Standing up

for the local people,

the landscape,

the heritage,

and for the future.



November 2022 to November 2024

The Stop Botley West campaign to stop Botley West Solar Farm, Oxfordshire



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The long haul
from November 2022 to November 2026

The Campaign to Stop Botley West Solar Farm



Stop Botley West (SBW) is a group of people representing residents of the 15 towns and villages affected by the Botley West Solar Farm (BWSF) determined to provide the evidence of why this should not happen.

Author: Tom Lewis, October 2026

This is what we want to protect!



SBW created a web site (www.stopbotleywest.com) with stored articles, pictures, newsletters, and raised money through donations.

It was updated regularly and allowed our 1500 signed-up supporters to find out what we were doing.

Flooding



Fields between Cassington and Church Hanborough

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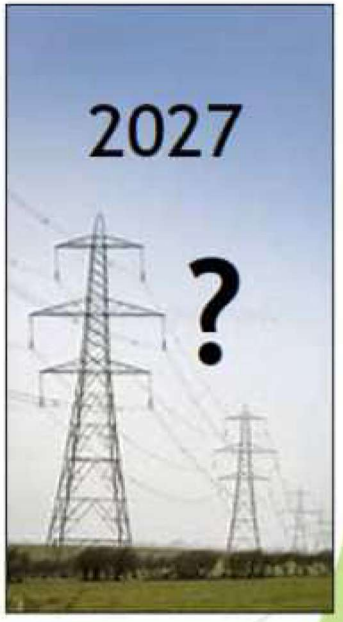
The Developers of BWSF and SBW were in for a long haul.

Botley West Solar Farm (BWSF) was a development proposed by Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP) to develop an 840MW solar farm on 1400ha of farmland in Oxfordshire predominantly owned by Blenheim Estate. Details of the project were announced to the 22,000 residents affected by the proposal in November 2022. The Developers intended that it would be operational by 2027 although to supply electricity to the National Grid BWSF requires an electricity sub-station to be built. Now in 2026, there are no accepted plans for this or where it is to be sited.



BWSF it is designated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and planning consent is removed from local authorities and decided by the Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero (SoS).

Botley West Solar Farm criticism

- The BWSF proposal by PVDP, the developers, and Blenheim have received considerable criticism locally and nationally.

Some of the headlines in Private Eye articles include

Pulling the plug

Marlborough light

Botley contested

Light and shady

Our green and pleasant land is no place for solar

We should have a moratorium on all solar farm installations until the government *sic* has deliberated.

Peter Dobson

emeritus professor of engineering science, University of Oxford

Wednesday August 02 2023, 9.00pm, The Times

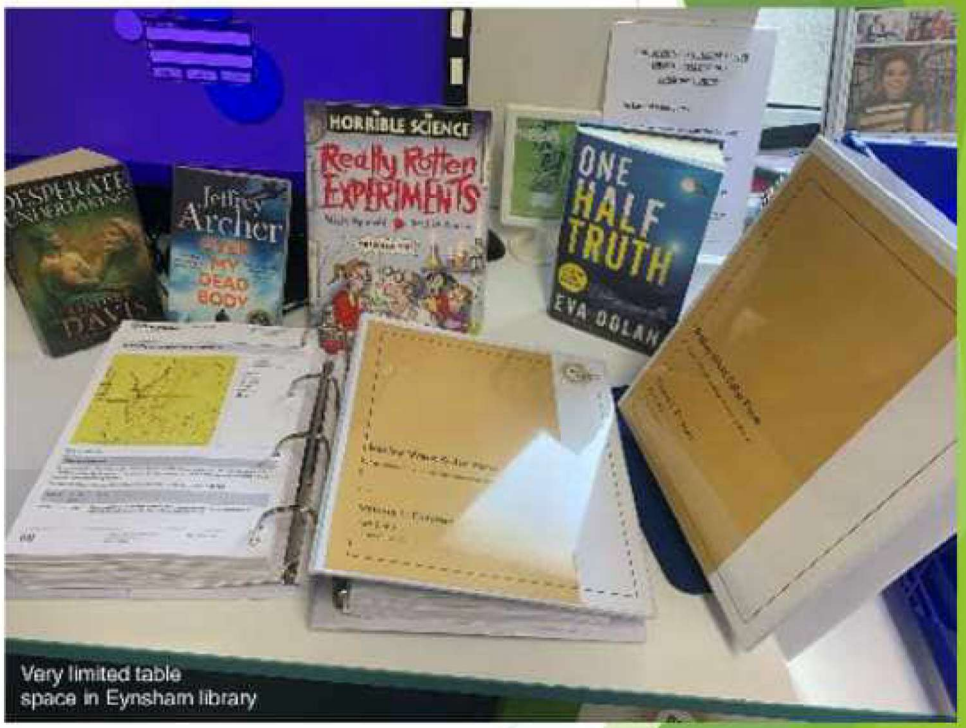
Shady solar

BOTLEY

Solar nexus

PVDP's attempt at publicising the Botley West Solar Farm.

- The Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) published for the Statutory 2nd Consultation
- Published 8 days before the first Information Event - 17 days before Christmas 2023
- It comprised 7000 pages including selective and poor-quality images and maps. It took 2m of library shelf space in Woodstock library.



Very limited table space in Eynsham library

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The advantage of a Community Access Point in a Library is that there are so many useful props available!

Proposed Footpath Mitigation !



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Cunningly walkers will not see the panels - nor anything else!

Activity from 2022 to 2026

- Merton College withdraws their land from the project (2023).
- SBW Posters and banners erected across the area.
- SBW printed and delivered 60,000 leaflets (2023).
- 11,000 Questionnaires hand delivered to residents. SBW received 1400 responses to the questionnaire with 91 per cent saying they oppose the project
- SBW attended and spoke at City, District and Parish Council meetings throughout the area and wrote articles for Parish Magazines.
- SBW and others wrote to and met with MPs and had articles published in the National press.



The caption 'Say NO to Russian money' stirred up a tremendous amount of local reaction.

A training flight
that didn't end well

Engine failure at
takeoff !



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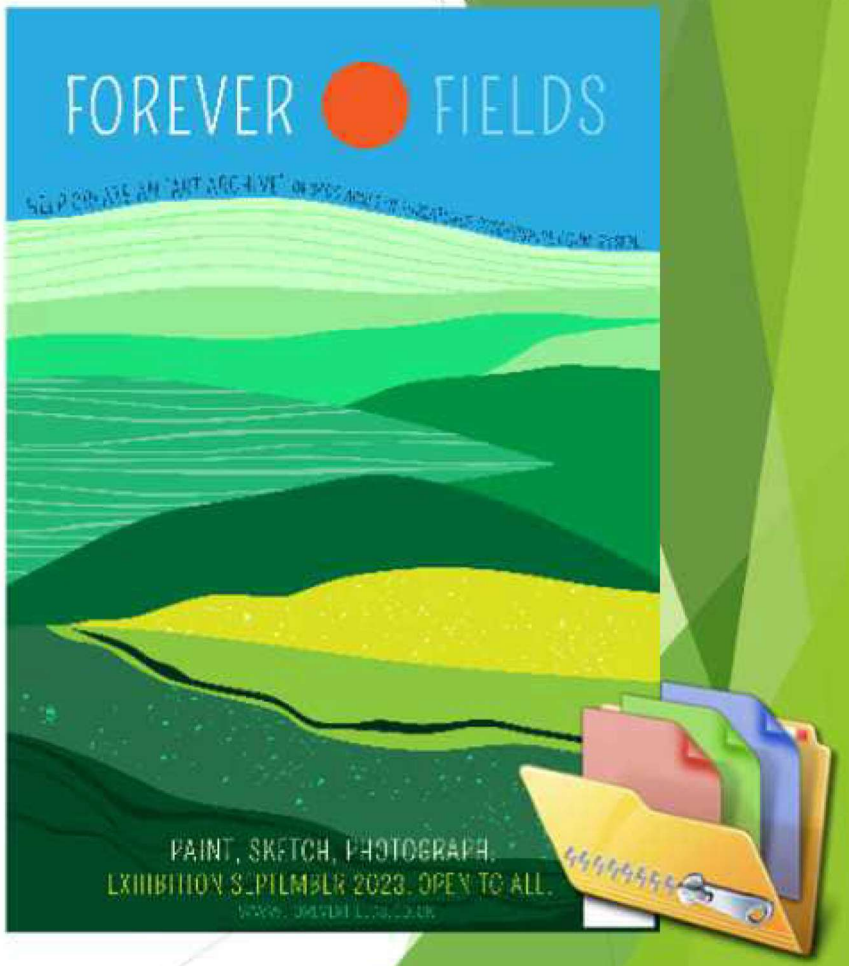
Fortunately no solar panels!

Forever Fields book

Over 100 contributors supplied paintings, photographs, models, drawings, sculptuers to produce a wonderful book that is a record of the views and sounds of the 3,400 acres of Oxfordshire Countryside threatened by BWSF.

- Forever Fields Exhibition in Cassington and Eynsham had over 1500 visitors. (2024)



The Examination Process

On 15 November 2024 PVDP submitted their application for the granting of a Development Consent Order (DCO) to the Inspectorate (PINS). The Examination, in public, ran from May to November 2025. SBW was represented in person and by their consultants and a barrister paid for out of generous donations from our supporters.

SBW and many other organisations including ICOMOS, Natural England and Oxfordshire Host Authority (OHA) presented evidence to the Examiners. Blenheim Estate contributed and contradicted their 2017 UNESCO Management Plan which clearly stated that solar farms were not appropriate on their land.

SBW at every stage presented evidence, not outrage, at the BWSF proposals



What were KEY issues regarding BWSF?

1. **Landscape/Visual Amenity/Green Belt encroachment**
   - 70 per cent on Oxford's green belt
   - 115km of fenced footpaths
   - Over 2,000,000 solar panels
   - No Visual Amenity Assessment

2. **Historical Environment**
   - Adjacent to a World Heritage site
   - Potential damage to archaeological sites

3. **Agricultural land use**
   - 1400ha some of which (*circa* 40%) has an Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) of at least 3a - Good Quality Agricultural Land. This has led to removing land from tenant farmers already producing satisfactory yields of crops and
   - Disproving 'poor quality land' argument with the potential loss of 450,000t of grain over the lifetime of the project.

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What were the other issues that challenged BWSF?



1. **Flooding** The geology and topography would have led to an Increased risk of flooding in Cassington and Cumnor.
2. **Ecological** - rare and Internationally protected bat species. Confused skylark mitigation proposals.
3. **Community agriculture** -intended to introduce large scale plots of land for commercial producers and communities to grow food crops. This is not required and it would likely be completely unworkable.
4. **Community Impact** the failure to address the loss of visual amenity for the residents most affected by the siting of the solar panels.
5. **Infrastructure** - no settled plans for an electricity sub-station to connect the output of BWSF to the National Grid until Q4 2031
6. **Aviation** The risks to trainee pilots at London Oxford Airport.

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The Great Man would have said....

"Never in the course of human history have so many solar panels been proposed so close to so many people! Let us protest in the fields and on the hills; we shall never surrender!"



AND WE DIDN'T

And how does BWSF measure up?

Prioritise the use of brownfield land.	NO
Benefit the local economy.	NO
Be supported and/or owned by local communities.	NO
Bring net benefits to wildlife.	?
Avoid/minimise loss of productive agricultural land.	NO
Avoid use of designated land such as Green Belt and SSSIs	NO
Avoid/minimise impact on footpaths, landscape, tranquillity and cultural Heritage.	NO



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Oh yeah!



What is there left to say?

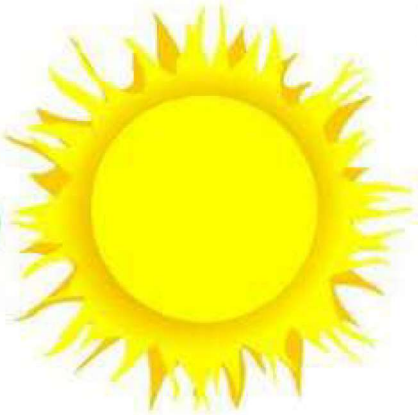
Well done Stop Botley West !

Throughout the long and torturous 4 years SBW have been opposing BWSF we have been supported by many people and organisations. We have received help and monetary donations from our supporters that have enabled us to commission consultants on landscape, heritage and a barrister to represent and advise us throughout the public Examination process.

Our thanks particularly to the following....

- Our local Members of Parliament
- Oxford Host Authorities,
  WODC, VWHDC, CherwellDC, OCC
- The Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE).
- AND particularly the overwhelming support
  of the local residents of the 15 towns and villages affected.

Well done to everyone who supported the campaign.



- We are not against the need for solar power just not this much of it in one place!
- www.stopbotleywest.com

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Exit

The story of the campaign from 2022 to 2026

evidence not outrage!

