

The response from PVDP talks only of the panels themselves. Nothing is offered about how the huge number of piles would be removed from the ground to return the area to agricultural land.

Historic villages, listed churches

Why are PVDP not prepared to consider the worth of this heritage? Only Blenheim Palace has been considered. Unique and historic listed churches, houses and villages have been ignored by PVDP. Our immediate area of Jericho Farm, Worton, Cassington, Bladon and Church Hanborough sits within the central section of the proposed Botley West site and includes many historic buildings and grade 1 listed churches and the relationship between these unique buildings and the landscape in which they sit is crucial.

PVDP Funding

It seems wrong that the financial details of such a huge project are not completely transparent. If the project is of national importance then the full financial detail should be publicly available for scrutiny

and its financial viability should be provable. A project of national importance should not just be for private financial gain. The financial structure of both PVDP, Solar Five and the Blenheim Estate and Blenheim Charitable Foundation should be transparent and assessed. PVDP's claim that the sketchy details on the financing of this project is 'normal' is extraordinary and again is arrogant and simply untrue.

I would be grateful if you would consider the points that I have highlighted here seriously and hope that you will NOT recommend that permission will be granted for Botley West.

Yours sincerely

Frances Sunderland