

CALUM MILLER MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Miatta Fahnbulleh MP
Secretary of State
Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero
55 Whitehall
London SW1A 2HP

3 October 2026

Dear Miatta,

I, along with others, submitted my objections to the Botley West Solar Plant proposal on 16 July 2026, in response to the Secretary of State's Request for Information.

I am very concerned that you have now extended the process again by changing the decision date to 10 November from 10 September, fully six months from the original date of 10 May. I said previously that I felt the Government was given the developer an extension to its homework. It now feels as though they have been given most of a school year to get it right. The Government should be running a process that puts faith in the Planning Inspectors who undertook the original inquiry, not flexing it to accommodate an ill-prepared application. I think this is improper and undermines public confidence in the statutory process.

If you do believe the Applicant has – in its submissions since 10 November – provided sufficient reassurance and adaptation of the proposal to give you confidence in it, I would ask you to consider whether this is still the same application originally submitted and scrutinised through the Statutory Examination process in 2025. If it is not, then it brings into question the integrity of a process that has been artificially extended by DESNZ.

I am also disappointed that the Applicant's latest response does not resolve the concerns I listed in my previous responses submitted on July 16 and February 12.

To restate my position: I strongly support the rapid expansion of renewable energy, including solar power. But supporting renewable energy does not mean accepting every proposal, whatever its scale, location or impact. Botley West would be one of the largest solar developments in the country. It would cover a vast area close to established communities and one of our most important heritage sites. The evidence supporting it must therefore be exceptionally robust.

Instead, too many important decisions remain unanswered or are being deferred until after consent has been granted.

The most immediate example is the impact on people living close to the development. The Secretary of State asked whether homes within 250 metres could be assessed individually. That work has not been completed. The Applicant now proposes that you accept an "outline" Residential Visual Amenity Plan which has only a 100m default buffer with "additional offsets up to 250m applied where needed". This goes backwards on the 250m recommended by Examiners and previously

shown on the Masterplan. That does not provide residents with the certainty they deserve. People should know before a decision is made how close panels and associated infrastructure could come to their homes and what effect the development could have on their daily lives.

The Oxfordshire Host Authorities have also said that affected homes should be assessed individually before consent, including through site visits. I agree. These are not minor details which can safely be settled later but are central to deciding whether the proposal is acceptable in the first place.

The further information also reinforces my concern that the scheme has been driven primarily by the availability of a grid connection and sufficiently large landholdings, rather than by a proper assessment of what this landscape and the surrounding communities can reasonably accommodate.

The Applicant argues that reducing the scheme further could make it financially unviable. That may be relevant to the developer, but it cannot be the deciding factor. If the changes necessary to make a development acceptable would also make it unviable, that may indicate that it is simply too large or in the wrong place.

There remains considerable uncertainty about the grid connection itself. National Grid's proposed Farmoor substation is still at an early stage and its indicative timetable suggests that connection may not be completed until late 2031. That appears difficult to reconcile with parts of the Applicant's case which assume the solar farm will be operational in 2029 or 2030.

Local communities should not be expected to endure years of construction and disruption without confidence that the project has a clear, deliverable and properly assessed route to the electricity network.

There also continue to be unresolved questions concerning flood risk, aviation safety, land rights and the ownership and financing of the scheme. For a project estimated to cost around £800 million and seeking extensive statutory powers, the public deserves much greater clarity about who will be responsible for delivering and operating it over its lifetime.

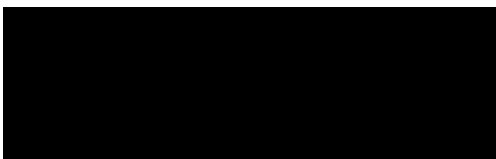
The central issue remains straightforward: **despite the additional information provided, too much remains uncertain and too many important decisions would be left until after consent.**

I therefore ask you to refuse the application in its current form.

If you believe that these problems can be addressed, the necessary assessments and agreements should be completed before any decision is made. The relevant local and statutory authorities must then be given a proper opportunity to consider them, alongside a fair further consultation with the communities affected.

The transition away from fossil fuels is urgent and necessary. But it will only retain public confidence if major renewable energy projects are well designed, transparent and developed with proper regard for the people and places expected to host them. The further information submitted has not persuaded me that this Botley West proposal meets that test.

Yours sincerely,



Calum Miller MP