

Simon Raywood

From: Steve Westaby [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 July 2026 17:47
To: Botley West Solar Farm
Subject: Botley West Application.

[You don't often get email from [REDACTED] Learn why this is important at [REDACTED]]

Dear Sir, am grateful for the opportunity to update my previous comments on this proposal and convey the anxieties of the West Oxfordshire community. I am a local resident with property looking out over Bladon Heath. As such I can confirm that there was no approach for visual amenity assessment and that comments made at community presentations were met with dismissive responses.

The site to be covered by solar panels is agriculturally productive and important for exercise and recreation of the local population which is of economic importance for the region. It is also of great historical significance. During the Civil War Charles 1st camped here with his physician William Harvey who described the circulation of the blood. Harvey dissected deer from the heath and I have found musket balls from the time on my own property. A recent architectural survey of the area to be covered with solar panels discovered Roman villas and Iron Age dwellings which were regrettably covered over again without school children being given the opportunity to visit them first. I viewed these findings on a daily basis whilst dog walking.

More to the point, I have personally witnessed a fatal plane crash on land destined for panels where I certified three occupants dead to assist the ambulance crew. You would not wish to know the details. I attended the site of a second crash on the heath where both pilots died when the engine exploded in flames. I am aware of further incidents involving trainee pilots and therefore feel compelled to raise serious concerns about solar sites being built in proximity to airports. Apparently 70,000 training flights take place at Oxford Airport each year and there needs to be open land for a considerable distance to allow for emergency landings. This includes helicopters also. Rescue services cannot reach casualties in the midst of shattered metal and glass. Those who experience engine failure or loss of power will therefore seek to land on roads or school playing fields. This has to be obvious to the applicant and land owner but was seemingly ignored during the local consultation and planning process. Eventually attempts were made to address the problems of glint and glare, thermal plume with radar disruption, and bird displacement. None of the applicants responses were reassuring and couldn't be for obvious reasons. Airports, helipads and military installations are particularly vulnerable to visual disturbances such as reflected sunlight from solar panels. Risks are particularly acute during low flying which characterises flight training. These dangers must also extend to RAF Brize Norton, one of our most important military bases at the western end of the proposed development.

The infamous Schiphol Airport debacle set the precedent for solar versus aviation some time ago when a relatively small site caused chaos in the middle of the day through glint and glare affecting pilots and the control tower. This resulted in massive financial losses after which legal action caused the panels to be removed. With increased awareness applications for solar sites in proximity to British airforce bases have already been declined. In the case of RAF Marham the Ministry of Defence warned that metal solar arrays "would interfere with the radar system with impact on the ability to track incoming aircraft during critical stages of their approach". This influence is said to be of significance up to 18 kilometres away. The US Aviation Administration have made similar observations and our National Planning Policy Framework now stipulates that developers must avoid potentially unacceptable adverse impact on natural and built environment including aviation safety.

Inevitably solar developers have published websites in an attempt to counter the dangers but at the end of the day who would want to take any risk with aviation safety and people's lives. That said the Schiphol situation was known about before the Botley West application was submitted yet

we are told there was no dialogue in advance with Oxford Airport. This does not generate confidence amongst the local population when presented with these risks by an overseas developer who some believe are not committed to undertaking the site construction , maintenance and deconstruction themselves.

Yours sincerely, Professor Stephen Westaby, [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone