

FURTHER SUBMISSION REGARDING BOTLEY WEST SOLAR FARM PROJECT
From C H Atherstone (Interested Party No [REDACTED], 4 October 2026

Dear Secretary of State

As you no doubt know, from numerous submissions made to the Planning Inspectorate over the past two years, the promoters of this project have from the outset shown little regard for the questions, misgivings and objections raised by interested parties, nor have they shown inclination to respond with due respect to those who would be impacted if the project goes ahead. Thus it was with dismay that we learned that they had been given yet another extension of time to improve their submission, implying that the authorities were willing them to succeed, despite so many negative aspects of the scheme.

It is good to see that the promoters have at last accepted that some boundaries between solar panel arrays and residential properties should be pushed back. However, they have ignored the recommendation that buffer zones should be a minimum 250 meters wide, as recommended by the Examiners, and have provided for only a 100 metre minimum, though allowing for some reconsideration once the project has been given the go-ahead. But who would adjudicate any such reconsideration, and to whom might residents appeal if they were unhappy with an outcome? The promoters assert that trees planted to filter views of structures will mature within 15 years, but what would obscure structures in the meantime? As mentioned in one of my earlier submissions, the methodology used by the promoters to decide whether views from properties would be impacted by solar panels or ancillary structures has been questionable.

Where it is agreed that previously planned solar panels should be withdrawn from some fields or parts of fields, the red-line boundary of the project should be contracted, to allow those fields to remain outside and available for farming.

Contrary to assertions made by the promoters, there can be no doubt that villages and communities surrounded by vast fields of solar panels would be dominated by those installations.

The risk of flooding in Cassington, potentially caused by run-off from solar panels on the hill above the village, has not been adequately addressed.

It should be noted that reductions in the scheme fall short of reductions required by the Oxfordshire Host Authorities. It is hoped that the judgments of the OHA will be given due weight, considering the official status of these bodies and their standing as instruments of local elected government.

No satisfactory promises have been made by the promoters to establish a reasonable fund for the benefit of communities affected by such a project. The suggestion that some unwanted pockets of land within the project boundaries might be set aside for residents to grow vegetables was laughable.

As has been pointed out by others, too many important questions remain unanswered by the proposers, leaving them too much freedom to make significant decisions after development has been granted and beyond public scrutiny or challenge.

As indicated earlier, I support the notion of generating electricity from solar and wind power, and would be happy to support a smaller installation in this area than the one here proposed - but I firmly believe that this present scheme is far too big for this location; the need for it has not been proven; it would go against Green Belt and agricultural provisions; and it would have a serious detrimental effect on local communities. I am left believing that motivation for the scheme has been prompted by the prospect of a financial windfall for the developers.

I respectfully request the Secretary of State to refuse the granting of permission for this application.

Yours faithfully
C H Atherstone