

Simon Raywood

From: Mark Selinger [REDACTED]
Sent: 03 October 2026 14:42
To: Botley West Solar Farm
Subject: Botley West

3rd October 2026

The Rt Hon Miatta Fahnbulleh
Secretary of State for Energy Security and NetZero
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Dear Secretary of State,

I am sure that as the current SoS for ES & NZ you will claim responsibility for the planning fiasco lies with the previous incumbent. I am also sure that as the present SoS for ES & NZ you should simply refuse permission to PDVP and put the whole matter to bed - thereby saving the country money.

Furthermore I believe that you, or whoever you have detailed to read this letter, will realise that a large part of it has been written with the help of an artificial Intelligence.

However, this bit, I wrote.

The government has bent over backwards in an attempt to allow an inexperienced contractor to create a uniquely large solar power plant (including an unspecified three story 'connector') on green belt and prime farming land while completely ignoring the wishes of those who would be detrimentally affected by it.

The AI says

Re: Botley West Solar Farm proposal in Oxfordshire

I am writing to urge you to refuse consent for Photovolt Development Partners' proposed Botley West Solar Farm, or at the very least to require a substantially smaller and more appropriately located scheme.

I support the expansion of renewable energy and recognise the need to reduce carbon emissions. However, the proposed development is excessive in scale and would place an unacceptable burden on the Oxfordshire countryside. It would cover approximately 1,000 hectares—around 2,400 acres—with an estimated capacity of 840 MW. The scheme would extend across areas north of Woodstock, west of Kidlington and west of Botley, affecting a large and continuous rural landscape.

The principal concern is the loss of productive agricultural land. Land used for food production should not be treated as an unlimited resource, particularly when the United Kingdom is already vulnerable to disruptions in food supply. Removing such a large area from normal agricultural use for approximately four decades would reduce local food production and alter the character of the countryside for a significant period. The fact that the land may eventually be restored does not remove the disruption and uncertainty during the project's operational life.

The location is also inappropriate. This is not a small, unobtrusive installation but an industrial-scale development in and around the Oxford Green Belt. It would introduce millions of panels, fencing, access roads, substations, cabling and other infrastructure into an important rural setting. The visual and cumulative effects would be felt across an extensive area, including by residents, visitors and users of public footpaths. The proposal risks damaging the landscape and heritage setting that make this part of Oxfordshire distinctive.

The project's scale also raises questions about whether its benefits have been fairly weighed against its local impacts. A national need for clean energy does not mean that every renewable-energy project should be approved regardless of location. Solar generation should first be concentrated on rooftops, car parks, brownfield sites, commercial and industrial land, and other areas where panels would avoid the permanent or long-term industrialisation of open

countryside. Energy efficiency, offshore wind, battery storage and a properly planned mixture of smaller schemes should also form part of the assessment.

I am particularly concerned that the project's national significance means that the final decision rests with central government rather than the affected local authorities. Local communities should not be expected to bear the environmental and visual costs of a nationally important project without clear evidence that less damaging alternatives have been properly assessed. The proposal is being considered through the Development Consent Order process because of its exceptional size, rather than through an ordinary local planning application.

Before reaching a decision, I respectfully ask you to ensure that:

- the full loss of agricultural production is independently assessed;
- realistic alternatives—including rooftops, brownfield land, car parks, smaller distributed solar schemes and offshore wind—are properly compared;
- the effects on the Green Belt, landscape character, heritage assets, biodiversity, drainage and local traffic are given appropriate weight;
- the claimed electricity output is assessed against actual expected annual generation and periods of low solar availability;
- binding arrangements are put in place for decommissioning, land restoration and long-term ecological management; and
- the views of affected residents and local councils are treated as more than a procedural formality.
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A successful energy policy must deliver both decarbonisation and public confidence. Approving an exceptionally large solar installation in this sensitive location could undermine that confidence by creating the impression that rural communities and farmland are being sacrificed when less damaging options have not been exhausted.

I therefore ask you to refuse the Botley West proposal on the grounds that its scale, location and impacts are disproportionate, and that the case for placing such a development on this particular area of Oxfordshire has not been convincingly demonstrated.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Mark Selinger DM, FRCOG

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