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To: Secretary of State for Energy
Security & Net Zero

From [REDACTED]
Chair of West Oxfordshire Ramblers

Department of Energy Security
& Net Zero
3-8 Whitehall Place
London SW1A 2AW

IP [REDACTED]

2nd October, 2026

Re Botley West Solar Farm – Application for an Order granting Development Consent

1. From the beginning, the representatives of the Applicant have made statements implying, or even directly asserting, that, as far as they were concerned, the views of the local population were irrelevant. At a meeting of Witney Eco Forum in December 2023, a speaker working for the Applicant actually stated that the 80% of local people who had said in response to a consultation that they were against the proposal were wasting their time, because Grant Shapps (Secretary of State at the time) would approve it anyway.
2. Views of highly qualified local residents have been treated as being worth less than those of the Applicant – and the companies they have employed. Note: the Examiners employed at the Inspectorate commented on the Applicant's attitude in this respect: in their response of 14 October 2025, the Inspectorate took the Applicant to task for the nature of their response about residual effects [REP4-037]. I quote "this comes across as being very dismissive of anyone's view but your own."
3. The Applicant has failed to consult groups of people who would be severely impacted by the proposals: not only have the submissions by the over 2,500 members of the Oxfordshire Ramblers Group been ignored, but as far as we can ascertain, the Applicant has also ignored other local groups of walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. When they did conduct a survey of people using footpaths, they only spent enough time to meet people covering short distances, and failed to ask them anything about their views of the proposed solar farm. (Note: of the 3 dates chosen, one clashed with the women's final at Wimbledon, and another was a bank holiday.
4. The Applicant has stated again and again that crucial decisions should be postponed until after consent. In contrast, the Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) have repeatedly complained about this attitude, and of even greater importance are the OHA's complaints that the Applicant pretended that agreement had been reached on various topics between themselves and the Applicant when, in fact, there had only been inconclusive discussions – see submissions on 7 June 2026. Therefore, it is our view that no proposal should be accepted from an Applicant that is so "economical with the truth".

5. Further, regarding decisions being postponed until after consent: in our submission to DESNZ in July of this year, West Oxfordshire Ramblers specifically quoted the view of a geotechnical engineer – an elected member of our committee – that leaving decisions about anything more than basic construction methodology posed serious risk. This view has been ignored.
6. As a local group of the national Ramblers organisation, we have been consistently frustrated in our attempt to judge the impact of the proposals (including the many modifications) on Public Rights of Way. This is because the consultants employed by the Applicant have lacked expertise in presenting maps;
 - a. Early versions of maps did not attempt to use the internationally recognised grid system
 - b. One of the documents produced in January 2025, that was supposed to show modifications to PRoW as well as to hedges etc., used drawings that were both so small and so poorly referenced that experienced members of the Oxfordshire county group of Ramblers were unable to work out the locations of those changes. A request submitted asking for better information received only an auto-receipt.
 - c. The more recent versions of the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) had 1: (version by RPS submitted in June 2026) included maps that had lines of different colours that overlapped, making them impossible to interpret, and appeared to create a situation where a cyclist or horse-rider using a bridleway would find themselves with no alternative but to turn back when they met a footpath reserved for those on foot; and 2. the additional pages in the latest version (September 2026 produced by ICENI) show no identification numbers for the PRoW at all!
7. In addition to their failure to understand how to present maps, consultants working for the applicant have lacked understanding of Public Health criteria. We have attempted at various points in the consultation process to point out that people have 5 senses, and all of those senses contribute to the enjoyment of walking through the countryside – this was to counter the impression given by the Applicant that the only sense that needed to be considered is sight – at one point referred to as ““high sensitivity visual receptors”! We have also commented that positive impacts on all 5 senses contribute to Public Health, and that the proposals risked having a negative impact on people living in an area which is rated highly on Public Health scales – see our submission to PINS in November 2025 - this has been ignored.

In view of all the above concerns, the members of West Oxfordshire Ramblers urge the Secretary of State NOT to give her consent to the proposal by the Applicant, on the grounds that a: they have consistently ignored the views of Oxfordshire residents (including those with a high level of relevant expertise) b: there are large omissions from the information provided, and c: that there are too

many instances of them wishing to postpone crucial decisions – some of which could have a serious impact on safety.