

**Submission from Rosemary Lewis (IP [REDACTED])
to the Applicant's Response (submitted on 9 June)
to the Secretary of State's Request for information (14 April 2026 revised 28th April)**

I am a member of the Stop Botley West (SBW) steering group but submit this response as an individual local resident and registered interested party

From the very start of their preparation for the Botley West Farm (BWSF) proposal in 2022 the Applicant has expected to be granted a Development Consent Order with very little need to provide detailed, well evidenced reasons for this proposal to be accepted, to submit the required assessments and responses in a timely manner or to engage seriously with interested parties; residents, the local councils, MPs, the Government Inspectorate or even, most recently, to the Secretary of State himself.

The Applicant's latest response to the Secretary of State's Request for Information is little different from their previous submissions in its incompleteness and inaccuracies. However, there are indications that they have come to realise, too late, that they have not provided enough evidence in their responses to date and that their own "professional judgement" is not sufficient justification on its own in face of the overwhelming referenced evidence provided by other interested parties.

The Applicant has relied heavily, almost exclusively in the "planning balance", on the urgent need for significant amounts of large-scale energy infrastructure (e.g. NPS EN-1, para 1.1.2) but the SoS should be aware that NESO's own figures give 237Gw in the solar queue of Government target of approx 47GW by 2030 ie 5 times the amount needed or that the Grid could cope with. The corresponding figures for 2050 are 738GW in the queue of Government target of 70-75GW.

Even more importantly, National Grid (NGET) forecasts that the required substation will not be completed or ready to connect until the final quarter of 2031 at the earliest. Furthermore, NGET has not yet even finalised the location or submitted a planning application for this substation. It would be folly indeed for the Applicant to be allowed to commence construction of BWSF without the certainty of a connection to the National Grid which is why the ExA proposed a Grampian clause in the DCO, which the Applicant has subsequently sought to circumvent, to prevent construction starting until the NGET substation had Planning Permission.

This means that BWSF would make **no** contribution to the 2030 target and is just one of hundreds of projects seeking permission to connect by 2050. It follows that the Secretary of State could now be more selective about which Applications to approve.

By contrast, the negative aspects of BWSF in the planning balance remain. They include include the harm on the setting and outstanding universal value (OUV) of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site and other significant Grade 1 churches and Archaeological sites, the loss of productive farmland and of Oxford's green belt, the danger to safety of novice pilots at the UK's biggest training airport, the damage to the local landscape and its unique ecology, the increased risk of flooding and the impact on the residential visual amenity of hundreds of properties near the site boundary and the loss for many thousands of residents (11,000 properties within 1.5km) and visitors to the area of the health benefits from walking the site's 100km of Public Rights of Way without being enclosed between fences and high, dense hedges.

If you were looking for a less appropriate location for the biggest solar farm in the UK, or one with a higher population density, you would be hard-pressed to find one.

Since the end of the examination in Nov 2025, the Applicant has continued to try the patience of all those involved, including that of the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State issued a request for information containing not just a few points for clarification but 70 detailed questions and what amounted to a request for a complete redesign.

This is unprecedented at such a late stage in the application after the Examination has closed and it is disappointing that the Secretary of State chose to extend the decision date to allow yet more time for the Applicant to provide the missing answers and to complete their work now rather than refusing to grant the DCO

Unbelievably, the applicant sent in a late request for a further three month extension in order to complete their work and, when this was rightly refused, their submission on 9th June omitted several very important reports and assessments including updated LVIA, RVAA and Heritage assessments - this last being dismissed as "not their job" but the responsibility of the State Party (DCMS) to complete. In their answers to the RFI they appear to blame the Secretary of State's refusal of extension for their inability to complete the work. The Applicant still claims the missing studies and assessments will be provided - this time after the Consent that they are so confident of receiving.

One example of the Applicant's post-consent plans:

Failure to carry out an adequate Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) and replacing it with a Residential Visual Amenity Plan (RVAP)

The Applicant's resistance to carrying out the thorough and detailed RVAA requested by the ExA is a particularly serious issue. This was only even partially addressed at the very end of the Examination, too late for the property owners or other Interested Parties to respond.

I can personally attest to the inadequacy of the Applicant's RVAA. In my role as Community Liaison for Stop Botley West I visited over 50 of the most impacted properties and spoke to many owners and I observed the situation of each myself. I discovered many errors made by the Applicant (who failed to make a single visit to inside the curtilage of any property) in their assessment of outlook, visual impact and existing vegetation.

At the end of the Examination, with this vital work still not completed by the Applicant, despite repeated requests, the Inspectors proposed a standard 250m separation between all residential properties and panels.

Following the Secretary of State's request for information on this issue, the Applicant devised yet another delaying tactic by proposing a RVAP instead which would be implemented after the DCO was granted consent.

This plan has been universally criticised; principally by the Oxford Host Authorities, who would need to administer it, as unworkable but also by a large number of interested parties and the Stop Botley West campaign representing many local residents who would be affected by this plan without any means of being consulted in the decision-making process as is their Democratic right. Because this issue is so important it should not be left in limbo like this because the Secretary of State is not then provided with the information needed to make a fair and just decision.

It is becoming clear that many of the Applicant's stated intentions simply cannot be relied upon; the agreements they claim to have secured, their constantly changing buffer zone plans, their

contradictory statements about viability, their intention to actually see the project through to construction.

One example of the Applicant's unsubstantiated claims:

One of the Applicant's many unsubstantiated claims is that they have built several large solar farms in the past citing their largest to date in Japan. This project was first proposed in 2012. The applicant sold out once consent was granted and were not involved in construction at all. This is still not built and abandoned infrastructure litters the site. Source: Mainichi, Japan's National Daily (May 14, 2023) [REP3-114]

That information and numerous other examples of misleading, unjustified statements (eg about the visibility of the panels, the quality of the land, the flood risk, the funding of the project etc etc) all made without evidence give no confidence that the Applicant has any intention to complete the missing work post-consent. It is highly likely they will sell immediately if the DCO were to be granted.

Now the Applicant is openly talking about submitting further new plans five weeks after their deadline and too late for public scrutiny, presumably in a last ditch attempt to get their Application over the line. This is a blatant disregard of the rules to which everyone else has adhered and these late submissions should not be accepted.

A large number of well-evidenced - as well as passionate - responses have been submitted by Interested Parties on time and in accordance with the deadlines provided. Residents and our elected representatives care about the climate crisis but also care about this country's heritage, landscape, food security, health, safety and well-being and, above all, our democracy.

As the decision stage reaches its conclusion, many important issues remain unresolved and the Applicant has still not provided significant amounts of important information. The Secretary of State can only make a fair and balanced decision if that information is available.

The Applicant assumes theirs is the only voice that matters. Please demonstrate that this is not the case, make the right, honest and fair decision about the case of BWSF and refuse to grant the DCO.

I respectfully request the Secretary of State to refuse this application outright and not to allow a smaller, watered down version which the Applicant has stated may not be viable and which would still have the majority of the negative impacts already listed here.