

# Begbroke Parish Council

Botley West Solar Farm  
FREEPOST BWSF

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Your ref:

16 December 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **Re: Botley West Solar Farm – Official Objection from Begbroke parish council.**

*I am writing on behalf of Begbroke parish council regarding the above proposals. At our parish council meeting on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, they were discussed. The committee were unanimous in voting against your plans.*

I list below bullet point details, with little elaboration, of our objections and comments

- Green belt'
- Ruins a beautiful rural landscape that has views from Spring Hill towards neighbouring villages and beyond.
- Agricultural land – even Merton's tenant farmer has signs saying "These fields produce your food"
- Undemocratic – avoiding local planning by promoting as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and removed from direct control by the three affected District Councils (West Oxfordshire, Cherwell, and Vale of White Horse).
- None of the responses during any community consultation is likely to be made publicly available, so that we will not be able to judge the strength of feeling for or against Botley West Solar Farm.
- Planning Inspectors may be chosen who have little or no knowledge of the local situation because their job is only to decide if due legal process has been followed.
- If the developers have ticked all the relevant NSIP legal boxes, the Inspector is obliged to approve the application whether it is a good idea, and whether it is appropriate in the landscape where it will be built
- Claims of increasing biodiversity are rubbish
- On flight paths for Airplanes
- Does not account for housing developments already agreed on green belt surrounding Begbroke
- None on Blenheim Estate – why?

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- None on recent new housing built by Blenheim and Pye
- Insist panels are put on new developments to reduce needs elsewhere
- Water run off may be increase – leading to increased flooding and overflowing ditches.
- Promoted for financial gain as more £/acre than food production.
- Residents are against
- Why this area when there are other more suitable locations in the country?
- Electricity Input to National Grid is not limited to a location such as Botley
- Not evaluated compared other generation means
- Why not other means of generation such as Biofuels?
- Encourages weed growth – not pasture.
- The size is overwhelming
- Already others in the area
- We need to reduce energy consumption by more insulation and reduction in waste such as air curtains in shops.
- The PM has stated several times that solar panels should not be sited on agricultural fields.
- Some of the fields are used for Biofuels so that will be lost along with the flexibility to grow food for human consumption one of the things the government said we need to increase food production and reduce our reliance on imported food.
- Some productive farmland is in Cat. 3b and some of it around us 3a
- Green belt - further loss which at first sight seems to be a greater land area in the county as all the proposed housing.
- This proposal will turn productive agricultural landscape into a barren one which will not support the current eco systems.
- These proposals will require a change of use to be approved - what guarantees are given that it will be withdrawn / revert after a given time?
- What is the design of the solar panel support frames? (There are multiple designs available to allow continued partial agricultural use)
- Sheep - do not need them - being encouraged to eat less meat / vegan / vegetarian unprofitable especially at shearing time.
- Increased bio-diversity - is not proven and very unlikely - no consideration given to larger animals such as deer who run free - animals naturally avoid tracks and pathways used by humans and dogs.
- No consideration appears to have been given to the existing eco systems supporting other species such as Red Kite, Owls, birds of prey, hares and the many insects found on the land.
- Insects are showing a 64% reduction in numbers since 2004 (Kent Wildlife Trust and Buglife)
- Other means of generation - Wind farms – could be considered
- Solar panels are inefficient compared with other means of generation and have a high environmental impact if the process of mining / processing raw materials and manufacture are included.
- Other locations - use of railway embankments, use of decommissioned coal fired generation sites for other means of generation. For example, Wind farms. Hydro-

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electric on the Thames/other local rivers/Blenheim Lake/Central reservations on dual carriageways

- Aircraft flight path - in the event of accident, high risk of fatality - Electricity and aviation fuel do not mix - also rigid structures on the ground rather than grass and crops.
- How will the hedges proposed be maintained or are they just going to be left to grow wild - the latter method does not work as paths become overgrown and damp/boggy/unusable.
- Given that there is still major conflict between Ukraine and Russia which is likely to escalate further, the loss of productive agricultural land does not appear to be in the national interest. you cannot eat electricity.
- Construction of this facility is unlikely to create local employment.
- The de facto ban on solar farms will be continued by the government, the environment secretary has signalled.
- Thérèse Coffey, fresh from her visit to Cop27, suggested to parliament that she would be continuing with policy plans initiated under the former prime minister Liz Truss, which would block solar power from most farmland.
- However, with a government that has continual “U” turns, there is no certainty on anything.
- Under Truss, Defra officials were looking at how to redefine “best and most versatile” land (BMV), which is earmarked for farming, to include the middling-to-low category 3b. Land is graded from 1 to 5, and currently BMV includes grades 1 to 3a. Planning guidance says that development on BMV land should be avoided, although planning authorities may take other considerations into account. This would mean 60% of all agricultural land would be off-limits to solar farms.

**We look forward to you abandoning this misguided project.**

Yours faithfully

Jeffrey Wright - Clerk.