

EN010168 – Lime Down Solar Project

Written Representation on behalf of Whatley Manor Hotel & Spa

Interested Party Number: [REDACTED]

Background and Site Context

Whatley Manor is a long-established luxury hotel operating within a highly sensitive rural landscape. We have demonstrated a strong and measurable commitment to sustainability, holding Silver Certification with EarthCheck since 2019.

Our guests—99% of whom arrive by car due to the absence of viable public transport—choose Whatley Manor specifically for its tranquillity, landscape quality and rural seclusion. The hotel also serves local residents and spa members who similarly rely on private vehicle access. The proposed development threatens the very qualities that underpin our business model and the wider visitor economy.

Planning Concerns: Lime Down Project

Traffic and Highway Impacts

The rural road network surrounding the site is wholly unsuited to a project of this magnitude. The anticipated construction traffic would:

- Overwhelm narrow country lanes already operating at capacity.
- Create severe congestion and unpredictable journey times for guests, staff and suppliers.
- Undermine the hotel's viability by deterring visitors who expect reliable access and a stress-free rural experience.
- Impede staff recruitment and retention due to extended and unreliable commuting conditions.
- Increase operational costs through delayed deliveries and service disruptions.
- Cause significant surface degradation, resulting in muddy, hazardous conditions during wet periods.

The absence of appropriate infrastructure is a fundamental flaw in the proposal and raises serious questions about the suitability of the chosen location.

Noise and Disturbance

The hotel sits within a quiet valley where sound travels easily across the landscape. Construction on elevated land opposite the hotel would result in unavoidable and intrusive noise impacts.

We anticipate:

- Significant disruption to guest accommodation, spa facilities and outdoor areas marketed specifically for rest and recuperation.
- Disturbance to wildlife and the ecological value of our grounds.
- Dust deposition across the estate, increasing operational burdens and diminishing guest experience.
- Reputational damage arising from a compromised environment, with guests likely to seek alternative destinations.

These impacts are incompatible with the operation of a luxury hospitality business and would cause long-term harm to our brand and economic sustainability.

Impact on Landscape Character and Hotel Setting

The proposed development would fundamentally alter the character of the surrounding countryside. The introduction of industrial-scale solar infrastructure in close proximity to Whatley Manor would:

- Replace a pastoral landscape with an industrialised visual environment.
- Degrade views that form a core part of our guest experience.
- Undermine the sense of tranquillity and rural authenticity that defines both our brand and the wider Cotswolds identity.

For a destination whose value is intrinsically tied to landscape quality, these impacts are severe and unacceptable.

Impact on Enjoyment of the Local Area

Whatley Manor actively promotes walking and cycling routes that rely on the area's rural charm and safety. The project would:

- Erode the authenticity of these routes through construction activity, fencing and altered views.
- Increase traffic on narrow lanes, creating unsafe conditions for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

- Pose risks to the river running through our property, a key environmental and amenity asset.
- Damage the wider Cotswolds tourism economy, which depends heavily on the preservation of landscape character and rural tranquillity.

The cumulative effect would be a significant reduction in the attractiveness of the area for visitors.

Brand Alignment and Sustainability Perception

Although we support renewable energy, the proposed development raises serious concerns regarding sustainability credibility and brand coherence:

- The juxtaposition of a vast industrial energy installation with a destination marketed as an “unspoilt countryside escape” is fundamentally incompatible.
- Guests would struggle to reconcile our positioning as a tranquil retreat with the presence of one of the UK’s largest solar farms on our doorstep.
- The loss of surrounding farmland would directly undermine our ability to source hyper-local produce, a cornerstone of our culinary identity.
- There is no evidence that the project has been assessed against the UN Sustainable Development Goals, several of which—SDG 8, SDG 11 and SDG 15—appear to be in direct conflict with the proposal.
- Whatley Manor has reduced its Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 98% in just five years. By contrast, the proposed development is understood to have a carbon payback period exceeding 50 years, raising serious questions about its true climate benefit and proportionality.