

Representing the Sherston Boule Festival and Tournament Committee, I would like to strongly object to the Lime Down Solar Park. The annual festival, celebrating its 40th year, is one of the largest and oldest Pétanque competitions in the country and is of significant cultural, social, and economic importance to the local communities.

The Sherston Boule Festival attracts visitors from across the UK and Europe. Its appeal is rooted in the "tranquil, quintessential Cotswold character" of the village. The proposal to surround Sherston with 4.5-metre-high solar arrays and security fencing will transform the approach to the village into an industrial corridor. Visitors come for the historic, open-field setting. Replacing 2,000 acres of rolling Wiltshire countryside with "an ocean of glass and steel" will permanently damage the village's reputation as a tourist destination, leading to a decline in festival attendance and associated revenue for local pubs, B&Bs, shops and cafes. Furthermore, the festival relies on the village's narrow rural road network for the safe arrival of hundreds of attendees and equipment. The construction phase anticipates over 20,000 HGV movements. The narrow lanes surrounding Sherston are already ill-equipped for this volume and the timing of the Tournament in July conflicts with the peak construction season. Heavy plant machinery and road closures on key access routes (like the B4040 and lanes toward Malmesbury) would make hosting a large-scale public event logistically impossible and potentially unsafe. Many of the festival-goers utilize the surrounding Public Rights of Way (PRoW) during the festival weekend. Encasing these historic paths in 3-metre security fencing destroys the "sense of place" that defines the Sherston experience.

The Boule Festival is a non-profit, volunteer-led event that fosters community cohesion. The overwhelming local opposition (99% of representations) highlights a community under immense stress. The long-term "industrial overshadowing" of the village threatens the very community spirit required to organize and sustain such a complex annual festival. A festival that is a major fundraiser, annually donating around £10,000, to local charities, community groups and village infrastructure. Any project that reduces the attractiveness of the village or disrupts the festival's operation directly depletes the "Social Value" of the area.