

## **Kidlington Parish Council response to the initial proposals by Botley West Solar Farm (BWSF)**

Kidlington Parish Council has adopted a climate emergency statement, and acknowledges that there is a need for alternative renewable energy to avoid the use of fossil fuels; however the council is opposed to the proposals by BWSF on the scale proposed and in the location identified by the proposers. By 2050 the area around Oxford will be heavily developed largely in existing green belt. The BWSF will cover further parts of the green belt in the same area, which will change the landscape substantially, decreasing the attractiveness of the areas to live and work in, and have significant impact on the tourist industry. We believe there are other ways to create renewable energy and we would support the approach taken by the CPRE: a copy of their letter is contained in the link below

[www.cpreoxon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Botley-West-consultation\\_CPPE-Oxfordshire-response\\_Final\\_Dec2022.pdf](http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Botley-West-consultation_CPPE-Oxfordshire-response_Final_Dec2022.pdf)

The Initial proposals are at an early stage and we reserve our right to make further comment when further details emerge. We understand that the proposals are to be decided by a consent order by the secretary of state, as this is classed as a Nation Strategic Infrastructure Project. It is unclear at this stage how the council will be able to influence and make recommendations to the Secretary of State

Some key points to support our objection at this stage are as follows:

1. Botley West Solar Farm (BWSF) would be the biggest Solar Farm in Europe (currently the eleventh biggest in the world), and would be the biggest solar farm anywhere globally built on farmland.
2. The Green Belt is for leisure, health and landscape views, not for solar factories. More than three-quarters of BWSF falls within Oxford's Green Belt, occupying more land within 2kms of the city than all of the proposed new houses being built there.
3. There is a food emergency as well as a climate emergency. Britain currently imports more than half of the food we eat. We should not use any productive farmland for solar farms when there are 250,000 hectares of unused, south-facing commercial roofs in the UK.
4. Solar Farms are a very inefficient way of generating green energy. In the UK, solar panels produce their maximum output for fewer than three hours each day, and none at all during the night. Offshore wind turbines produce maximum power for at least four times longer each day, including during the night-time.
5. The developers claim that Botley West will provide sufficient power to meet the electricity needs of 330,000 homes. But this applies only to the sunniest day of the year, not to the other 364 days. On average, throughout the year, only 220,000 homes will be provided with Botley West's solar power, which goes straight into the National Grid supply to the entire country, not just to Oxfordshire.
6. There are no evident direct benefits for local residents; alternatives can easily be located elsewhere.
7. Solar farms are usually established for 30 or more years, but decommissioning costs can be twice as large as original installation costs. Solar farms frequently change ownership during their lifetime and there is no guarantee that future owners will pay for decommissioning.
8. Solar panels can occasionally catch fire spontaneously. Given the very large number of panels involved, Botley West presents a 10 sq. km fire hazard, in many places without obvious access for fire control measures.

9. Many claims are made for increased biodiversity within solar farms. The reality is different. Toxic chemicals leak slowly from commercial panels and permanently pollute the soil. Run-off from the panels causes gully erosion of the soil and possible flooding of nearby properties.
10. Botley West would be situated between Oxford city and the Blenheim Palace World Heritage site, sits on the border of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Cotswolds), is overlooked by ancient woodlands and the world class Site of Special Scientific Interest, Wytham Woods, and is consequently an obvious tourist destination. Botley West would occupy a total of 1400 hectares, an area greater than Heathrow Airport. Who wants to visit Heathrow Airport in the Cotswolds?
11. Property values are decreased by between 0% and 30% when utility-scale solar farms are built nearby. No Solar Farm of this size has ever been built anywhere on earth so close to major human settlements. The impact is greater the larger the solar farm.

We are grateful to Professor David Rogers for developing these points.

The impact of the proposed housing development together with the BWSF are shown on the maps below. The first map shows the impact on the wider Oxford area and the second one shows the impact on the Kidlington area.

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