

[REDACTED]

From: ANTHONY THOMPSON [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 July 2026 17:33
To: Botley West Solar Farm
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Reference EN010147

For the attention of

[REDACTED]
Head of Planning
Department of Energy Security & Net Zero

Reference your Letter dated 11th June 2026 to PVDP and all Interested Parties

The conflict in the relationship between The Blenheim Estate and Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation Ltd (Charity number: 1166164) as it relates to assessment of the OUV of the World Heritage Site, means that any impact assessment by The Blenheim Estate or the Charity itself must be discounted.

Throughout the consultation and application process for Botley West Solar Farm, one of the key arguments made by the developer as to why this particular site was chosen was that they were being supported by one major landowner which owned almost all the land they needed to create the utility scale solar farm. In ordinary circumstances this is a reasonable position to take because this could give confidence to the Secretary of State and operators of the site, that potential complexities or conflicts of interest of land ownership are bypassed.

However, in this case the landowner in question, The Blenheim Estate, is managed by the same team that are responsible for the stewardship of the World Heritage Site, Blenheim Palace. This is important because The Blenheim Estate is privately owned and operated for the commercial benefit of private family trusts, whereas Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation Ltd is a Charity set up to protect the WHS 'for the benefit of the public and mankind' (<https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk>)

This means there is a conflict of interest created by this structure in that The Blenheim Estate are supporting the application with their land whilst the assessment of potential impact to the OUV of the WHS (the Palace) is being made by the very same management team. The CEO and Property Director of The Blenheim Estate are also the CEO and Property Director of the Charity and have both been incentivised by the Estate to drive value to various Estate companies and trusts. In return they will receive substantial bonuses (£millions) if certain targets are met. These targets are more likely to be met if the Botley West Solar Farm is approved.

In making this statement I am not suggesting any wrongdoing. However, conflicts of interest do exist and as such, any assessment of the impact on the OUV of the WHS of Botley West by the management of The Blenheim Estate and Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation must be discounted.