

CUMNOR PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Cumnor Parish Council
on Monday 8 January 2024 at 7.30pm
held in Fogwell Road Pavilion, Fogwell Road, Dean Court.

In attendance.

Council. Tom Christophers, Chairman, Laurence Waters, Vice-Chairman, Alison Jenner, Paula Lopez, Gary Mason, Judy Roberts, Ray Stone and Oliver Wright.

County Councillors. Judy Roberts.

District Councillor. Scott Houghton and Judy Roberts.

Visitors. 48.

The Chairman informed attendees that the meeting would be recorded to assist Paula Lopez with the minute taking as the Clerk was not in attendance.

01/24 Apologies for Absence.

Basil England (prior commitment), Chris Westcott, (prior commitment) and Tina Brock, Clerk (unwell). These apologies were approved.

02/24 Declarations of Interest.

Personal Interest.

Minute 19/24 Ray Stone as he is a member of the Farmoor Village Hall Management Committee.

03/24 Co-option to Council.

No requests received.

04/24 Variance of Order of Business.

Council approved bringing items 15ii 2 planning application P23/V2624/FUL Red House Farm, 16ii a Land West of Red House Farm, Farmoor and 16i a and b proposed Botley West solar power station be brought forward of the agenda.

05/24 Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council.

Council resolved to adopt the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 4 December 2023 and the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on Monday 18 December 2023.

06/24 Matters Arising from the Minutes. None.

07/24 Clerk's Newsletter and Addendum. Received

- i. Payment of Accounts. Approved as per minute 08/24.

08/24 Payments of Accounts.

Council resolved to authorise the payments specified in the Clerk's Newsletter and Addendum and reproduced below.

Table 1 List of receipts.

Statutory Power	Income received	Description	Total (£)
11 Enclosure Act 1845	Cumnor Conservation Group	Higher Level Stewardship (see payment 99)	2,143.70
12 Local Auth Cemeteries Order 1977	S & R Childs	Interment of ashes	135.00

Table 2 List of payments due.

Statutory Power	Payments now due:	Description	Total (£)
95, 95b, 95c, 95d SO LGA 1972 s112 Contract/Pensions Act 2014	Staff costs		6,962.86
DD Telecom Act 1984 s97	BT	Office phone and broadband	101.89
96 LG (misc prov) Act 1953 s4	The Bin Cleaner	Quarterly clean of bus shelters extra 30 minutes due to graffiti on several shelters	625.00
97a LGA1972 s143	OALC	Clerk's training	300.00
97b LGA1972 s143	OALC	Clerk and Chari training	
97c LGA1972 s143	OALC	Councillor training	
97d LGA1972 s143	OALC	Councillor training	
DD Telecom Act 1984 s97	EE	Mobile phone	7.28

98 LG (Misc Prov) Act 1976 S19	As New Home & Office Cleaning	Nov clean of pavilion	96.00
99 Enclosure Act 1845	Cumnor Conservation Group	Higher Level Stewardship (see receipt 11)	2,143.70
100 LGA 1972 s111	The Net Result	Payroll processing Oct-Dec	88.50
BACS LGA1972 s111	Unity Bank	Service charges	18.00
101 LGA1972 s111	T Brock	Reimbursements	399.40
102 Public Health Act 1875	Total Pest Control (UK) Ltd	Quarterly mole control – Fogwell Field	113.40
103 LGA1972 s111	Critchleys	Quarter end procedures and Sage software	218.86
104 LG (Misc Prov) Act 1976 S19	Ady Podbery Grounds Care	Litter picking, raking sand and pea shingle and hedge cutting`	625.80
DD LGA 1972 s111	Eurosolve	Annual Office 365 subscription	174.00
DD Telecom Act 1984 s97	BT	Office phone and broadband	101.89

Notes.

- i. After all payments/receipts are accounted for Unity Account will be in credit at £33,357.70.
- ii. After all payments/receipts are accounted for the Santander Community Account will be in credit at £87,065.71.
- iii. The Council has the following debtor for 2023/24: HMRC (Reclaimable VAT) £ 11,334.56.
- iv. As of 18 December 2023 the Santander Corporate Notice account held a credit balance of £77,066.21.
- v. M&G Investments Fund. Dividend cheque for £594.16 received and sent to COIF deposit account.

09/24 Public Participation.

The Chairman read out the main points of the report in agenda 15ii 2 for the benefit of those in attendance after which those present were invited to speak.

7 members of the public made statements and asked questions of Luke Hoskings, Green Nation and Councillors, in summary.

- The developers did not appear to provide any evidence that siting of the Solar Farm on the Red House Farm site was the best option.
- Disappointment was expressed that consultations were held over the Christmas period.
- Have other sites been looked at. Has the developer considered roof tops as an alternative.
- It was asked that District Councillors meet with Planning Officers before the end of the consultation to look at the lack of 'optioneering' evidence and the removability of the project which takes the assessment down to 'negligible impact'.
- As the project was classed as 'reversible', albeit after 40 years the impact of the development is considered to be minimal this was cause for concern.
- There appeared to be lack of cumulative impact of the various proposals and should include Botley West.
- There also appears to be a lot of evidence missing or downplayed from the submissions with regards to biodiversity, local amenities, historic environment, local traffic and pedestrian movement and it was asked that District Councillors also address this with the planners before the end of the consultation.
- There was no visual impact submitted from high ground which affects the vista of those houses on higher ground and their view across Farmoor.
- Concern was raised over the weight of the adopted Neighbourhood Plans. If Planning did not take into account the policies in these plans then this would set a precedent for all Neighbourhood Plans in the future and there would be no point in having one.
- Concern was also raised regarding connection to the grid and that the Botley Road would need to be dug up again.
- Had the developers looked at the cost of improving substations nearer to the site.
- Concern of impact on animals/wildlife in the area,
- Would the developer of Red House Farm consider withdrawing now and wait for the outcome of the Botley West development?
- Has the Red House Farm site been secured?

Luke Hosking Green Nation responded.

- Mr Hosking spoke in support of solar farms delivering Net Zero and driving down energy costs.
- He advised they are currently involved in a project in Norfolk to install solar panel on roof tops, but this does not give the energy output required.
- Everywhere in the country will have solar panels and this is a unique opportunity for this area to have something that works, is productive and as unobtrusive as possible. Green Nation have consulted heavily, grid capacity is limited.
- It was confirmed that the connection to the grid would need to go via the Botley Road.
- They are not aware of any smaller sub-stations nearby that could be improved to support the site.
- The site was chosen as it needs to be fairly close to a connection, is flat land, other sites uneven and the impact more visible.
- He also advised it would not be sensible for them to wait until the Botley West outcome as this could be 2 years or more away.
- Confirmation was given that Green Nation had secured the Red House Farm site.

District Councillor confirmed they would take forward the requests.

PLANNING

10/24 Submitted Planning Applications.

The Council would submit the following observations:

Table 3 List of planning application.

Ref	Planning application number	Address and proposal
i	P23/V2624/FUL	Red House Farm, Eynsham Road, Farmoor, Oxford OX2 9ND <i>Installation of ground mounted solar photovoltaic array with associated infrastructure, security fence, CCTV, cable route, landscaping, and onsite biodiversity net gain.</i> Objects.

1. **Cumnor Parish Council (CPC) wishes to object to this planning application for a solar power station.**

It does so having taken into account the size and nature of the proposed industrial installation for the production of electricity, the location of the proposed development site in the Oxford Green Belt, and the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Effects will be significant and wide ranging, including permanent industrialisation of the Oxford Green Belt; landscape and visual impacts; loss of amenity; heritage, Public Rights of Way (PROW), agriculture, pollution and nuisance impacts; traffic and road safety impacts during construction and decommissioning; and significant adverse effects on ecology and biodiversity.

Sections 2-11 of this document set out the detailed reasons for the objection.

CPC would also like to draw Vale of White Horse District Council's (VWHDC) attention to the avoidable fact that our assessment of the application has been unnecessarily hindered by the numerous errors, omissions and repetitions in the documentation supplied by the applicant. A partial list of these can be found in Appendix 1.

Cumnor Parish Council's Grounds for Objection

2. **The development is contrary to the basic principle of the Green Belt (NPPF para 142¹).**

The project site lies entirely within the Oxford Green Belt. Building the power station on that site would therefore conflict with the basic principle of the Green Belt as set out in paragraph 142 of

¹ The NPPF was updated on 20 December 2023, and this reference is to the updated version. The equivalent paragraph in the previous version was para 137.

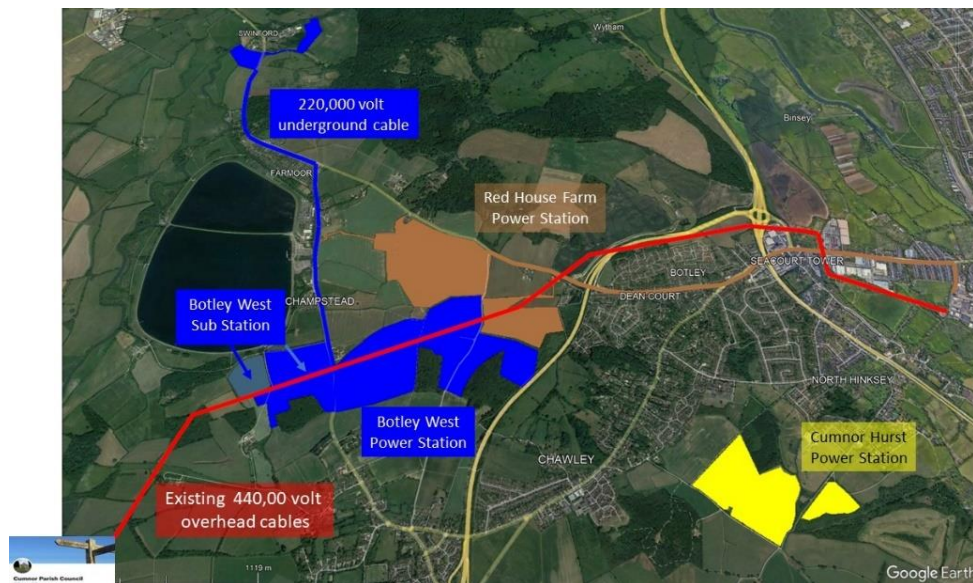
the NPPF, which reads (in relevant part) as follows:

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

‘Openness’ has been ruled by the Supreme Court not to be merely a matter of the volume of a proposed development but also its visual impact². The solar power station would clearly have a huge (and negative) visual impact. It would fill much of the valley between Cumnor Village and Wytham Wood, and virtually all that valley when combined with the proposed Botley West solar power station and the substation National Grid is proposing to build in connection with that power station. The valley is visible from the higher parts of the Parish and the view of it is listed as a protected view in the Cumnor Parish Neighbourhood Plan. The developer may argue that this impact can be mitigated in due course by the use of hedges, but given the difference in elevations, that is clearly not the case, unless the hedges are planted at the top of the hill, in which case they will not preserve the view but will simply obliterate it.

Similarly, even though the developer would be obliged to preserve the rights of way within the power station, the amenity value of those rights of ways (which include a section of the Oxford Greenbelt Way) would be lost, as instead of walking across open fields with views of the surrounding hills, people would be walking along narrow passages between high fences backed by solar arrays taller than any human.

These visual impacts (which we go into further later in this document) will affect not just our parishioners but also residents of West Oxford and Botley, for whom this is one of the most easily accessible areas of attractive countryside. They will, furthermore, be cumulative with those of other solar power stations proposed for our parish if they too are permitted to be developed. As the figure below shows, those currently proposed include not just the Botley West project, immediately bordering this one, but also the Cumnor Solar Farm (P21/V3288/SCR) (labelled ‘Cumnor Hurst Power Station’) on the south-eastern side of Cumnor.



Nor would this impact, and the consequent loss of amenity, in any meaningful sense be temporary. As a minimum the power station would be in existence for 30 or 40 years – in other words, roughly half an average lifetime – and it seems highly improbable that it would actually be demolished and removed even at the end of that period. Realistically, what would happen is that the leases would be extended, with the necessary planning permissions being granted, and so on and so on, effectively for ever.

² *Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and others v North Yorkshire Country Council* [2020] UKSC 3

This would be made still more likely if National Grid were permitted to build a substation here (as proposed in connection with the Botley West project) as that would itself be an openly permanent structure, and the fact of its continuing existence would inevitably be used as an argument for the continuation of the neighbouring power stations.

The only circumstances in which that might cease to be true would be if a new source of power were developed (the obvious example being nuclear fusion) which was so cheap and plentiful that solar power stations would no longer be economically viable. Clearly such a breakthrough cannot be assumed, and even if it did occur, it is doubtful that the underlying fields would actually be restored to their original state. It may be the case that under current law, they would not be regarded as brownfield sites, but considering the projected population growth over the rest of this century and beyond, the likelihood is that they would in fact be used for some other form of development.

In practice, therefore, if this development is allowed, the loss of this section of the Green Belt will be permanent and irretrievable.

3. **The project would constitute an ‘inappropriate development, harmful to the Green Belt’ within the meaning of paragraphs 152 and 156³ of the NPPF. It should therefore only be permitted if the developer can show that it is justified by ‘very special circumstances’.**

Paragraph 152 of the NPPF states as follows:

Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

With specific reference to ‘renewable energy projects’, paragraph 156 adds:

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.

For the reasons given in section 2 above, it is abundantly clear that this project is an inappropriate development within the meaning of both these provisions. Therefore the onus is on the developer to show that there are ‘very special circumstances’ which would justify it being approved.

We note that the final sentence of paragraph 156 recognises that in the case of renewable energy projects, the ‘very special circumstances may *include* [emphasis added] the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources’. Clearly, however, that factor alone will not suffice. If it did suffice, all developments of renewable energy projects within the Green Belt would automatically be allowed, which would render the first and second sentences of the provision nugatory.

Moreover, whilst we agree that increasing the country’s renewable energy resources, including by building solar power stations, will have wider environmental benefits, it does not follow that any such stations should be built here, or anywhere in the Green Belt, let alone on this scale.

The Government’s target is to increase solar generation capacity five-fold by 2035, from the current 14 GW to 70 GW⁴, an increase of 56 GW, or 56,000 MW. Estimates of the amount of land needed per megawatt of capacity range from four acres⁵ to six acres⁶. Even taking the higher figure, the extra capacity would therefore take up no more than 336,000 acres. That is a little over 0.5% of the total area of the United Kingdom, and a little over 1% of that of England alone. There is therefore no need to build any of it on the Green Belt.

Accordingly, the developer has to show very special circumstances beyond the mere fact that it

³ Previously paragraphs 147 and 151 respectively

⁴ This exceeds the Climate Change Committee’s estimate of what is needed by 16GW.

⁵ <https://solarenergyuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Briefing-Fact-Checker-1.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/factcheck-is-solar-power-a-threat-to-uk-farmland/>

is developing a renewable energy project.

4. The developer has not shown that the project passes the ‘very special circumstances’ threshold (NPPF paras 152 and 156, Local Plan Core Policies 13 and 41, Cumnor Parish Neighbourhood Plan Policy DBC4).

4.1. The VWHDC Pre-app (appendix 3.5 re P22/V0143/PEJ) invites the applicant to provide:

‘Justification for a 40year period’

noting that:

‘40 years is a significant period even where the proposal is temporary and reversible, during which the adverse impacts (landscape and visual) would be experienced by many people.’

4.2. The VWHDC Pre-app (appendix 3.5 re P22/V0143/PEJ) invites the applicant to demonstrate:

‘that the point of connection has capacity and there is no other alternative connection.’

4.3. The VWHDC Pre-app (appendix 3.5 re P22/V0143/PEJ) invites the applicant to provide

‘the capacity factor and estimated annual production ... together with the number of residential properties electricity equivalent for UK.’

4.4. The VWHDC Pre-app (appendix 3.5 re P22/V0143/PEJ) notes

‘There is also no detail currently provided of what alternative sites (outside of the Green Belt) have been considered, however I note that you propose to provide a Site Selection Report to accompany any formal application.’

4.5. Having searched ES Chapters 4 (The Proposed Development) and Chapter 5 (Need and Consideration of Alternatives) as well as the Site Selection report, Council notes that:

4.5.1. Contrary to the information supplied by the applicant for the pre-app, Para 4.63 states that:

‘Planning permission is sought for a 30-year operational period’

yet para 5.50 states that viability of solar PV power stations only occurs for leases

‘beyond 30 years’,

which the applicant advances as a reason for not considering roof top solar.

4.5.2. Paras 5.39-5.45 state:

5.39 In this instance, however, Road Night Taylor (RNT) an independent specialist grid consultancy was approached by the tenant of Tilbury Farm and Landowner of Red House Farm (the ‘Landowner’) to prepare a Grid Feasibility Study.

5.40 The Grid Feasibility Study confirmed a suitable grid connection was available near Tilbury Farm and Red House Farms at Oxford Bulk Supply Point (BSP) operated by SSEN located at Ferry Hinksey Road, Botley.

5.42 A formal grid application for a 49,900kW (49.9 MW) connection and the defined land area was submitted to SSEN in April 2020 by RNT on behalf of the Landowner.

5.45 Having paid the first grid connection instalment payment to SSEN, thus, securing the connection, RNT and the Landowner subsequently entered a tender process to find a suitable developer of a solar farm.

4.6. Assessing the information provided by the applicant, CPC concludes that:

4.6.1. The applicant has not demonstrated there is no alternative connection

4.6.2. The applicant has not considered any alternative sites outside of the Green Belt

4.6.3. The applicant has merely bid in a commercial tender process at their risk for a grid connection being sold on by a landowner, who themselves had – at their own commercial risk – paid for a grid connection.

The applicant has then attempted to use that purely commercial decision at their risk to justify the ‘very special circumstances’ required for such a development to be allowed in the Green Belt.

4.6.4. The applicant has not provided the information VWHDC requested on capacity factor etc. (see also 9.4 below)

4.6.5. CPC recalls the case of the [Nuneham Courtney Nineveh Farm application](#) considered by SODC Councillors and joint SODC/VWHDC planning officers, where planning permission for 35 years was initially granted, with the applicant returning for a 5 year extension, which was refused.

5. Impact on the Openness of the Green Belt (VWHDC Core Policy 41 – Renewable Energy, and Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan Important Views Policy DBC7)

5.1. Given the proposal’s intention to surround more than 63 hectares of arable Oxford Green Belt in 2.1m high security fencing, complete with 77 CCTV cameras, installing numerous 40’ shipping containers and building a number of additional structures, CPC objects to this proposal on the grounds of irretrievable loss of openness of the Green Belt.

In addition to what we have said on this issue in section 4, we must point out that not all the infrastructure and other changes to the landscape will be even purportedly temporary. As just one example, para 4.38 states:

‘4.38 The cable will be adopted by the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) upon energisation of the solar farm and will remain its property after the solar farm is decommissioned.’

The DNO infrastructure therefore will be permanent, the cable terminating at the DNO substation (8m x 6m x 3m high on a concrete plinth set within a 12m x 14m security fence) to be built immediately adjacent to a PROW that leads to the Hill End Outdoor Education Centre (ON|184|16/10 - known locally as Denmans Lane) at its junction with ON|184|22/20.

5.2. The VWHDC pre app states:

‘the published landscape character assessments and the important views indicate that the site does form a role in the greenbelt and its openness in this location.’

The VWHDC pre-app (P22/V0143/PEJ) invites the applicant to complete an:

‘analysis as part of any application, as to how much the site currently contributes to the openness of the Green Belt and to what degree the proposed solar farm will affect any such openness in landscape and visual terms’

CPC considers the applicant has failed to do this (see also Landscape and Visual Impact Analysis below).

As just one example, the applicant has provided only annotated photos that seek to address this, and so ignoring what the VWHDC pre-app requires, viz:

- *With regards to locations of viewpoints, views from Wytham Woods to the north should also be explored. Although not public rights of way, this area is well used by walkers and accessed by a free permit scheme.*
- *The site is in LM20 – Farmoor to Botley Corallian Limestone Ridge with Woodland Character Area of the Districts Landscape Character Assessment. Key landscape characteristics of this area include being contained by wooded slopes, relatively intact network of hedgerows, mix of post medieval and modern, limited settlement and the route of the Oxford Green Belt Way. It has a keen sense of place and a degree of tranquility. Both the District and Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Character Assessments cover restricting the placement of structures that would be visually intrusive and detract from the expansive views.*
- *The Neighbourhood Plan Important Views Report, clearly illustrate the role the site forms in this area of open countryside and greenbelt. View 5a and 5b covers the foreground of arable fields, mature hedgerows criss-crossing the landscape with expansive views up towards Tumbledown and the wooded backdrop of Wytham. View 16 include preserving the important panoramic views to Wytham Woods to the north.*

- 5.3. **CPC believes *‘the important panoramic views to Wytham Woods to the north’* and the reciprocal *‘views from Wytham Woods’* with *‘expansive views up towards Tumbledown’* would be significantly adversely damaged by the proposal, given that it would involve *‘the placement of structures that would be visually intrusive and detract from the expansive views.’* e.g. shipping containers, substations, a ‘welfare’ cabin, etc.**

CPC considers the applicant has failed to complete an: *‘analysis as part of any application, as to how much the site currently contributes to the openness of the Green Belt’* as required in the VWHDC pre-app.

In summary, the openness of the Green Belt would not be preserved for all the reasons above, and because the applicant intends to install (para 12.56) screening *‘in the form of an opaque fence to mitigate the impacts’* of glint and glare that would cover the 2.1m high deer proof fencing.

6. Landscape and Visual Impact & Amenity Impact

- 6.1. **CPC considers this proposal to run counter to the provisions of Core Policies 44 and 41 (visual amenity) of LPP1, and Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan policies DBC7 (Important Views) and TI3 (Footpaths and Bridleways)**
- 6.2. Cumnor’s Neighbourhood Plan Policies DBC7 and TI3 evolved from widespread engagement with parishioners in a number of consultations including the [‘Big Survey’](#), conducted as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

32% of respondents to the Big Survey said that ‘protecting and enhancing local green spaces’ was their top priority for the Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan, with 62% of respondents placing the green spaces option in their top 3 priorities (see extract from Table 1 below)

Priority rank order	Cumnor Parish	Farmoor	Dean Court	Cumnor Hill	Cumnor Village
1st	Green space	Green space	Green space	Green space	Green space

This community response was addressed in the made Neighbourhood Plan by a number of policies, including DBC7 – Important Views, and TI3 – footpaths and bridleways.

In his formal comments, the Plan’s Examiner noted that the accompanying [Important Views Report](#)

‘is an excellent part of the evidence base of the wider Plan. It sets out its methodology and comments about the important views in detail. In general terms the views both describe and celebrate the landscape of the parish.’

Policy TI3 addresses the impact of development proposals on PROW through the Parish, in particular the amenity value of an interconnected set of PROW offering kinetic views across open countryside in the Oxford Green Belt, including from the Oxford Green Belt Way in the Parish adjacent to this proposal’s site:

‘New development proposals should take into account the safety, accessibility and visual amenity of Cumnor’s network of footpaths and bridleways. Development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on their accessibility and recreational amenity value will not be supported.’

6.3. The VWHDC Pre-app (appendix 3.5 re P22/V0143/PEJ) invites the applicant to provide *‘photomontages, showing the proposed scheme, from selected key viewpoints, at year one of the operational phase and later at year 10 or 15 of the operational phase with mitigation in place.’*

6.4. CPC can find no evidence that this requirement has been met. Instead, with the exception of a few visualisations along the valley floor (e.g. Figures 10.1 and 12.1) the applicant has chosen to present a series of photos with superimposed red lines showing what it claims to be ‘the extent’ of the development.

6.5. The VWHDC pre-app notes that:

‘the published landscape character assessments and the important views indicate that the site does form a role in the greenbelt and its openness in this location.’

and that

‘The openness of the Green Belt is recognised as having a landscape and visual element to it.’

and invites the applicant as part of the application to provide an analysis:

‘as to how much the site currently contributes to the openness of the Green Belt’

6.6. CPC can find no evidence that this requirement has been met, with no response to the VWHDC pre app statement that:

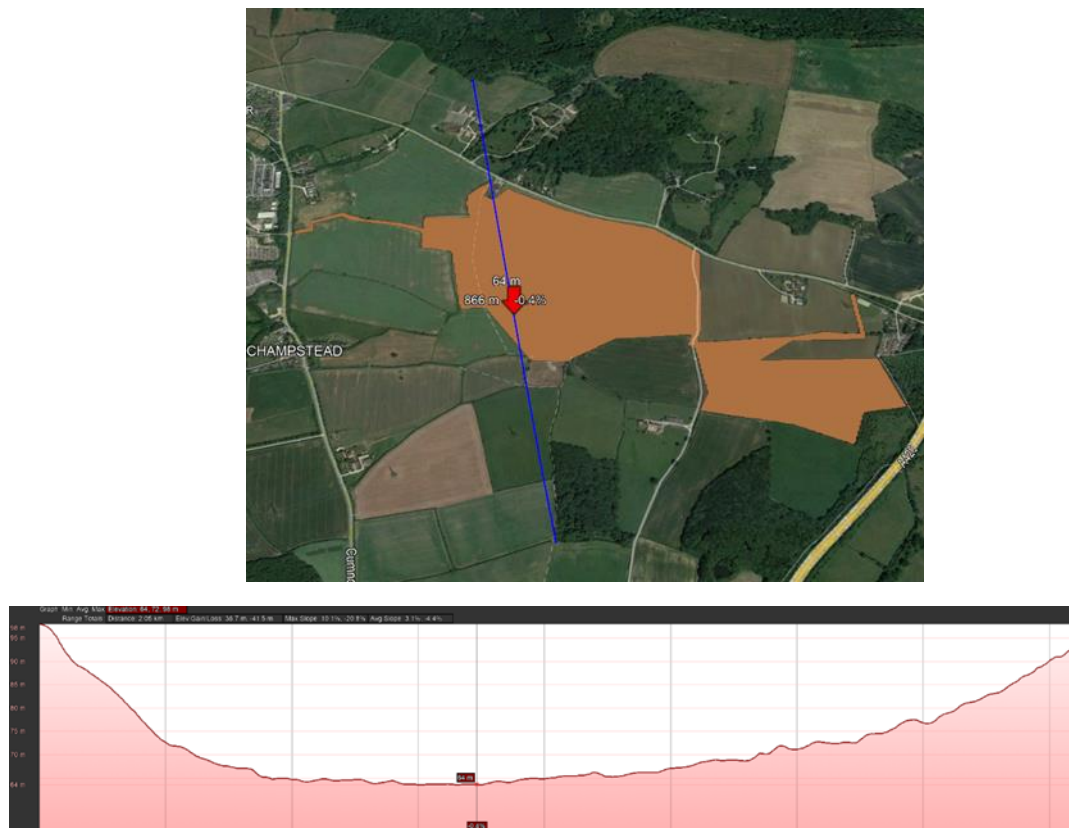
'The Neighbourhood Plan Important Views Report, clearly illustrate the role the site forms in this area of open countryside and greenbelt.

View 5a and 5b covers the foreground of arable fields, mature hedgerows criss-crossing the landscape with expansive views up towards Tumbledown and the wooded backdrop of Wytham.

View 16 include preserving the important panoramic views to Wytham Woods to the north.'

As just one example, the Google Earth Pro 'path' from Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan Important View 3 to Important View 1 (below) shows how the proposed site sits some 34m below Important View 3 and 30m below Important View 1 – the site being visible in the foreground from both.

Similar visibility is afforded from Important View 16 and Important View 23

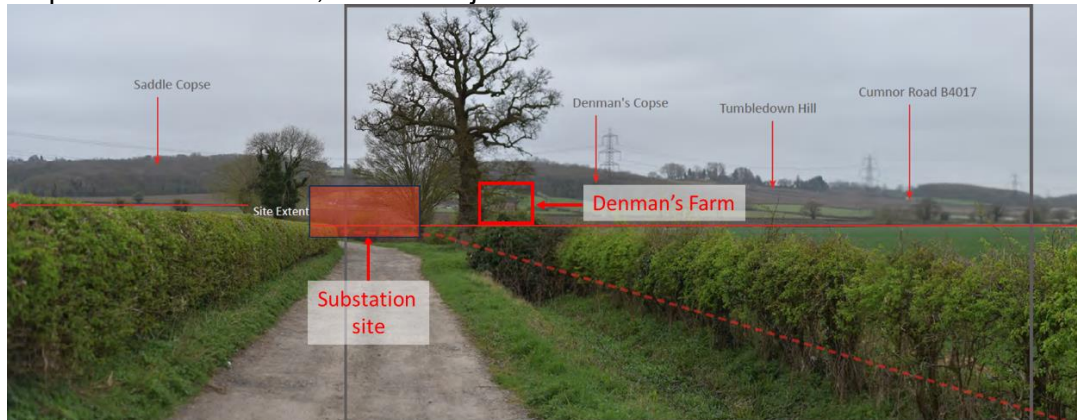


Google Earth Pro path from Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan Important View 3 to Important View 1

- 6.7. In attempting to dismiss the impact on Neighbourhood Plan Important View 5b the applicant offers the photo below (representative viewpoint 2 Appendix 7.1 – the same as Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan Important View 5b)



This is not a visualisation – as required in the pre-app - at years 1,5 and 10. CPC has therefore annotated the applicant's photo (below) to show a visualisation, including the proposed location of the 6m x 8m x 3m substation set in a fenced secure compound of 12m x 14m, and the adjacent location of Denman's Farm.



The 'reverse' view is also shown by the applicant (page 97 of Appendix 7.1) as a photo with a few lines superimposed (below)

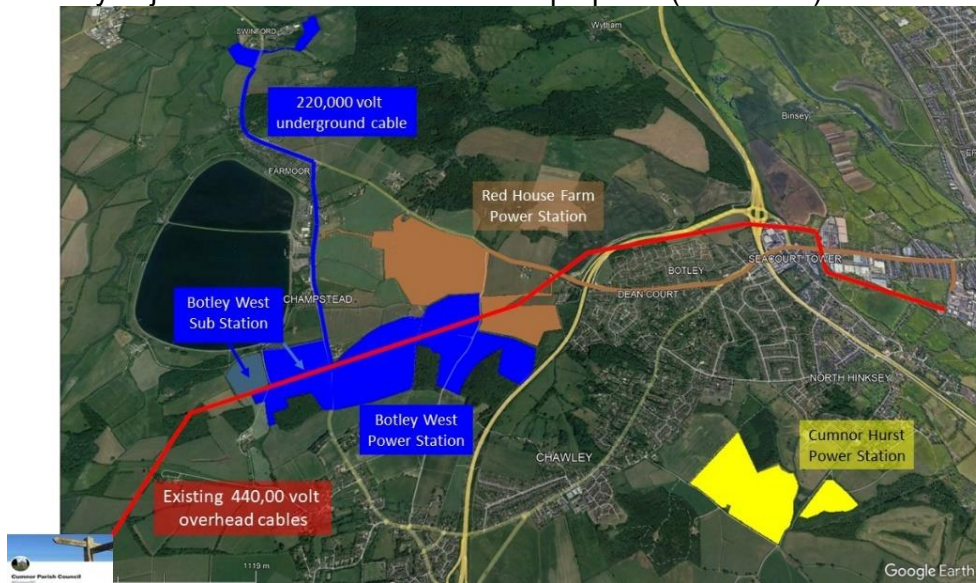


Again, CPC (below) shows instead a visualisation, as requested by VWHDC, showing the extent of the panels and the 2x substations



Ironically, a visualisation of the impact of a solar power station in that vicinity is provided by the latest documents from the Botley West consortium.

That proposal would place solar panels and associated infrastructure in the fields immediately adjacent to the Red House Farm proposal (see below).



CPC map of the extent of Red House Farm and Botley West proposed adjacent sites Botley West provide a 'before' and 'after' visualisation showing the impact on the visibility of Denman's Farm from the valley floor.



CPC annotation of Denmans Farm location on visualisation provided by [Botley West](#)

6.8. The proposed site is set within, and across, a dense network of well used PROW (see below - Figure 4.1 in appendix 7.1) including a substantial section of the Oxford Green Belt Way in the Parish



6.9. CPC is fortunate in that local residents have volunteered their services to produce the visualisations required by VWHDC in their pre-app.

As examples two sets of before and after visualisations are shown below for PROW through and around the proposed site.



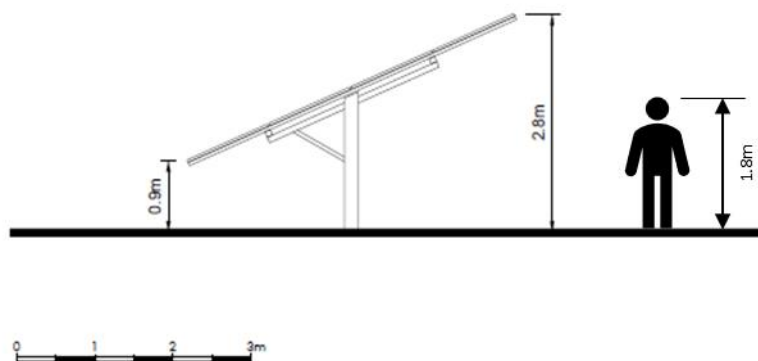


ON|184|15/10





Cross Section
4 Modules in Landscape at 24° tilt
Scale 1:50 @ A3



CPC visualisation showing how viewpoint of a 1.8m tall person will be impacted by 2.8m high panels

- 6.10. Cumnor Parish Council considers the applicant's proposal runs counter to Policy TI3 and LPP1 Core Policy 41, as installing shipping containers, substations and other infrastructure alongside PROW, will severely adversely affect visual amenity.

Similarly, given the noise signatures of the inverters there will also be a significant adverse impact on aural amenity on PROW (see also section 9 – pollution and nuisances - below).

In other words, there will no longer be an open, peaceful countryside for residents and visitors to enjoy.

- 6.11. **Cumnor Parish Council is not of the view that offering a bench (as shown in the applicant's photo on p22 of Appendix 7.1) next to a 2.1m security fence and within metres of several CCTV cameras and shipping containers emanating a characteristic noise signature (see also section 9 below) is conducive to full and free enjoyment of the PROW currently experienced.**
- 6.12. **CPC notes with dismay the proposal to build the construction compound – including HGV access - immediately adjacent to PROW ON|184|15/10. In addition to the loss of visual amenity for 5+ months the health and safety concerns are clear, but not addressed by the applicant.**

7. Heritage Impacts

- 7.1. **CPC considers that the proposal fails to meet the requirements of Core Policy 39 of LPP1, Development Policies 36, 37, and 38 of LPP2 and NPPF paras 200, 201, 205 and 209⁷. It also fails to meet the requirements of Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan Policies DBC2 (Cumnor Conservation Area) and DBC6 (Conserving and Enhancing Local Heritage Assets)**
- 7.2. **CPC assess that the proposal would diminish the significance of the setting of heritage assets in the area. This includes, but is not limited to the setting of the Cumnor Conservation Area**

As one example, Historic England's response to the Scoping request P22/V2581/SCO noted:

'Cumnor Conservation area (the scoping report, 2.1.5, incorrectly identifies no conservation areas within 2km of the development).

A number of Listed Grade II buildings including not only those listed in the scoping report but also those on or near the north edge of the Cumnor Conservation Area.'

Despite this, paras 9.72-9.80 of the application attempt to argue (incorrectly) that the site is not within the setting of the Conservation Area and so, by implication, the applicability of Neighbourhood Plan Policies DBC2 and DBC6.

- 7.3. CPC assess that the proposal is limited in its understanding of the significance of heritage assets and, in particular, of their setting.

By constraining the survey area to 1km (para 9.26) the application artificially declines to consider the relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies, as evidenced by the Historic Environment Desk Based Analysis (HEDBA) that does not even reference Neighbourhood Plan policies.

As VWHDC and Neighbourhood Plan Character Assessments make clear, the dispersed farmsteads comprising the site and its setting are inextricably linked historically with their surrounding fields. These remain at present as open Green Belt countryside and are read as such.

- 7.4. Historic England's response to the Scoping request P22/V2581/SCO advises the applicant to involve the relevant Conservation officer. No evidence that this has been done, or of the officer's response if it has been done, can be found in the application.

- 7.5. Historic England's response to the Scoping request P22/V2581/SCO recommends the proposed Botley West Solar Power station is considered as part of the cumulative impact.

This is not included in Cumulative Effects, paras 9.166-173.

⁷ Previously paragraphs 194, 195, 199 and 203 respectively

- 7.6. CPC does not consider the proposed mitigations sufficient to outweigh harm. The provision of a bench, (with or without a bottle of wine on it as shown in the applicant's photo on p22 of Appendix 7.1), suggests either a lack of understanding of the way this landscape is currently experienced from near and afar, or desperation.
- 7.7. **As the significance of the setting of the heritage assets has not been fully articulated, it follows that the harm to this significance has not been properly assessed. Consequently, CPC disagrees with the level of harm assigned.**

The application employs a number of stratagems to underplay the impact.

As one example, para 9.82 states

'the historic landscape is not scoped in as a heritage receptor as it was not identified as part of the Scoping Opinion'

This device, and others, immediately limits assessment of impact, ignoring the fact that covering the fields with solar panels, the erection of the substation, shipping containers, security fencing and CCTV cameras will cumulatively have a significant adverse impact on the setting of the farmsteads.

For example, at Nobles Farm, diminishing the last vestiges of its connection to former agricultural land would cause a high degree of harm.

- 7.8. **CPC believes NPPF policies (200, 201, 205 and 209⁸) have priority in considering the historic environment. Therefore, the applicant's conclusion for each heritage asset is that the impact is**

'Not considered significant under EIA regs'.

is insufficient and incorrect and is not the same as a Heritage Impact Assessment, which VWHDC would have to take into consideration.

- 7.9. **CPC is also concerned about the stated temporary nature of harm. There is no evidence that these sites will be properly reinstated, nor any mechanism suggested to secure this.**

Even though the section on Potential Effects: Operation (paras 9.111-9.155) is lengthy and repetitive, it still fails to address the repeated impacts of having to replace inverters and other major pieces of infrastructure several times within the proposed operational lifetime, nor the need to replace panels when they fail or lose efficiency, nor the regular operations required to clean the panels (see also section 9 – pollution and nuisances – below).

8. Biodiversity & Ecology

- 8.1. **CPC considers that the application fails to satisfy the requirements of LPP1 Core Policy 46 (ecological receptors) and LPP2 Development Policy 30 (watercourses) – both these policies being coincident with NPPF paras 180, 185 and 186⁹.**

⁸ Previously paragraphs 194, 195, 199 and 203 respectively.

⁹ Previously paragraphs 174, 179 and 180 respectively.

- 8.2. CPC notes that the applicant's methodology for Biodiversity seems to be limited to translating unevidenced personal value judgements on the biodiversity gain of a length of hedging, or of the retention of a watercourse, to claim a net biodiversity gain.
- 8.3. As one example, Table 5 (para 5.15) asserts that 30.357 hectares of 'hay meadow grassland' will be 'created' giving a 'score' of 203.23 units. Yet CPC cannot find any reference to the management of the hay production, or its cropping.

Instead, there are many mentions of sheep grazing. To the best of CPC's understanding sheep do not eat hay.

- 8.4. So, whilst this methodology may be a component of the applicant's 'assessment' processes, it seems to CPC to bear little relation to the reality of the application.
- 8.5. Thus, no biodiversity 'scores' are attributed to the impacts of many km of deer proof fencing which will isolate deer populations in scattered adjacent woodland without the ability to sustain their existence by foraging on open fields or to transit between the woodland areas.
- 8.6. The applicant seems to be relying on separate value judgements of 'biodiversity' (Appendix 8.4) and ecology (appendix 8.2) without an analysis of the interplay of the two.
- 8.7. As just one example amongst many, Chapter 8 para 8.151 records that:

'The scattered trees, scrub and hedgerows provide suitable habitat for breeding birds, whilst the large open arable fields offer suitable habitat for ground nesting birds.'

And para 8.153 records that

'A total of 52 species were recorded within the survey area during the breeding bird survey. Of these, 36 were considered to be breeding, with a total of 178 territories recorded (see Table 8.15). Eighteen of the species recorded within the survey area are considered notable (BOCC 513 Red list: greenfinch (Chloris chloris), house sparrow (Passer domesticus), linnet (Linaria cannabina), song thrush, skylark, yellowhammer (Emberiza citronella), yellow wagtail (Motacilla flava); BOCC Amber list: bullfinch (Pyrrhula pyrrhula), dunnoek (Prunella modularis), kestrel (Falco tinnunculus), mallard (Anas platyrhynchos), reed bunting (Emberiza schoeniclus), sedge warbler (Acrocephalus schoenobaenus), stock dove (Columba oenas), whitethroat (Curruca comcmunis), woodpigeon (Columba palumbus), wren; Schedule 1: kingfisher (Alcedo atthis).'

Para 4.77 states

'Birds recorded incidentally within the survey area include a flock of 40 x fieldfare, a flock of 30 x lapwing, herring gull and black-headed gull. In winter, fieldfare and lapwing flock on ploughed fields'

It then goes onto state:

'the application site therefore offers suitable over-wintering habitat for these species.'

without providing any evidence of how a 63 hectare site covered in solar panels, shipping containers and surrounded by a 2.1m fence is as ecologically attractive to these species as open fields.

Para 8.156 asserts (again without evidence) that:

*'Overall, the site is considered to be of **local** value to breeding birds'*

Para 2.22 also states:

'An assemblage of bird species typical of arable landscape was identified'

Despite this it repeats and amplifies the assertion in para 8.156 that:

*'Overall, the application site is considered to be of **local** value to breeding and wintering birds.'*

How this assertion of local value is arrived at by comparison with the nationally recognized importance of the adjoining Farmoor reservoir, its setting and its associated 3 wildlife sites, is not explained.

- 8.8. Farmoor is described by its owners as a *'[unique habitat for wildlife](#)'* and by [RSPB](#) as: *'one of the top birdwatching venues in Oxfordshire. The combination of open reservoir, woodland, award-winning wetlands and meadows attracts a great variety of birds.'*

- 8.9. Regarding Farmoor, and its wildlife sites (LWS) 95m east of the site, VWHDC's pre-app requires that:

'The proposed development site may contribute to the ecological interest of the LWS, by providing nearby foraging resource within the farmland for birds. It is recommended that bird surveys, including breeding surveys, are undertaken to understand whether the site has a functional ecological connection to the nearby interest of the LWS.'

CPC cannot find any reference in the application to VWHDC's requirements having been met.

CPC concludes that although the application asserts only 'local' value to the east of the B4017, while there's national significance to its west, the applicant provides no evidence that birds recognise the B4017 as a boundary, as the applicant does.

- 8.10. CPC notes similar assertions the application in respect of mammals, amphibians – including Great Crested Newts - and, perhaps, most importantly bats.

- 8.11. For example, no reference in the application could be found to the Bristol University peer reviewed study *'[Renewable energies and biodiversity: Impact of ground-mounted solar photovoltaic sites on bat activity](#)'* in Journal of Applied Ecology 60: 1752–1762 by Tinsley et al (2023).

This paper found that the activity of 6 out of 8 species of bats detected were significantly lower over solar panels than in field and field boundary sites.

For common pipistrelles, activity was reduced by 40% around the boundaries of solar farms and by 86% in the centre. Overall bat activity was reduced by a half at solar power station boundaries and two thirds at their centres.

The surveyed solar farms covered an average of 59 hectares – almost exactly the area of the proposed Red House Farm solar power station.

- 8.12. CPC does not assess the proposed provision of a few bat and bird boxes as suitable or sufficient mitigation. Placing a number of them within the noise envelopes of the installed infrastructure (see section 9) is not considered in the applicant's noise assessment.

CPC is concerned they have been proposed merely as the bat/bird equivalent of the aforementioned wooden bench and bottle of wine for humans.

- 8.13. The applicant's assertion in the Application form that the proposal is 'not within 20m of a watercourse' is also a cause for concern (further explored in flood risk below). At best it indicates a lack of attention to detail and at worst an attempt to paint a picture not in accordance with the facts.

9. Flooding and Drainage

- 9.1. CPC considers the application is not compliant with NPPF para 161 and Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan policy RNE2 – flood risk, as it comprises an inappropriate development in an area at risk of flooding that does not satisfy the exception test of NPPF para 159.
- 9.2. CPC does not consider the application compliant with the associated guidance of Neighbourhood Plan Policy RNE2 – particularly para 111 that states the unsuitability of the Filchampstead area, and because there is no evidence of the applicant having complied with the processes described in para 114.
- 9.3. CPC notes that the applicant's assessment seems to rely entirely on Environment Agency data. As VWHDC is aware there are significant flooding issues in the Parish, addressed within a specially commissioned Neighbourhood Plan [Flood Risk Assessment](#) forming a key part of the underpinning for the Flood Policies within the Neighbourhood Plan. The applicant does not seem to have considered this.

10. Highways and Traffic Matters

- 10.1. CPC is alarmed to read that the developer plans to lay the cable connecting the power station to the Osney Island substation along the Botley Road, which will inevitably give rise to that road being at least partially closed for extensive periods. This will follow the long period of complete closure during the works on the station and the railway bridge, which themselves were preceded by multiple and prolonged periods of partial closure. The cumulative effect of these closures on residents Cumnor, Botley, North Hinksey and the surrounding and points beyond, for whom this is the main and most direct route into Oxford (and the sole direct route for bus travel), has already been severe, and will be further aggravated if the route is again obstructed for the purposes of this project. Moreover, CPC notes that if the proposed traffic filters are proceeded with, Botley Road will become the route by which *all* traffic enters West Oxford, regardless of its point of origin.
- 10.2. Further, C CPC assesses that the application is not compliant with LPP1 policy CP33 in that it manifestly does not *'increase safety and improve air quality.'*
- 10.3. On the contrary, the proposal to route all construction traffic, including articulated HGVs carrying 40' shipping containers via the northern section of the B4017 from its narrow, obscured 'mini roundabout' junction in Farmoor, immediately adjacent to the village store and village hall and opposite a bus stop, south to the proposed site entrance is of great concern to Council, residents and local businesses.

Routing to the Site

- 4.2. The proposed route, indicated in dark blue below, comprises the B4017 Cumnor Road, B4044 Eynsham Road, the A420 and the A34.



Figure 9: Construction Traffic Routing Plan

- 10.4. Such a routing (with the applicant considering no other from the evidence presented) will adversely impact air quality for residents of properties on the B4017, staff and animals at businesses there (there is a veterinary surgery on that road).
- 10.5. The routing will pose adverse significant risk for pedestrians and motor vehicles as articulated HGVs attempt to traverse the acute, narrow junction with its very limited visibility (see below).



- 10.6. **CPC notes with great concern that alternatives – such as a properly constructed site entrance from the B4044 – have not been considered, and that there’s no evidence of the pollution/health and safety issues described above having been considered either.**
- 10.7. **Instead, the applicant has chosen to submit in Appendix 3.3 (Transport Statement and Construction Transport Management Plan) many pages of text and diagrams about the Ninevah Farm solar power station application near Nuneham Courtney.**
- 10.8. **Elsewhere CPC can find no assessment of safety or air quality impacts of 11 weeks of disruption caused by digging up the B4044, the Eynsham Road and the Botley Road over a total distance of 5.5km (the applicant states that cabling will occur at a rate of 5 days per 100m section of road) – including along the very route they are proposing for site access - to reach the**

already pre-designated (with no other options investigated or evidenced) grid connection point in Osney.

11. Other planning considerations

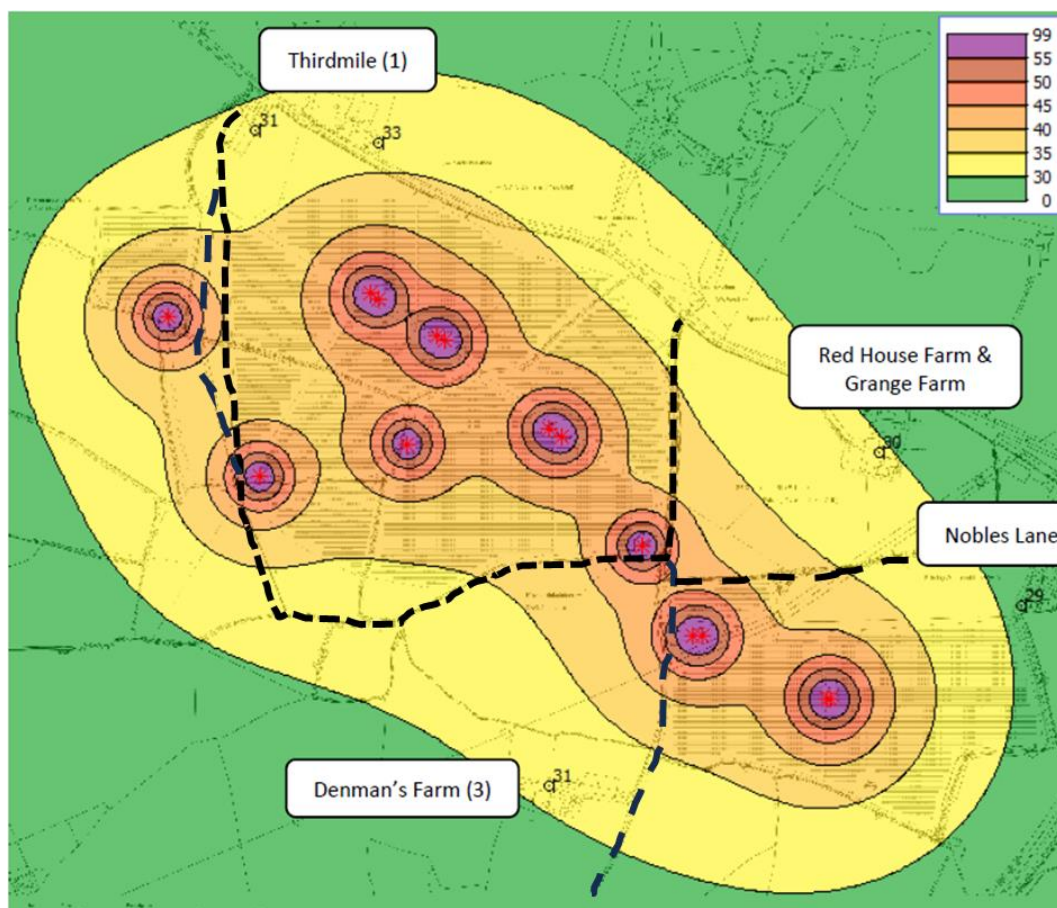
11.1. Pollution and Nuisances

11.1.1. VWHDC scoping opinion 22/V2581/SCO stated:

'A noise assessment will be required as the development includes infrastructure that has the potential to produce significant noise levels during its operation as well as noise from construction. The noise assessment should consider the potential cumulative effect on a wider area as a result of increasing development in the vicinity of the proposed application area and the approved solar farm adjacent to the site.'

However, in response the applicant seems to have considered cumulative impacts on dwellings (aka receiver locations) – not on PROW.

To remedy this deficiency in the application CPC has superimposed the relevant PROW on figure 10 Appendix 3.4 (below) showing how the noise envelopes of installed infrastructure will impact the PROW.



Applicant's noise envelope mapping with PROW superimposed as black dashed lines

CPC also invites VWHDC to cross reference proposed locations for bat and bird boxes (Ecology and Landscape Mitigation and Enhancement Plan drawing no 3377-TLP-XX-DR-L-10002) with these noise envelopes, there being significant colocation across the site.

- 11.1.2. **Noise and vibration impacts on ecology:** no analysis can be found in the application for this topic – considered by PINS in their scoping opinion on the proposed adjacent Botley West solar power station to be required for that development – see below

3.7.4	Paragraph 7.7.23	Noise and vibration impacts on ecological features	Impacts on ecological features are proposed to be assessed within the ecology aspect chapter of the ES. The Inspectorate is content with this approach. However, the noise and vibration aspect chapter should provide cross-references to the relevant sections of the ecology chapter where appropriate e.g., alignment of the ZOI.
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- 11.1.3. **CPC cannot find any evidenced reference to the use of herbicides, and their impact on ecology or watercourses, to manage weed growth**, including but not limited to areas not amenable to grazing. CPC notes the widespread literature on this subject and contrasts it with the lack of detail in the application.

- 11.1.4. **There are references in the application to passive infra red ‘lighting’.** Since passive infra-red is by its very definition ‘passive’, viz it uses an IR detector not an IR illuminator or ‘light’, CPC is concerned that there is no reference to the use of the latter that will be required for CCTV to operate during darkness – a requirement for both health and safety and insurance of solar power stations.

Given that IR illuminators typically transmit at a wavelength of 850nm the application should include an assessment of the impact of this on nocturnal species, including birds, bats and insects.

- 11.1.5. **Exposure to radiation.** Chapter 4, in respect of the proposal to lay an underground high voltage cable along Eynsham Road, through Dean Court, past the Botley shopping centre and thence along the Botley Road to Osney, states that:

‘4.11 The proposed solar panels will be linked via underground cabling to the associated infrastructure and onwards to the point of connection to the grid network.’ However, no information is provided on the voltage of the underground cable and no assessment of the Health and Safety implications or public exposure guidelines as laid down by the International Commission on Non – Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) – see for example the [Planning Inspectorate \(PINS\) response to the Botley West Scoping Opinion ID 3.15.4 Section 9.4](#) for their proposed underground HV cable.

- 11.2. **Agricultural Land Classification (ALC):** CPC observes that the applicant’s designation of the majority of the site to be ALC Grade 3b is dependent on the moisture content of the soil as reported.

CPC, by reference to planning challenges elsewhere in England on disputed ALC classifications, has a low degree of confidence in the assessment presented in the application.

- 11.3. **Opaque fencing:** The intention of the applicant to install (para 12.56) screening

‘in the form of an opaque fence to mitigate the impacts’

of glint and glare so covering the 2.1m high deer proof fencing raises many concerns beyond those of openness of the green belt.

No analysis can be found in the application of the impact of this proposal on avian and mammalian species, for example. Also, no details are provided on the maintenance and replacement of this opaque barrier.

11.4. Electrical Output: In its Scoping Report VWHDC notes:

The Applicant's Scoping Report states the power generation plant will be designed to provide a total output of up to 49.99MW.

And then VWHDC goes on to require that:

The Applicant needs to confirm if there is any operating scenario where total output could be greater than 49.9MW. The Applicant needs to detail the mechanisms the Applicant will put in place to ensure total output will not exceed 49.9MW.

CPC cannot find any evidence that these requirements have been met

11.5. Other matters not considered by the applicant: In [VWHDC's submission to PINS in respect of the Botley West Scoping Opinion](#) it stated that the following should be scoped in:

Waste – *The disposal of materials and plant following decommissioning of the development.*

Electro Magnetic Fields - *on the grounds of the substation proximity to Cumnor primary school and the effects on bird navigation and their reproduction at Farmoor Reservoir.*

Major Accidents - *on the grounds of the fire risk and proximity to the Farmoor Reservoir's water quality and the RAF Brize Norton's runway flightpath.*

All of these apply to this application but none are addressed.

CPC believes that they should be – as does VWHDC for a proposed adjacent solar power station.

11.6. Cumulative Impacts: Lastly CPC is disappointed, but not surprised, to be able to find no reference in the application to the requirements set out by VWHDC in their EIA Scoping Opinion (P22/V2581/SCO) regarding cumulative planning issues caused by the proposed Botley West solar power station immediately adjacent to the proposed site.

11.6.1. Specifically, P22/V2581/SCO required:

'The following types of projects should be included in an assessment of cumulative impact (subject to available information):

- a. existing completed projects;*
- b. approved but uncompleted projects;*
- c. ongoing activities;*
- d. plans or projects for which an application has been made and which are under consideration by the consenting authorities; and*
- e. plans and projects which are reasonably foreseeable, i.e. projects for which an application has not yet been submitted, but which are likely to progress before completion of the development and for which sufficient information is available to assess the likelihood of cumulative and in-combination effects.'*

and

Consideration should also be given to the cumulative impact of the proposed development and other permitted large-scale solar PV developments on landscape and visual impacts within the local area.

and

Consideration should also be given to the cumulative impact of the proposed development and other permitted large-scale solar PV developments on the supply of agricultural land within the same classification across the local area.

and

Consideration should also be given to the cumulative impact of the proposed development and other permitted large-scale solar PV developments on ecology and biodiversity impacts within the local area. In particular, the cumulative impacts together with the recently published proposals for the Botley West Solar Farm should be evaluated. Cumulatively the two developments would create a vast array of solar panels in very close proximity to Farmoor Reservoir LWS and Wytham Woods SSSI.

11.6.2. The applicant lists a Chapter 14 – Cumulative Effects - in the contents list for the Environmental Statement. No Chapter 14 could be found.

This despite VWHDC also raising the cumulative issue in their response to the Botley West EIA screening opinion consultation, part of the on-going Planning Inspectorate (PINS) process for that proposal that pre-dates this application – see below.

‘7.2.35 refers to ‘large’ but doesn’t define what this may be. There are also potential sequential Cumulative Impact with other existing and proposed solar and other development in the Oxford Green Belt, especially those sites that the Oxford Green Belt Way passes. This area of the Oxford Green Belt contains numerous rights of way with limited detractors and is a key recreational resource to Oxford and surrounding urban areas.’

Cumnor Parish Council would like to thank the parishioners who have helped the preparation of this document.

Your expertise and detailed local knowledge are much appreciated and greatly valued by Council.

Appendix 1

As mentioned in 1. above, CPC’s assessment of this application has been unnecessarily hindered by the numerous errors, omissions and repetitions in the applicant’s documentation, compounding the challenge in responding to this application, eventually made in December, and not November as the applicant had previously informed CPC. Given this unfortunate slippage, Xmas holidays and CPC meeting dates have only allowed CPC 15 working days to assess and respond to this application. This is insufficient for a part time, volunteer, unpaid public body attempting to discharge its duty to its parishioners. CPC hopes that VWHDC Planning Officers and District Councillors are not similarly impeded.

CPC notes with concern that this is not the first time this applicant has lodged an application with errors and omissions – their first EIA screening request having been initially registered in the name of a company that did not exist on the Companies House register. A partial list of errors and omissions in the c. 79 documents supplied can be found below.

- No Chapter 14 (Cumulative effects) of the Environmental Statement (ES) could be found.
- Indeed, only chapter 10 of the ES is so labelled, and the document called ‘Environmental Statement.pdf’ is merely a list of chapter and section headings with no page numbers.
- Figure 4.12 (as listed in the un-numbered PDF file for Chapter 4 of the ES – no page number provided) detailing the cable routing seems to have only been supplied to ‘Oxford City Council’.

- Paragraph 1.4 of ES Chapter 1 (although not named as such) claims that:

'A full description of the proposed development is provided in Chapter 4 (The Proposed Development).'

It is not.

- The Application form states that the proposal is 'not within 20m of a watercourse'. This is incorrect.
- Chapter 10 still contains an embedded comment by a Gemma Melvill that Table 10.5 referenced in para 10.71 *'does not correspond with the final project description'*
- Appendix 3.3 Transport Statement and Construction Transport Management Plan contains, for no discernable reason, many pages of text and diagrams about the Ninevah Farm solar power station application near Nuneham Courtney.

11/24 Proposed Industrial installation (Solar Power Station) for the production of electricity on Green Belt land.

ii. Land West of Red House Farm, Farmoor.

- a. Council approved the proposed guidance on the material planning considerations on which residents could object to planning application P23/V2624/FUL.

i. Proposed 'Botley West' solar power station.

- a. Council noted that an in person event would take place on Wednesday 17 January 2024 in Cumnor Village Hall, 3pm – 7.30pm over the consultation period which would end on Thursday 8 February 2024.
- b. Council agreed that the response to the developer should consist of points of concern only, detailed views could then be put forward once an application by the developer had been made.

The Chairman thanked those in attendance for coming, a member of the public thanked councillors for the amount of work that had been put into this subject.

The majority of those attending left the meeting.

REPORTS

12/24 Report from County Councillor(s).

CC Judy Roberts submitted a written report.

General OCC.

The cheap £2 fares that are on offer at the Park and Rides will continue until April 2024.

Flooding – There have been many flood defence systems deployed during Storm Henk and afterwards.

The Abingdon Road is closed today, as is Seacourt P&R. There is a section on OCC's website with the latest information.

The main focus at the County is the Budget. There is a gap of 9 million which widened to 11 million after the governments increase in the minimum wage. There is a tool on Let's Talk that allows people the ability to changes the figures to see what they would do.

Traffic and highways.

There are no planned closures at the Botley roundabout for January and February at the moment.

The roadworks at the Botley roundabout should now finish in February 2024.

The website link which will contain up to date information is:

www.nationalhighways.co.uk/a34botley

There is a section on OCC's website that should cover the Botley Bridge Road closure:

The work is now being carried out 24/7 and the bridge will not reopen until October 2024.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/roadworks/future-transport-projects/oxford-city-station-phase-2c>

This will have all cycle paths, bus and Network Rail information and various links to other websites

posted on there.

This is the website that the latest information will be posted on from Network Rail

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/western/oxfordshire/botley-road-bridge-replacement/>

[Phase 2 of the works have now be announced as taking place from October 24 to March 25 with traffic lights and a one lane closure. Both Phase 1 & 2 will require one lane to be closed over the bridge.](#)

[Library](#)

[The Botley library now provides free coffee and tea as part of their warm spaces program. There are also newspapers to read and a jigsaw puzzle to complete.](#)

Consultations.

Let's Talk Oxfordshire.gov.uk website:

There is a balancing the budget simulator and consultation which closes on 10th January.

There is a consultation asking for your opinion on "Help Oxfordshire stand out from the crowd".

There are 3 on line workshops:

Tuesday 9 January 2024, 9.30am – 11am

Thursday 11 January 2024, 12pm – 1.30pm

Wednesday 17 January 2024, 5.30pm – 7pm

There doesn't appear to be a closing date.

13/24 Report from District Councillor(s).

DC Scott Houghton submitted a written report.

Full Council Meeting

I asked the following question regarding the Botley West Solar Farm:

Question from Councillor Houghton to Councillor Thomas, Leader of the council

Many residents in my ward are extremely concerned about the potential impact of the proposed Botley West Solar Farm. Can the Leader set out the council's current position on the proposal, outline any representations the Vale has made so far on the proposals and outline what further actions the council intends to take going forwards?

Response

Thank you for your question. For almost five years, our council has prioritised taking action on the climate declaring a climate emergency in February 2019 and setting a target to be a carbon neutral district by 2045, with an aim for a 75 per cent reduction in carbon emissions in the district by 2030. Solar development can assist in achieving this target. The Council's current position on solar development, as set out in the Vale Local Plan Part 1 Core Policy 41 is supportive, unless a proposal causes a significantly adverse effect to landscape, biodiversity, the historic environment, the visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt, local residential amenity, the safe movement of traffic and pedestrians, and the cumulative impacts of these combined.

The Botley West Solar Farm Proposal is currently at the pre-application stage in the National Strategic Infrastructure Project process, which is administered by The Planning Inspectorate. To date, officers and councillors have engaged with the developer team to discuss technical matters to be assessed and as part of the process have formally responded to:

The Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Opinion consultation from the Planning Inspectorate in July 2023

The developer's draft statement of community involvement in August 2023

Our responses are online (<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horsedistrict-council/planning-and-development/botley-west-solar-farm/>)

The Council will be responding in the New Year to the statutory pre-application consultation currently underway as a consultee identified under Section 42 of the Planning Act 2008.

Council officers will also continue to proactively engage with the developer leading up to the submission of an application to the Planning Inspectorate, in summer 2024. The Council will act on its statutory duties as part of that process once an application has been formally accepted by the Planning Inspectorate

Joint Local Plan

The same as last month's report, but a reminder that the consultation on the joint local plan will be starting later this month. No firm date has yet been communicated.

A preview of the Joint Local Plan consultation material is available as the six appendices to the

Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting is linked below.

<https://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=549&MId=3182>

Flooding

Although the floods are now subsiding, a reminder that the County Council has a flood tool kit website linked below.

[Oxfordshire County Council – Flood Toolkit \(oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com\)](http://oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com)

Additionally, if any waste collections have been missed due to the floods, please report these missed collections through the link below, and the crews will attempt to catch up.

[Missed bins - Vale of White Horse District Council \(whitehorsedc.gov.uk\)](http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

Full Council Meeting

I submitted a question to the leader of Vale of White Horse District Council asking for more details on the position of the council regarding the Botley West solar farm, to be answered at the full meeting of the council on 13th December.

Additionally, Councillor Emily Smith (Botley) has submitted a question relating to the roadworks in the Botley area.

Details of this meeting will be published at the link below in due time.

<http://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=108&MId=3194>

Finally a reminder that, as well as going through councillors, it is also possible for members of the public to ask questions or make statements at council meetings directly, details on how to do this are available at the link below.

<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/local-democracy-and-elections/councillors-committees-and-meetings/meetings/taking-part-in-a-meeting/>

Joint Local Plan

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are preparing to launch a second round of consultation early next year to develop their new Joint Local Plan to 2041.

The next consultation is scheduled to launch to the public in January 2024, subject to review by both councils' cabinets.

A preview of the Joint Local Plan consultation material is available as the six appendices to the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting linked below.

<https://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=549&MId=3182>

14/24 Report from Representatives on Outside Bodies. None.

TRAINING

15/24 Training Programmes.

No Councillors were available to attend the OALC Councillor Forum on Tuesday 9 January 2024 at 9.30am via zoom.

COUNCIL

16/24 South Hinksey Parish Council.

Council approved that a letter of support for a proposed cycleway/footpath connection from the bottom end of Betty Lane to the Oxford Garden Centre should be provided.

17/24 Consultations.

- i. Council resolved to respond to the Oxfordshire County Council Draft Charter and appointed Judy Roberts to make the response. The consultation closes 31 January 2024.
- ii. Council resolved to respond to the SODC and VWHDC Joint Local Plan 2024 an appointed Laurence Waters to make the response. The consultation closes 21 February 2024.

FINANCE

18/24 Quarterly Financials.

- i. Council resolved to defer this item as in the Clerks absence no back ground information was available.
- ii. Council noted the quarterly accounts (budget and prior year end reports) as of 20 December 2023.

19/24 Grants.

Council resolved to approve Farmoor Village Halls grant request of £900 towards the purchase and installation of new heaters (LGA1972 s137).

Ray Stone did not vote on this item.

ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES

20/24 Ad-hoc Grass Cutting of Grass Verges in the Parish. None.

21/24 Update on other current matters.

All trees and bushes that had come down during the recent storms had been dealt with.

Judy Roberts advised she had reported that the ditch opposite St Andres Church needed clearing and that OCC would provide sand bags in an emergency. The Councils Emergency Plan would be reviewed.

PLANNING

22/24 Draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Monday 18 December 2023.

Received.

23/24 Submitted Planning Applications.

The Council would submit the following observations:

Table 2 List of planning application.

Ref	Planning application number	Address and proposal
i	P23/V2768/HH	54 Appleton Road, Cumnor, Oxford OX2 9QH <i>Replace conservatory and erect two storey rear extension and internal alterations.</i> Support.
ii	P23/V1890/HH amended details	24 Arnolds Way, Cumnor, Oxford OX2 9JB <i>Proposed front and rear extensions to the dwelling. (Amended plans rec'd 19 December 2023 reducing the size of the extensions and changes to the roof design.).</i> Supports.
iii	P23/V2602/HH	8 Owlington Close, Dean Court, Oxford OX2 9DP <i>Erection of a garage conversion into double storey side extension as habitable space.</i> Supports

24/24 Permitted planning application(s). Noted.

Table 3 List of permitted planning application(s).

Ref	Planning application number	Address and proposal
i	P23/V2439/HH	28 Cumnor Hill, Cumnor, Oxford OX2 9HA <i>Replacement rear extension. Part first floor extension over ground floor extension. Extend existing study to form new shower room. Single storey front porch extension. Minor internal alterations.</i>
ii	P23/V2610/HH	4 Church Close, Farmoor, Oxford OX2 9NP <i>Proposed rear extension to rework existing kitchen, enlarge existing bathroom plus new utility room. Proposed change of brickwork finish to smooth rendered – white to approved extension and rendered finish to existing brickwork.</i>
iii	P23/V1266/HH	The Old Cart House, 25A High Street, Cumnor, Oxford OX2 9QD <i>Propose demolition of existing conservatory, retaining existing south wall. Addition of garden room and entrance porch on north elevation. Raising of the eaves and ridge on west elevation. Various internal alterations (as amplified by amended plans rec'd 24/10/2023).</i>

25/24 Certificate of Lawful Development application(s). Noted.

Table 4 List of Certificate of Lawful Development application(s).

Ref	Planning application number	Address and proposal
i	P23/V2725/LDP	Land to the rear of 8/8a and 9/9a Cumnor Road, Farmoor, Oxford OX2 9NS

Ref	Planning application number	Address and proposal
		<i>Demolition and like-for-like replacement of the 4 x existing garages, to sit within the existing footprint.</i>
ii	P23/V2737/LDP	90 Kimmeridge Road, Cumnor, Oxford <i>Erection of single storey rear extension.</i>

26/24 Update on other current matters.

27/24 Proposed Industrial installation (Solar Power Station) for the production of electricity on Green Belt land.

iii. Land at the Hurst/Millennium Field/Harcourt Hill.

a. No update.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Exclusion of Press and Public

To move the following resolution, in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted it is in the public interest that the public and press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting, and they are requested to withdraw.

28/24 Confidential Matters. None.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

29/24 Next meeting.

The next Parish Council meeting will take place on **Monday 8 February 2024 at 7.30pm** in **Fogwell Road Pavilion, Fogwell Road, Dean Court.**

Further meetings are due to be held in **2024 on Mondays:** 4 March, and 8 April at **7.30pm** in **Fogwell Road Pavilion, Fogwell Road, Dean Court.**

The Annual Parish Meeting will take place on **Tuesday 7 May 2024 at 7.30pm** in the **Old School, High Street, Cumnor.**

The meeting closed at 9pm.

Signed..... Date.....2024