

# D J OAKEY & SON

## The Art of the Country

D J Oakey & Son Nigel and Penelope Oakey, Grange Farm,  
Godington, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX27 9AF

21<sup>st</sup> June 2023

Mrs Rebekah Morgan  
Planning Department  
Cherwell District Council  
Bodicote House  
Banbury OX15 4AA

Dear Mrs Morgan

### **OBJECTION - PROPOSED 44MW PADBURY SOLAR PARK - Planning Application Ref: 22/03873/F**

We were the previous owners of the farmland (2000 – 2021), which is now being proposed as the site for the vast Padbury Solar Park. We believe that the evidence in our document clearly demonstrates that this agricultural land should be classified as 3a and not 3b or 3c, as it is falsely claimed to be. The land also offers significant conservation and environmental assets to the local area.

#### **Land Classification/Historical Factual Data**

Over many years we successfully farmed this land, growing healthy yielding crops for human consumption, including Wheat, Oats, Oil Seed Rape, Spring and Winter Barley.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>CROP</b>	<b>YIELD tonnes per/acre</b>	<b>COMMENTS See grid notes page 2</b>
2003	Wheat	4.0	
2004	Wheat	3.4	
2005	Wheat	3.5	
2006	Wheat	3.6	
2007	Wheat	3.3	
2008	Wheat	3.5	
2009	Wheat	3.4	
2010	Wheat	3.5	
2011	Wheat	4.3	
2012	Wheat	3.5	Very dry year
2013	Wheat	-	Fallow Year Very wet period
2014	Wheat	3.3	
2015	Wheat	3.6	
2016	Wheat	3.5	
2017	Wheat	3.5	
2018	Wheat	3.8	
2019	Winter Barley	3.5	Hybrid Barley
2020	Spring Barley	2.5	Break for Blackgrass
2021	Spring Barley	2.5	Break for Blackgrass

**IMPORTANT GRID NOTES:** to achieve successful wheat production, other crop varieties are also grown alongside and rotated each season, ie Oil Seed Rape and Beans.

- Wheat consistently never under 3.3 tonnes/acre
- Beans average 1.28 tonnes/acre
- Oil Seed Rape 125 – 175 tonnes/acre
- Spring Barley added in rotation from 2015

### **Landowners new Grain Store Application - Ref: 22/01503/AGN**

It is a fact that the landowner applied for and was granted planning permission only recently on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022 for a new Grain Store, based on the historic healthy yielding crop levels being achieved on this land for human consumption.

Indeed, in the current owners planning application to build a Grain Store to service this land it states (2.7) "One m<sup>3</sup> of wheat weighs approximately 790kg. Taking the total acreage of the holding at 241 acres, multiplied by a yield of 3.5 tonnes of grain per acre = 844 tonnes in total." This highlights it is productive food producing land and contradicts a met's report findings.

### **Archaeological Solar Farm Investigations**

The highly intrusive/destructive archaeological trenches that are currently (from March 2023 onwards) being excavated, mid annual crop cycle, will have a highly significant detrimental effect on this year's crop harvest and yields subsequently achieved.

### **Previous Conservation Schemes and Awards on this Land**

For over 20 years, we actively participated in the government lead DEFRA 'Higher Level Stewardship' and 'Countryside Stewardship Schemes'. Under these Schemes and as part of our own projects, we undertook a wide range of valuable environmental work over tenure of this land.

This included planting six metres of wildflower margins around all the hedge lines (see attached photograph) and cultivating wild bird covers for winter feeding, which in particular supports small birds. (Appendix 1)

We have been very fortunate to receive prestigious awards for our work in conservation on this land. The most notable for these being The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust's Cotswold Grey Partridge Trophy, in recognition of our work in creating wildlife habitats for this rare, endangered bird, along with being selected as Finalists in the National Purdey Awards for Conservation. (Appendix 2)

### **Potential Future Return of Land to Agriculture**

It is not 'easy' to return land to agricultural uses after it has been used for decades as a solar power site, as has been suggested. Amongst other factors, the resulting damaging effects on the land drainage system, makes it very difficult for the land to ever be as productive again for agricultural purposes.

It would also take considerable funds, which are easily underestimated. Developers are often unwilling to guarantee sufficient funding for this to potentially happen in future decades.

Many farmers are regularly contacted by companies seeking collaborative arrangements to build Solar Parks. We were previously approached to work with a developer in a very similar project on this specific land. Given the potential financial rewards and benefits of solar power, we carefully considered the proposal, seeking expert specialist professional advice, but based on the facts it was an easy decision not to proceed.

### **Detrimental Impact on local lives**

When a huge Solar Park site is not located on your doorstep (as in this case with an absent landowner) who has so called 'supporters' living out of the area (submitting cut and paste comments clearly provided by a third party), what appears to be easy financial gain might seem attractive.

Afterall, the landowner, supporters and those benefitting financially, will not forever more have their lives, businesses or environment they live in severely impacted or disrupted in any way.

Our local area is already significantly blighted with HS2 right on our doorstep, which will continue to do so forever. We also suffer the disruption of the ongoing EWR works. We doubt if many people submitting letters of support have even visited Stratton Audley or Godington and seen the proposed location, visualising the impact it would have on the environment and local life in terms of residents and the local wildlife. It would undoubtedly be a very different story if the proposed site was right next door to their homes.

### **National Food Security Policy**

The UK's first Food Security summit was held at 10 Downing Street in May this year, signalling a huge step change for British farming. The importance of our national food production was officially put on an equal political footing with other high-profile issues such as energy, the economy and climate change.

### **Proportionate**

Most people appreciate there is a need for renewable energy and solar power, but destroying beautiful and productive farmland at a time when Food Security is equally vital, is not the solution.

The proposed site of 44MW on 168 acres of productive agricultural land is vast and totally out of keeping and proportion with the local area. Proposed sites must, without question, be proportionate to their location, gain significant public support, not be environmentally damaging or located alongside small residential communities and rural businesses.

We therefore ask for this planning application to please be rejected.

Yours sincerely

**Nigel & Penelope Oakey**

Nigel & Penelope Oakey



Appendix 1



Appendix 2