

All Souls College
Oxford OX1 4AL

Tel. +44 (0)1865 279379 Fax. +44 (0)1865 279299

Cumnor Parish Council
Clerk to the Council
8 Sand View
Faringdon
Oxon
SN7 7UT

17 February 2022

Dear Councillors

Solar energy at Cumnor

Thank you for your letter of 17 January letting us know of the Parish Council's concerns about the proposed development of a solar energy facility on land at Cumnor owned by All Souls College. Let me set out why we are proposing this development in conjunction with Solar2.

As you all know, All Souls is a college within the University of Oxford and our mission is to undertake great research which can benefit mankind. Our activities are funded solely by the College's investments. The effective management of our investments is thus vital to the College. We therefore seek attractive financial returns, while also trying to behave responsibly, especially in relation to climate change, and to respect the people and communities affected by our investments.

We have an active programme of reviewing whether we can further our goals by changing how our agricultural land is used. Owners and tenants of agricultural land are now facing significant changes to subsidy regimes, availability of labour, climate issues, water quality and the need to enhance biodiversity. All these issues mean that change of land use is more likely now than it has been for many years – though land uses and the landscape have, of course, changed significantly over the years.

This review led us to investigate prospects for solar energy facilities on a number of sites, including Cumnor. We believe that, done well, solar energy facilities would increase the production of green electricity, provide an enhanced financial return and increase biodiversity. We work with a specialist solar developer at each site; for three of those sites, we work with Solar2.

We also recognise that the introduction of solar facilities can be a significant change for the communities close by. It is especially important therefore that we work with developers who are sensitive to this, who are willing to engage properly with communities and who work to mitigate adverse effects where possible. The developers are also expert in understanding the planning framework governing these schemes including their own responsibilities and the protections rightly afforded to those affected.

We welcome that you are actively engaging with Solar2. It is this process of talking openly about matters that should lead to a better proposal. I believe that Solar2 will be able to assuage concerns about the sourcing of solar panels, biodiversity and, to some extent, the effect on views. We will also raise with Solar2 and other relevant tenants your Fit for the Future initiative; I believe that Solar2 are already engaged with Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment. I would urge you to continue your engagement with Solar2 and the planning process which will provide the platform for further consultation and the opportunity to raise issues and concerns.

Finally, as this is subject to the planning processes laid down by public policy, of course the College will respect whatever decisions are made by those with responsibility for those public policy decisions.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

David Renton
Estates Bursar