

Comment for planning application 22/01682/F

Application Number	22/01682/F
Location	Land North Of Manor Farm Noke
Proposal	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.
Case Officer	James Kirkham
Organisation Name	Mr & Mrs Unwin
Address	Brookfurlong Farmhouse, Bletchington Road, Islip, Kidlington, OX5 2TJ
Type of Comment	Objection
Type	neighbour
Comments	<p>The application should be refused on one or more of the following grounds:</p> <p>Landscape Character The proposed solar farm will be clearly visible from many places and will impact on views in and around Islip, Oddington, Fencott, Murcott and Charlton-On-Otmoor. It may also be visible from further away, eg from Beckley and Brill (both of which can be seen from the site).</p> <p>The panels will be 2.8 metres high and would be visible from the Oxfordshire Way between Islip and Noke and from the Oxfordshire Way approaching Islip from the north (the site is clearly visible from the footbridge where the Oxfordshire way crosses the Bicester to Oxford railway line).</p> <p>The site is clearly visible from the Oddington Road as you approach Islip as part of it lies on a north facing slope and it would be clearly visible from the higher portions of the Wheatley Road as you leave Islip. The proposal would thus be a significant visual intrusion on an otherwise unspoilt open panorama.</p> <p>Screening: We question whether the proposed hedging/screening/trees intended to block the panels from view would be effective. Such screening is notoriously poorly installed and maintained (and usually ineffective in winter) and it would take at least 15 years for the proposed hedgerows/trees to grow to a sufficient height to shield part of the site. In any case, due to the location and lie of the land, the panels will always be visible from the surrounding higher land (and in particular from along the Oxfordshire Way). No amount of screening will thus mitigate the significant visual intrusion the proposal would create.</p> <p>Residential Amenity Many residents of Islip, Noke and Oddington regularly enjoy country walks along footpaths in and around the area of the site, in particular the footpath from Islip to Noke and the footpath from Noke to Logg Farm. The industrialisation and visual intrusion of such a large solar farm would result in a significant adverse effect on such enjoyment (and hence both the mental and physical health of the local population).</p> <p>Green Belt This area of open countryside is protected by Green Belt status. The solar farm would result in industrialisation of the Green Belt and would occupy much of the space between the neighbouring villages of Noke, Islip and Oddington - exactly what the Green Belt is supposed to protect.</p> <p>Listed Buildings The solar farm would be visible from St Andrews church in Oddington, grade 2 listed Rectory Farm House, grade 2 listed Logg Farm House and grade 2 listed Brookfurlong Farmhouse (irrespective of the proposed screening).</p> <p>Quality of Land Contrary to the application, it is noted that local farmers advise (on the basis of their experience) that the area is high yielding productive farmland and has been used to grow successfully wheat, barley, oilseed rape and beans. Their experience should carry more</p>

weight than reports prepared for the developer. The farmers' view is that the land is likely to be classed as grade 3a farmland. Government policy is to avoid using land of grade 1, 2 or 3a for solar farms (even more so now with the increased need for food security).

While there is a great need for clean energy from solar panels, there are many other sites that would be more appropriate and much less visually intrusive. There are brown field sites along the M40 and A34, and ex-MOD land within the Cherwell District, where solar panels could be installed in an unobtrusive way; as well as numerous roofs on the many new housing and commercial developments in and around Bicester. And there is already an 80 acre, 19MW solar park (Ray Valley Solar) at Arncott. There is therefore no need to locate a large and visually intrusive solar farm in such an open area of the Oxfordshire countryside. It is an inappropriate location made worse by the need for a panel height of 2.8 metres to compensate for a north facing slope - and screening would not prevent it being visible from much of the surrounding area. I sincerely hope that the application will be rejected.

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Attachments