

Fionn Irwin



4 October 2026

The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
c/o The Planning Inspectorate

Re: Botley West Solar Farm, Application for Development

Dear Secretary of State,

I write to express my strong support for the Botley West Solar Farm, and I respectfully urge you to grant development consent when you make your decision on 10 November.

The country urgently needs more energy, and it needs that energy to come from sources that are secure, affordable and clean. Recent years have shown how exposed households and businesses are when supply depends on volatile fossil fuel markets, and the cost of that exposure has been felt in higher bills and greater uncertainty. Large-scale renewable generation is the most credible route to reducing that vulnerability. Botley West is one of the largest solar projects proposed in the United Kingdom, and its capacity would make a meaningful contribution to national energy security and to the Government's clean power and net zero commitments. Targets of this kind can only be met if schemes of this scale are approved and built, and they will not be met if such projects are delayed or refused.

Every unit of electricity generated from the sun is a unit that does not have to be produced from imported gas. Solar generation is domestic, carries predictable costs once built, and is not subject to international price shocks. Approving Botley West would therefore strengthen the country's independence from fossil fuels and help to insulate consumers from the instability of global energy markets.

I would also draw your attention to the benefits the project offers to the land itself. Much of the site has been intensively farmed for many years. For the operational life of the solar farm, no pesticides would be used, giving the soil a sustained period of rest and recovery. This creates the conditions for improved soil health, greater biodiversity and stronger habitats for pollinators, birds and other wildlife. Solar development of this kind is also reversible, so the land can return to agricultural use in better condition than before.

These benefits extend beyond the site boundary. Reducing intensive cultivation should reduce agricultural run-off, including fertiliser, pesticide residues and sediment, which can pollute local rivers and waterways. Cleaner water would be a lasting benefit for the local environment and for the wildlife that depends on it.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of the Applicant, who has gone to considerable lengths to address the needs and concerns of the local area. Through consultation, design changes and mitigation proposals, they have engaged seriously with the community and sought to balance

the project's national importance with local interests. That level of proactive engagement reflects a project that has been developed responsibly and deserves recognition.

In summary, Botley West offers clean, secure and home-grown energy, an opportunity for intensively farmed land to recover, and benefits for local waterways, all delivered by an Applicant that has worked hard to meet local concerns. The national need is clear and the benefits are substantial. I respectfully ask that you grant development consent.

Yours faithfully,

Fionn Irwin