

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

The British Horse Society

Email enquiry@bhs.org.uk

Abbey Park,

Website www.bhs.org.uk

Stareton,

Tel 02476 840500

Kenilworth,

Fax 02476 840501

Bringing Horses and People Together

Warwickshire CV8 2XZ

The logo for The British Horse Society, featuring the text "The British Horse Society" in white serif font on a dark red square background.

14 July 2022

Planning & Development
Development Management
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
BANBURY
OX15 4AA

FAO James Kirkham, Case officer

Dear Mr Kirkham,

Application no 22/01682/F: Ground mounted solar farm, Land North of Manor Farm, Noke

Thank you for consulting the British Horse Society (BHS) about this application. Our response is focused on the impacts that this proposed development would have on equestrians and the horses that are kept and ridden on the bridleways and roads within the area local to this development.

The plans refer to Fencott & Murcott Bridleway 16 (ref 209/16/10) which runs adjacent to the easternmost boundary of the development site. Other bridleways within the immediate locality include:

- Noke Bridleway 309/8, which runs eastwards from the road into Noke village centre at St Giles Church to Rectory Farm then south to rejoin the road at Rectory Cottage
- Noke Bridleways 309/7 and 309/13 (Prattle Lane), which connect BW209/16 through the eastern end of Noke village and across the B4027 to the C-class road into Woodeaton

There are more than 700 horses registered to addresses in the OX5 postcode district¹, many of them kept within the immediate area around Otmoor, Noke, Islip and Oddington (where there is a livery yard at Logg Farm, some 300 metres from the proposed development). The minor roads in this part of Oxfordshire are an essential part of the local horse-riding network, providing links between bridleways and other off-road access. Horse riders and carriage drivers are legal road users ranked alongside cyclists and immediately below pedestrians in the new Highway Code hierarchy of vulnerability. They *have* to use roads (though they would much rather not) and to cross them in order to gain access to off-road routes.

The BHS is therefore particularly concerned about the safety of riders using the local road network during the construction of this proposed solar farm, which according to the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will involve more than 900 additional HGV movements over a 12-week period along the B4027 – a busy road which is already problematic for horse riders who must traverse and/or cross it to gain access to quieter roads and bridleways.

¹ Equine passport data from Defra, 1 April 2021

There are growing concerns about the speed and volume of traffic on these rural roads. The BHS keeps a record of road incidents involving horses; in Oxfordshire **from November 2010 to December 2021** there were 110 road incidents reported, involving

- 7 horse fatalities
- 15 horses injured
- 2 human fatalities
- 20 humans injured

In 2021 alone, in Oxfordshire there were 55 road incidents reported, which included

- 2 horse fatalities
- 2 horses injured
- 3 humans injured

While the BHS recognise that this increase in vehicle movements would be for a limited period only, we remain extremely concerned about the impact of additional HGV movements on the safety of local horse riders during the projected 3-month construction period.

If this application is to be approved, we request a Condition for the submission of a Construction Management Plan that includes a specific section on awareness of equestrian users on the adjoining road network and appropriate measures to ensure all drivers are educated on safe interactions. This should include reference to the **Highway Code 2022 Road users requiring extra care (sections 204 to 225)**, with specific reference to **section 215**, namely:

“215

***Horse riders and horse-drawn vehicles.** Be particularly careful of horse riders and horse-drawn vehicles especially when approaching, overtaking, passing or moving away. Always pass wide and slowly. When you see a horse on a road, you should slow down to a maximum of 10 mph. Be patient, do not sound your horn or rev your engine. When safe to do so, pass wide and slow, allowing at least 2 metres of space.*

Feral or semi feral ponies found in areas such as the New Forest, Exmoor and Dartmoor require the same consideration as ridden horses when approaching or passing.

Horse riders are often children, so take extra care and remember riders may ride in double file when escorting a young or inexperienced horse or rider. Look out for horse riders' and horse drivers' signals and heed a request to slow down or stop. Take great care and treat all horses as a potential hazard; they can be unpredictable, despite the efforts of their rider/driver. Remember there are three brains at work when you pass a horse; the rider's, the driver's and the horse's. Do not forget horses are flight animals and can move incredibly quickly if startled.”

I will be happy to discuss any of these points with the Authority or the applicant, if needed.

Yours sincerely,



Petronella Natrass, MSc, MIPROW
Access Field Officer (BHS South Region)

petronella.natrass@bhs.org.uk / access@bhs.org.uk /