

Lynne Baldwin

From: Planning
Sent: 18 July 2022 16:46
To: DC Support
Subject: FW: Planning Application - 22/01682/F

From: Leslie Scott <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 18 July 2022 16:45
To: Planning <Planning@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>
Subject: Planning Application - 22/01682/F

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FAO:
Mr James Kirkham
Principal Planning Officer
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
White Post Road
Bodicote
Banbury
OX15 4AA

From:
Leslie Scott
Upper Woods Farm
Noke
OX3 9TF

REF: Planning Application - 22/01682/F

Dear Mr Kirkam,

I write to request you refuse planning consent for this proposed, highly inappropriate development of 70+ acres of Otmoor.

In 1997, Otmoor was recognised of such great national conservation value that a nature reserve was established at its heart. The reserve, now 1,000 acres, is managed by the RSPB. Backed by local and national support, this charity has spent the last 25 years working to return Otmoor to the wetland wilderness it was up until this common land was alienated, enclosed and drained 200 years ago.

This project to restore and protect Oxfordshire's ancient moorland is a great success – birds, and nature lovers now flock to the site. I have seen this for myself having co-owned and lived on a 100 acre farm (predominantly pasture, trees and hedgerows) on the edge of the reserve since 1999.

But it is early days, and it is still very much a work in progress.

And, the simple truth is that - apart from the blindingly obvious, devastating visual impact of installing 47,000 x 3m solar panels abutting this nature reserve - no one knows precisely what impact this industrial size development (electricity factory) would have on this still fragile nature reserve, with its growing population of wild birds and other wildlife – certainly NOT the applicants.

This country faces huge problems due to the historic lack of action to mitigate the effects of climate change. This is why I applaud CDC's Climate Action Framework with its commitment to increase the district's solar energy production by a factor of 5, by 2030. But I do not think CDC should be panicked into throwing other equally key aspirations to the wind – eg the vital importance of preserving Oxfordshire's green spaces and improving access to them. Such growth must be strategically planned and phased, and the electricity grid in Oxfordshire must be developed in a way that accommodates this planned growth.

If there has been a follow-up to the Framework and a detailed strategic plan now exist, it doesn't seem to be in the public domain. It is therefore impossible to tell how many, if any, sites for solar energy generation have been identified for development within Cherwell district to ensure CDC will reach its ambitious target. And it is impossible for anyone (public, planners, developers et al) to judge the significance or otherwise of the output from this electricity factory – without being able to view this in the context of a strategic plan.

Of great concern is that this lack of a transparent plan leaves the county's vital, green and rural spaces vulnerable to exploitation by 'greenwashing', opportunistic, private landowners – as in this case.

The applicant may well own a parcel of agricultural land within Otmoor, but this should not entitle him, or anyone else, to profit at the expense of either the local communities of Otmoor, or the residents of Oxfordshire and beyond.

The Otmoor basin may no longer be the wetland held in common for the villagers of the 'seven towns' that surround it - to graze, fish, shoot wildfowl or wonder at will - but, as with all green space, it is an incredibly valuable common asset. And all of us will be immeasurably poorer if this industrial structure is permitted to encroach upon this deeply rural, but easily accessible, sphere of Oxfordshire countryside.

Again, I entreat you to refuse planning permission.

With thank you for your attention and kind regards

Leslie Scott

Founder/Director, **Oxford Games Ltd**

Co-Owner, **Upper Woods Farm, Noke**

Trustee, **Mpala Wildlife Foundation (50,000 acre Wildlife Reserve, Kenya)**

Senior Associate, **Pembroke College, Oxford**

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