

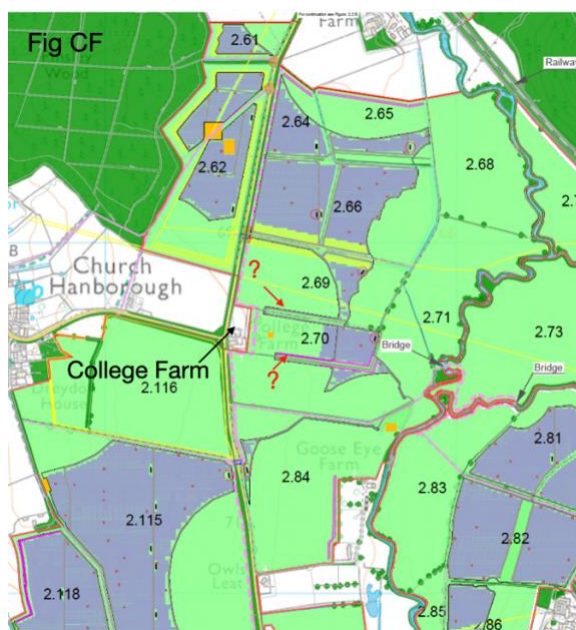
To: BotleyWestSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Project: Botley West Solar Farm Application EN010142 Ref. [REDACTED]

From: Prof David Sherratt FRS and Dr Lidia Arciszewska, owners and residents of [REDACTED]

14/07/2026

1. We are pleased that the Applicant has increased the buffer zone to ~200m around [REDACTED] (College Farm; CF) and neighbouring residences (viz. Pelican house and Goose Eye Farm) by removing panels as indicated in map ENO1047/APP/8.2Rev.4 (plot 2.70). We request, in agreement with the ExA, that this buffer zone be increased to 250m. Nevertheless, we are concerned by the apparent fenced rectangles ('horns') that extend from the panels to almost the CF boundary (Fig.CF, red arrows, below). We can find no reference to why they are there and what their purpose is (highlighting the sloppy and incomplete nature of the applicant's revised submission). A buffer zone should be precisely that: an area free of solar panels and other necessary infrastructure; these apparently fenced rectangles should be moved at least 250m from the CF boundary and their planned function explicitly explained. In the revised map, the panels immediately east of CF (Fig. CF: plot 2.70) extend west of the fenced boundary that defines the buffer zone in the Applicant's map (i.e. the panels in the map extend into the buffer zone!). We presume this is a mistake and the area covered by panels needs to be reduced to the east so that all panels are contained in the fenced area defining the buffer zone? Moreover, we propose that the buffer zone surrounding our property and other buffer zones should be removed from the red boundary of the BWSF project area; i.e. the proposed solar farm boundary should be defined by the fence within which the proposed solar panels and necessary infrastructure are contained.



It is **unacceptable** for the Applicant to propose that 'the precise buffer widths (between 100m and 250m) will not be decided until the Development Consent (DCO) is granted! This statement makes a mockery of the due planning process. The Applicant has given no indication of who will maintain these buffer zones and what they will be maintained as (grassland, meadow, etc)? By moving buffer zones outside of the solar farm 'brownfield' boundary, as we propose, they would retain their current Green Belt status. Though we welcome the increase in panel-free buffer zones in our and neighbouring properties, we are puzzled by the few patches of connected panels retained around our properties (Fig. CF: plot 2.69, 2.70, 2.84). These serve no obvious purpose, would reside on BMV land and be in an area the WODC proposed should be panel-free.

2. Plot 2.116 is retained as a proposed area for community vegetable growing, despite the local community objecting to it. It is not needed; it is in the wrong place; it is distant from both Long Hanborough and Church Hanborough; and there is no safe and easy access to it. We request that field 2.116 be taken out of the red boundary of the BWSF project area and used for productive agriculture.
3. The Applicant still states that the proposed solar farm will have insignificant effects on the amenity (including visual amenity) of CF and neighbouring residents. This is a subjective statement that is not justified by the fact that our views of rolling countryside and attractive cropped fields will become blighted by panels in every direction and particularly towards and on the eastern skyline (see images in our earlier submission). Furthermore, they continue to be confused about the number of residences on plot 2.70! For example, see “[College Farm and Pelican House Figure 2.26. The house is 50m to the west of the solar panels in the central section of the Project Site. It appears that views of the solar panels would be partially screened by the hedgerow and trees along the eastern perimeter of the property. Views of the solar panels 100m to the north and 80m to the south of the house would be screened by the vegetation which surrounds the property. There would be more distant views, from upper floors to solar panels on rising ground to the east on the Evenlode Valley sides.](#)”

	Year 1	Year 15
Magnitude of impact	Medium	Medium-Low
Significance of effect	Moderate	Moderate
Conclusion	significant	not significant

It is disappointing and unfortunate that the Applicant has not had time to complete an updated Landscape Study (including footpaths and viewpoints) and to carry out the full Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA; the impact on residents in affected properties) in time to present them to SoS. A comprehensive landscape study and RVAA should have been completed by the Applicant **before** they put the entire project forward. The ExA and all interested parties have been calling for a full RVAA to be undertaken since the project was initiated. The fact that the Applicant has still not undertaken these reflects the Applicant’s arrogant attitude, which they have demonstrated throughout the entire process of this project’s application and examination. We are disappointed and appalled that the fields on the slopes of the Lower Evenlode River Valley, particularly those around the Purwell Farm and near Cassington, still feature on the final map submitted to SoS. West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) requested that the solar panels in the fields on both sides of Lower Road be removed from the proposal.

4. We are puzzled as to why the applicant continues to plan a cycling path along the eastern side of Lower Road, along the border of our property towards the north. Such a placement of the path would require the cycle path to cross the busy Lower Road from one side to the other twice. It is also nonsensical to maintain that the path is the Applicant’s ‘benefit to the community’. A cycling path on the western side of the Lower Road has already been approved by the Oxfordshire County Council (as stated verbally on the site visit to our property, when a PVDP representative was present and should have noted this). Blenheim Estates has already committed to collaborating on this matter before the PVDP application was undertaken.
5. Many important details are still missing in this final stage of the application, and many questions remain unanswered. Like the lack of detail on cable routes, and no clarity on issues such as protecting habitats, avoiding tree damage, and mitigation measures. The Applicant still claims that the connection to the grid will take place in 2029, although National Grid (NGET) predicts a connection to take place in the last quarter of 2031. Moreover, the site for the substation has not been decided yet and has not even been precisely established. The Applicant seems to have run out of the necessary resources to comply with the ExA requests; and is attempting to push the incomplete application through.
6. *Agricultural productivity* The Applicant continues to state that the land proposed to form the solar farm is of low quality and poor productivity. Responses from several sources have stated that much of the land is of BMV quality and high productivity. The Applicants most recent

analysis, by Velcourt Advisory Services, does nothing to counter the view that the land is agriculturally productive given good management, as has been stated elsewhere repeatedly. The Applicant's evidence-lacking statement, repeated many times in documents and in oral testimony, has no credibility and should be disregarded.

With reference to 'agricultural land classifications' in relation to the Applicant's proposal (EN010147: Document Ref: EN010147/APP/20.3 Para 7 page 26-29). In a document submitted earlier, it was demonstrated that ~80% of the land in Hanborough Parish planned for solar panels on both sides of Lower Road is classified as 'Best and Most Versatile' (BMV) [21% class 1 and 2; 59% class 3a]. A further 20% is class 3b (medium, NOT poor). In the Applicant's revised submission, some of this land is now solar panel-free (increased buffer zones on the east side of Lower Road and the proposed community vegetable growing area (plot 2.116) on the west side of Lower Road). Although this removes some BMV land, the overall % of BMV land in this area is not significantly changed. The statement of the Applicant reproduced below is totally misleading and largely irrelevant, since it apparently refers to 5.5 ha of lost BMV land once the 40-year working life of the proposed solar farm is completed and agricultural land is reinstated!

Applicant's statement: "There would only be a small permanent loss of 5.5 ha of BMV land arising from the Proposed Development, which is not significant. The mitigation measures included through the Outline Soil Management Plan would protect soils through the construction process and the outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan would enable soil health to be enhanced through the conservation grassland and extensive grazing proposed within the installation area. The design process for the Project considered the likely areas of BMV land at an early stage...."

During the lifetime of the proposed solar farm, ~1000 hectares of BMV land would be taken out of agricultural production at a time that a national 'food security emergency' has been declared! Furthermore, Fig. 1 (page 26) is illegible and unhelpful! By lumping together ALC grade 3a (BMV) and 3b (medium), the Applicant apparently tries to confuse the reader and the ExA. The reality is that a substantial proportion of grade 3 land is grade 3a, with ~45% of the total land planned for panels being BMV (earlier documents and submission). *The following Applicant's statement is yet again misleading and inaccurate:* "A site of this size would always affect some BMV resource. It is clear from the Applicant's early analysis that the location of the areas of the Proposed Development fell predominantly within Grade 3 land, with some potential Grade 4 land, which compares favourably with surrounding districts within Oxfordshire, where there are generally significant areas of Grade 2 and also limited areas of Grade 1 land. The initial assessment therefore identified the land would mainly comprise Grade 3 and lower quality land, and the detailed survey work has confirmed that this is the case. So the Applicant's position was that the presence or absence of BMV was unlikely to be a determinative." [page 29].

7. The Applicant previously requested a three-month extension to complete missing requested work, which the SoS rightfully refused. **Any further submissions by the Applicant should also be refused as there is no time for Interested Parties to review them as part of the democratic planning process.**

Finally, we stress that we are strong supporters of renewable energy and have extensive solar panels on the roof, a heat pump, a thermal battery for hot water and drive an electric car. The BWSF proposal was not born out of the vision to help reverse the climate emergency. It is a 'speculative land grab', with a poorly designed project that was conceived purely for commercial gain. The Applicant has failed to deal satisfactorily with the ExA concerns, and many of the responses that the Applicant has made are not justified by the evidence. Considering the negative effects this project would have on the landscape, the Green Belt, the natural environment, the heritage, and the communities, as well as the disapproval from the local authorities and opposition from the local community, this proposal should be refused in its entirety.