



The countryside charity  
Oxfordshire

Campaigning to protect our rural county

3 July 2024

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Dear PVDP,

## **RE: Botley West Targeted Consultation – June/July 2024 – Response from CPRE Oxfordshire**

CPRE Oxfordshire remains opposed in principle to the Botley West Solar Farm proposal as this is an entirely inappropriate location for solar energy generation in terms of its impact on the Green Belt, productive farmland, the countryside and ecology, and local communities.

In relation to this ‘targeted’ consultation, we have the following specific comments:

### **1. Unacceptable Impacts on the Public Rights of Way Network**

We are concerned about the multiple proposed impacts on the local Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Network.

Of particular concern are:

- *Change 1*, which would impact Dornford Lane, an ancient drovers’ road, and the Sustrans national cycle route NCR5.
- *Change 3* which would impact both the above, plus Wootton BR21, an east-west green lane linking Wootton to Dornford Lane
- *Change 9* which would impact Sustrans NCR5 as well as the Glyme Valley Way
- *Change 18* There is a clear error in the applicants’ document as the text re Change 18 refers inter alia to Eynsham where in fact most of Change 50 is located. The Thames Path/OGBW are, of course, on the other side of the river in Cumnor. However, Change 18 may still affect public rights of way, as, while it is unclear whether it refers to the bridleways themselves or a strip of land alongside them, it follows Woodstock BR5/Shipton-on-Cherwell BR3, a green lane following the current perimeter of the built-up area and Shipton-on-Cherwell BR2 towards Shipton village. Given the harm that would be caused, we object to cable-laying within the surface of the bridleways.
- *Change 16*: impacting Woodstock FP6, part of an easy and popular circular walk from Woodstock, which goes through a beautiful tunnel of trees and well established hedges.
- *Change 28*: impacting Bladon BR5, part of Shakespeare’s Way and an important route out of Bladon village into woodland known as Bladon Heath and towards Begbroke and Yarnton.



In addition to the localised impacts, we have two over-arching concerns:

- a) **Surface deterioration** - Laying cables under the surface of green lanes in the Oxfordshire Cotswolds would be undesirable for rights of way users as their topsoil tends to get sticky, not to say very muddy, when wet. In so far as they are reasonably satisfactory to use at the moment is due to the fact that their surfaces have been compacted by decades, if not centuries of regular use. For these surfaces now to be excavated would therefore inevitably lead to them becoming softer than previously and more susceptible to mud problems.
- b) **Cumulative impact** – although some of the impacts are listed as temporary, multiple interventions across the area could put much of the local PRoW Network out of action at the same time, which would be hugely detrimental to the amenity of local residents.

Whilst the new footbridge provided under *Change 34* would improve the connectivity of the local path network, it would be at the expense of the total destruction of the countryside which this path network serves.

## 2. Unacceptable impact on valuable meadowland of cable routing across the Thames

*Change 50* - We are pleased to note the dropping of the proposed cable routes that would have directly impacted the Long Mead Wildlife Site. However, the remaining routes would still directly impact very important restoration meadows and in our view it would be difficult to mitigate or compensate for this harm.

Putting cabling under the river and towpath would be undesirable wherever it is located as it would be likely to destabilise the riverbank and thus increase the risk of towpath erosion. With the recent increased tendency to flooding the banks are already under increased pressure and so erosion is more likely and cable-laying would be only likely to exacerbate this situation.

Yours faithfully

*H. Marshall*

Helen Marshall  
Director, CPRE Oxfordshire