

With regard to application I should like to post my objection. Whilst JBM Solar the financial beneficiary of this proposal suggests this is a 'done deal' with its '98 per cent success rate at planning; and its assertions that at pre-application meeting the case officer has already given tacit approval to the scheme, I should ask the case officer to consider the three points. Is there a demonstrable need and does it fit in with your own planning policies and who will benefit?

Is there a need? Cherwell is known nationally for its forward thinking sustainability strategy with regards to new and future developments. It asks that proposed developments comply with its energy policies ESD2-5 and goes further with its requirement that new homes comply to the Code for Sustainable Homes. Put these facts together with Cherwell's local plan allowing for 21,734 new homes and 134 ha of employment land - that's a massive 1,369 ha of land - all built taking these policies into consideration. Add together the eco town in north-west Bicester (5,000 homes alone), SW Bicester phase 2, Bicester Business Park through to SE Bicester (Cherwell submission local plan 2006-2031) before even looking at the development at Banbury and all these areas already earmarked for development, using sustainable construction methods onsite including solar immediately negate the argument for a stand alone solar farm on the edge of a conservation area of rural countryside! Use the 1,369 hectares instead!

Does it fit with Cherwell District Council's planning policies? Taken from Cherwell District Council's Local Plan 2011-2031:

Our vision for Cherwell District... 'Cherwell will maintain its rural character where its landscapes, its vast range of natural and built heritage and its market towns define its distinctiveness.'

Our Strategic Objectives for Ensuring Sustainable Development

SO12 To focus development in Cherwell's sustainable locations, making efficient and effective use of land, conserving and enhancing the countryside and landscape and the setting of its towns and villages.

Policy SLE1 Employment Development. B.44 To ensure employment is located in sustainable locations, to avoid problems such as traffic on rural roads and commuting, employment development in the rural areas will be limited.

Unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated, employment development in the rural areas should be located within or on the edge of those villages in Category A (see Policy Villages 1).

They will be small scale unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the character of a village or surrounding environment.

The proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on any non-designated buildings or features of local importance).

The proposal will not give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic and will wherever possible contribute to the general aim of reducing the need to travel by private car.

B.2 Theme Two: Policies for Building Sustainable Communities

B.87 Cherwell's countryside, landscape and green spaces are important natural resources. They form the setting of our towns and villages, contribute to their identity and the well-being of Cherwell's communities, and provide recreation opportunities. The countryside's intrinsic character and beauty is important to the quality of life in Cherwell and remains an economically important agricultural resource

Policy ESD 5: Renewable Energy

Planning applications involving renewable energy development will be encouraged provided that there is no unacceptable adverse impact, including cumulative impact, on the following issues, which are considered to be of particular local significance in Cherwell:

Landscape and biodiversity including designations, protected habitats and species, and

Conservation Target Areas

Visual impacts on local landscapes

The historic environment including designated and non designated assets and their settings

The Green Belt, particularly visual impacts on openness Aviation activities

Highways and access issues, and

Residential amenity.

I would argue that this application does not meet Cherwell District Council's policies as set out in its Local Plan 2011-2031. I urge the planning officer to recommend objecting to this development.

Much has been made by the applicant of the land being of 'poor quality'. Land is classified in the UK from grade one to grade five, with grade one and two being the best. This land is grade three. Only three per cent of land in England is classed as grade one. With grades one to 3A combined covering just 21 per cent. This is largely concentrated in the East of England, East Midlands, South West, Yorkshire and Humber regions. Not Oxfordshire. With the war in Ukraine, food security has become a serious issue in UK and this proposal will take out 60 hectares of quality food producing land. Using the argument that the land is only 3b is nul and void; most of our food producing land in the UK falls into this category!

I believe this is further industrialisation of our rural landscape. As suggested above, Cherwell District Council leads the country with its forward thinking sustainability ideals for new development, championing the need to consider the impact of climate change on our precious environment. Let those ideals also be used when considering turning a rural idyll, a stretch of precious food producing countryside, with its associated biodiversity into an 150 acre industrial-scale solar and battery farm. I urge the planning officer to recommend objecting to this development.

And who will benefit? Not the villagers of Stratton Audley or Godington or the neighbours and their businesses, nor the walkers of nearby footpaths, the cyclists or indeed the wildlife! The only beneficiaries to this application are the landowner and the applicant. This site has not been identified for this need, it is only being proposed by a landowner who will does not live locally so will not suffer from the visual impact and lack of rural amenity and an operator which will take financial gain from this application. I urge the planning officer to recommend objecting to this development.

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