

# Comment for planning application 22/01682/F

<b>Application Number</b>	22/01682/F
<b>Location</b>	Land North Of Manor Farm Noke
<b>Proposal</b>	Development of a ground mounted solar farm incorporating the installation of solar PV panels, associated infrastructure and access, as well as landscape planting and designated ecological enhancement areas.
<b>Case Officer</b>	James Kirkham
<b>Organisation Name</b>	David de Mestre
<b>Address</b>	Little Warren, Street Through Noke, Noke, Oxford, OX3 9TT
<b>Type of Comment</b>	Objection
<b>Type</b>	neighbour
<b>Comments</b>	<p>Planning application 22/01682/F Respondents - David, Kate, Emily and George de Mestre Sent 14/07/22</p> <p>My family moved to Noke in the 1940's, my children are now the 4th generation to be lucky enough to live here. The irony is not lost on us that this wonderful space could be lost to environmental changes if we do not make difficult choices. I have long supported and invested in green initiatives, bought into environmentally sound services/products, voted and even protested for environmental changes so this proposed development has really challenged my personal feelings but I cannot support this application.</p> <p>I am dismayed at the lack of a national government plan for renewables and applaud CDC's policy to encourage renewables but this particular project is full of 'unacceptable adverse effects'. The supporting documents for the application are vast and very comprehensive but contain numerous misleading statements and over exaggerations. The duty of CDC to meet ambitious net zero targets should not be at the expense of so much. I implore you to protect this area from a commercial enterprise that is driven by profit at the expense of the landscape and community whilst masking irreparable damage with glossy brochures and misleading figures.</p> <p>Listed below are the areas that are of most concern to me below. I hope that these key points will be enough to demonstrate that this site is just not appropriate.</p> <p>Visual impacts on local landscapes - The applicant says that the effects on this landscape will be 'minor' but knowing the area very well I strongly disagree. I would argue that the effects will be damaging to the sense of the area and completely detract from the calm green space that forms part of the historic Oxfordshire way. This site sits at a much lower elevation than the surrounding area making it highly visible from the surrounding villages, The Oxfordshire way and Cycle routes. From multiple viewing points it will dominate what is currently unindustrialised, untouched Greenbelt. A well used footpath will have all views completely obscured (despite the applicants attempts to demonstrate otherwise) and the permissive footpath proposed is through an area that becomes very wet in winter. I have tried to visit other solar sites in the area and most are situated in the immediate proximity to industrial enterprises, for example the Yarnton site is next to a skip processing plant and SSE substation and offices. Others are next to major roads or located on flat land and invisible. A similar site on the edge of the oxford ring road was turned down due to 'industrialisation of the Green belt' and this site sat within sight of an electricity substation and dual carriageway! I implore you to take the time to visit Noke if passing or ask one of your colleagues who have attended village meetings (Cllr's Angus Patrick, Gemma Coton, Callum Miller) and see the fantastic uninterrupted views, to argue that these will only be minorly effected is false. This will not only effect residents but the thousands of visitors to the RSPB reserve, detracting from the wildness and spoiling what is currently a wonderful calm space.</p> <p>NB please take the time to view drone footage uploaded to Youtube (<a href="https://youtu.be/atKd8X7VIGM">https://youtu.be/atKd8X7VIGM</a>), shot on 13/7/22. This gives a 360 degree view of the area and the footage starts and ends viewing the proposed site. This further demonstrates the nonindustrial nature of landscape and proximity to reserve and SSI.</p> <p>Landscape and biodiversity including designations, protected habitats and species, and Conservation Target Areas - The site is in the immediate proximity to SSI's, habitats for protected species and the wonderful Otmoor bird reserve. Otmoor is huge success story seeing endangered species returning and breeding for the first time in centuries. Its</p>

supported by the surrounding Green belt as an area of unbroken Greenbelt forming the Otmoor basin. We walk this site and frequently and view brown hares, deer, English partridge, numerous birds of prey, and my children find grass snakes and newts frequently (a building site on adjoining land in Noke recently shut down for 8 weeks after finding more than 100 newts in a half acre plot).

The plans try to mitigate this by saying that they are adding a nature reserve but this site is already an untouched wild habitat and has been so for as long as I can remember. This is not adding habitat and biodiversity, nor does the tiny triangular area to the North East of the site, this area floods in winter and is never farmed because of this. The planting proposed inside the area where panels will be situated will be heavily grazed and so does not add biodiversity. The proposed wild flower and turtle dove grazing areas will be extremely hard to establish and without management will be swallowed up by grass within a few years.

The historic environment including designated and non designated assets - The archaeological report states that the site needs 'extensive site research' and I cannot stress this enough. During lockdown my 5 yr old son found bones on the surface to the North of the site that have been identified by Dr Hilary Ketchum at the Natural History museum as 150 million year old Ichthyosaur bones. He has a box full of pieces of Roman pottery, fossilised clams as large as a fist and detectorists have found many coins and artifacts. If a 5 year old is discovering what Dr Ketchum described as a 'once in a lifetime find' what could a qualified team discover. This land will be lost forever once the panels are installed as although the term is 30yrs it seems inconceivable that it will not be reused or designated as brownfield and developed in the future.

The land in the application is listed as moderate quality but this is misleading. The surveys appear to have taken into account the quality of land to the east and west of the site that were originally included in first draft. These outlying fields are poorer quality due to flooding and shallower topsoil but support healthy crops year on year. The best quality land is the area being proposed to be built on and is more 3a than 3b. I feel the survey took into account the outer fields to downgrade the site as a whole. The tenant farmers are in a difficult position, not wanting to lose the other 200+ acres not included in application or the land as a whole if application is rejected. If this land is unproductive (which it is visibly not) why would they wish to continue farming it? It has healthy wheat, bean and Linseed crops on it this year and they use part of these in a biomass boiler. This land is currently providing vital food security and renewable energy initiatives (linseed oil also used to produce greener fuels). The hedgerows are sympathetically managed, providing great native habitat despite the application stating they are intensively managed.

There are multiple sites along the same power lines that albeit smaller and therefore ultimately less profitable would be more appropriate for solar installations. Brown field sites like the disused oil depot outside islip, the huge Bicester heritage site (just 100m away from an existing substation), the fields adjacent to A34 and Bicester railway line to name just a few. I understand the complexity in juggling costs and viability with a need for renewables but the lack of national policy should not give way to commercial profitability and personal gain at the expense of our Greenbelt.

The duty of CDC to meet ambitious net zero targets should not be at the expense of so much. I implore you to protect this area from a commercial enterprise that is driven by profit at the expense of the landscape, wildlife and local community.

**Received Date**

14/07/2022 23:03:36

**Attachments**