

# 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>	Georgina
<b>Address</b>	Grove Barn,,Beckley,Oxford,OX3 9US
<b>Type of Comment</b>	Objection
<b>Type</b>	neighbour
<b>Comments</b>	<p>There are six key reasons I object to the proposed solar scheme in Noke.</p> <p>1. Protection of the Green Belt: This scheme is an inappropriate industrial-style development in a Green Belt area next to an important Bird Reserve, whose importance has been recognised by central Government with the protection of this area vis-a-vis the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway application. Developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if such projects are to proceed. No such 'very special circumstances' exist in this case to build an industrial development covering 43.78 H/ 108.18 acres on Green Belt countryside and productive agricultural land. With a national grid a solar farm could be put anywhere where it does not threaten Green Belt countryside. Generation of solar energy is much more appropriate on new developments and retrofitting to existing roofs both in housing and industrial buildings.</p> <p>In addition, too much of the Oxford Green Belt to the east of the City has already been destroyed. Cherwell District has already lost 273 Hectares/ 676 acres of Green Belt land in its Local Plan. This is in addition to that lost in the SODC Local Plan - 770 Hectares/ 1,903 Acres. This land is lost forever to future generations.</p> <p>Furthermore, developing this site would be irreparable damage to the openness of the Green Belt countryside. This site is overlooked from the eastern part of Noke village itself and from all along the limestone ridge that runs from Islip to Stanton St John and beyond, particular to the south from Common Road Beckley and Elsfield. It is also overlooked by the Oxfordshire Way which is much used and a footpath runs right through the site and a bridleway around Otmoor, very nearby.</p> <p>A similar planning application for a solar park between Elsfield and Beckley in the Green Belt was opposed by both parishes and rejected by SODC as "it would erode the openness of the Green Belt and would detract from the landscape setting of Oxford and therefore constitutes inappropriate development" P15/S2202/FUL - Exactly the same can be said of this planning application.</p> <p>2. Damage to the Environment, Ecology, Wetland and Birds Wetlands such as Otmoor are extremely important and declining habitats that need preserving - <a href="https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/habitats/wetlands">https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/habitats/wetlands</a> , <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/discover-and-understand/landscapes/wetland-heritage/">https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/discover-and-understand/landscapes/wetland-heritage/</a> , <a href="https://www.wwt.org.uk/our-work/threats-to-wetlands">https://www.wwt.org.uk/our-work/threats-to-wetlands</a>. In addition, the solar farm is unsightly and an eyesore. There will be - 47,300 solar panels at 2.8 metre (over 9 ft) high, high deer-proof galvanised fencing at 2.1m CCTV on 3.2m poles Substation - 8 x 6 m 3 m high Spares shipping container - 12.16m long 2.59m high - ugly Inverter station - v large on legs no dimensions roughly 18m long (dimensions not given) Welfare container -2.59m high x 6.06m x 2.44m</p> <p>3. Protection of Agricultural Land</p>

At an Environmental Audit Committee meeting on 29th June '22, George Eustice, secretary of state for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs accused local authorities of disregarding advice on the use of agricultural land for solar farm development.

This guidance "created a strong presumption against solar farms on Best and Most Versatile land, and that is classified in law as grade 3B or above," he said, and resolved the problem of development on agricultural land for some time - 1.

The land is classified as grade 3a and b and currently and recently has grown wheat, linseed and beans. Development of a solar farm would be contrary to 2015 guidance. Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires planning decisions to recognise the benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1-3a.) Cherwell Policy ESD5 states that renewable energy development is supported only "wherever any adverse effects can be addressed satisfactorily" and where there is "no unacceptable adverse impact, including cumulatively".

Linseed is a bio-mass crop where the seeds go to bio-fuel and the stems to heating, and therefore already contributing to Cherwell's Climate Emergency objectives. There is a world shortage of wheat.

#### 4. Public Rights of Way and Walkers

There will be 47,300 solar panels at 2.8 metre (over 9 ft) high; unsightly 2.1m galvanised fencing; CCTV on 3.2m poles; a number of additional buildings to a maximum height of 3m/ 9.84ft and 18m long.

A much-used footpath from Noke to Oddington crosses the proposed site. At present it is through a pleasant country field. If development is allowed more like an urban alleyway with 2.1m unsightly galvanised fencing and 2.8m solar panels. There are also personal safety issues.

Both the Oxfordshire Way and the bridleway around Otmoor will be adversely affected by the unsightly industrial nature of the development, spoiling the enjoyment of the countryside. These footpaths are not only used by locals but are important access to the countryside for the residents of the city of Oxford.

#### 5. Construction Traffic and Safety of the Public

The developers have stated that construction is to take 12 weeks/3 months and there will be 466 mainly HGV deliveries.

The proposed route to the site will be along B4027, through the top of Noke village across the Oxfordshire Way then using a track and part of footpath across the site. This is a very real danger to anyone using the footpaths and bridleways or indeed anyone wishing to travel in Noke.

The 12 weeks/3-month time is likely to be very optimistic. The roads in Noke are very narrow and could not accommodate an HGV and another vehicle. We were told by the developers that there would some 'holding bay' for construction traffic to ensure that HGVs within Noke were not allowed into Noke or the site if there was not room. The site of this 'holding bay' was not known, but will adversely affect residents living along or near the route, particularly along B4027.

#### 6. Renewable Energy Output .

The Headington Substation cannot accommodate 25MW, the maximum possible output of the solar farm. It is only capable of a maximum of the Headington transformer can only accept 18MW This is measured as maximum output on the sunniest mid-summer day. The output declines each year by 10%.

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**Attachments**