



Otmoor Riding Group,  
Bridge House,  
Horton Hill,  
Horton-cum-Studley,  
OX33 1AS.  
21/07/22

**Objections to Planning Application Reference: 22/01682/F**  
**Proposed Solar Farm at Manor Farm, Noke**

Otmoor Riding Group is a group of horse riders who live and ride in the Otmoor area and beyond. Members of Otmoor Riding Group object to the proposed solar farm at Manor Farm, Noke, for a number of reasons.

Regarding equestrian issues, the proposed solar farm site directly impacts two important bridlevays. It is adjacent to the key Otmoor perimeter bridlevay between Oddington and Noke (Fencott & Murcott bridlevay 16) and also Noke bridlevay 8. During construction, the danger to riders trying to use the bridlevays will be considerable due to the noise and activity on the site and the movement of construction traffic. Nervous and inexperienced horses find it frightening passing building work at a single house, let alone trying to negotiate passing 100+ acres of construction work. Frightened horses may bolt and throw their riders leading to serious accidents and injury to them and other users of the path. In the long term, the reflective nature of the panels and the appearance of the site, with high fencing, cameras, panels and the related infrastructure, will continue to be frightening to horses and a danger to their riders.

The bridlevays and lanes around Noke are particularly vital for local equestrians when the MoD rifle range is in use, blocking access to bridlevays in parts of Otmoor. Negatively impacting routes around Noke leaves riders without safe riding and forces them out onto busy and dangerous roads.

Riders would like to emphasise that the local roads have got considerably busier and more dangerous over recent years, so bridlevays really do need to be safe riding spaces. There is considerable development proposed in the local area (e.g. 1400 new houses on land north of Bayswater Brook) that already poses a serious

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danger and a greater need for riders to have safe off-road riding. To try to develop this green space adjacent to Otmoor as a solar farm would be seriously detrimental to local riders and their ability to safely use the local bridleways.

In the wider area, the construction traffic on the lanes around Noke and in the roads beyond, e.g. B4027/Islip Road, will pose a serious threat to riders using these roads. The only entry road into Noke village has a steep and narrow hill, with the village roads being small country lanes. The farm traffic currently using the proposed site involves vehicles driven by farming people who have good knowledge of how to drive carefully in rural areas to safeguard horse riders, etc. Construction traffic will be of much higher volume and highly likely to involve people less knowledgeable of how to drive safely around horses. The location of the site access has poor visibility and the potential for conflict between construction traffic and horse riders using the lane will be high. The safety of vulnerable road users such as horse riders and cyclists who use these rural roads appears to have been totally ignored in the 'Construction Traffic Management Plan'.

On a global scale, group members object to the proposal for the damage it will do to the environment.

The planned site is in close proximity to the Otmoor Nature Reserve and there are serious concerns about the negative ecological impact the proposal would have. There is a risk that the wetland birds, insects and bats that are attracted to the reflective water at the nature reserve would be disorientated by the large area of reflective solar panels. Friends of the Earth recommend that solar farms avoid nature reserves. We should not be locating solar farm sites at the expense of nature.

The solar farm would fall entirely within the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework indicates that renewable energy projects are inappropriate developments on Green Belt land. With the rapid expansion of Bicester on one side and the urban sprawl of Oxford on the other, the Green Belt land between the two is absolutely vital and there needs to be strong defence of it, not further erosion.

The Otmoor area is of high amenity value. It is a beautiful and biodiverse area of open, undeveloped land, vital for the physical and mental well-being of people



where they can take fresh air and exercise on foot, cycles and horses. Indeed, there has been a proposal to make the whole of the Otmoor/Bernwood/River Ray catchment area (one of the last remaining traditional floodplain meadows in England) a regional park. This important area should not be compromised by a solar farm development.

There are also other serious issues with the proposal.

The location is on valuable farmland that should be used for agricultural purposes, not solar panels. The UK's national food security issues are being highlighted very clearly this year. The UK needs to become more self-sufficient in food production rather than relying on importing basic staples over thousands of miles. Farmland should be protected not urbanized.

In addition, Otmoor is a vital natural flood plain, protecting houses downstream. All the hard surfaces of a solar farm will affect drainage and increase flooding issues.

There are many empty rooftops on the 1000s of houses being built around Oxford and Bicester, which are far more appropriate places to install solar panels at the point of usage rather than destroying even more of the environment under the banner of 'saving the environment'. This proposal looks like another worrying foray into greenwashing territory.

Dr C. Doe  
on behalf of Otmoor Riding Group members