

# 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>	David & Gail Scott
<b>Address</b>	Pump House 794M From Lower Farm And 354M From,Otmoor Lane,Charlton On Otmoor,OX3 9TD
<b>Type of Comment</b>	Objection
<b>Type</b>	neighbour
<b>Comments</b>	<p>We oppose and object to this planning application for a solar farm in the Green Belt at Noke covering 43.78 Hectares 108.18 acres with 47,300 solar panels next to important wetland Otmoor RSPB reserve and SSSI.</p> <p>Protection of the Green Belt is vital - NPPF 151 states - when located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources. No such 'very special circumstances' exist in this case to build an industrial development covering 43.78 H/ 108.18 acres in 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. Alongside motorways is a good location, providing evidence for all to see of progress for green initiatives on land already blighted by the existing roadway.</p> <p>The solar farm is between the villages of Noke and Oddington which each have their own special historic character which will be adversely affected by this industrial development. The most important issue is that beautiful countryside will be encroached upon and destroyed. The openness of the Green Belt will be severely compromised and this landscape adversely affected. This industrial development can be seen from a number of higher points east Noke, Beckley and Elsfield as well as a number of public rights of way ie the Oxfordshire Way, the bridleway around Otmoor and the footpath through the centre of the development.</p> <p>The proposed solar farm immediately abuts the edge of the Conservation Target Area that covers most of the rest of the Otmoor area and part of Otmoor is a SSSI. There is huge concern that it is a large site covering 43.78 H/ 108.18 acres, that wetlands such as Otmoor are extremely important and are declining habitats that need preserving and it is in close proximity to the RSPB Reserve on Otmoor only 420 metres away at its nearest point. The distance from the solar farm to the middle of the permanently flooded part of Otmoor is only 1.3 kms. The area of the nearest part of the RSPB Reserve at Otmoor is 3.44 km<sup>2</sup> (c. 850 acres), while the permanently flooded part is only 0.265 km<sup>2</sup>. Otmoor is a very important RSPB reserve with breeding cranes and other rare species such as booming bitterns. The reflective surface of the solar panels could attract birds and insects, as it would appear like water.</p> <p>Unightly - The solar farm is an industrial development and will be an eyesore comprising 47,300 solar panels at 2.8 metre (over 9 ft) high - there will be high deer-proof galvanised fencing at 2.1m / CCTV on 3.2m poles / Substation-8x6mx3mhigh / Spares shipping container - 12.16m long 2.59m high / Inverter station - very large on legs no dimensions roughly 18m long (dimensions not given) / Welfare container 2.59m high x 6.06m x 2.44m</p> <p>Protection of Agricultural Land needs to be considered - 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</p>

against solar farms on Best and Most Versatile land, and that is classified in law as grade 3B or above," he said. This application's land is classified as grade 3a and 3b, and currently and recently has grown wheat, linseed and beans. Development of a solar farm would be contrary to 2015 guidance. Furthermore, 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.

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 it would be more like an urban alleyway. 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.

We respectfully ask that this application be rejected, for the benefit of all those local and far who enjoy this countryside today and for future generations. Thank you.

**Received Date**

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**Attachments**