

STOP BOTLEY WEST RESPONSE TO BOTLEY WEST SOLAR FARM VETERAN TREE TARGETED CONSULTATION (15th AUGUST – 15th SEPTEMBER 2024)

Stop Botley West is a community campaign group that began in November 2022 when local residents were first informed about the proposal to construct Botley West Solar Farm. We recognise the urgent need for bold collective action to address the devastation of climate change. However the climate crisis cannot be used to justify ill-considered, poorly planned projects that cause more harms than benefits. We believe the harms that would be caused by the proposed project would substantially outweigh the benefits it would create for reasons that are outlined in our response to the statutory public consultation.

Regarding the amendment proposed in the Veteran Tree Targeted Consultation, we note that the Applicant claims the purpose of the proposed amendment is to avoid or minimise environmental effects of cables on the veteran tree. We note also that the Applicant claims there is unlikely to be a change in environmental impacts already reported on as part of the Phase Two statutory consultation.

We have inspected the veteran oak tree that is the subject of this consultation, measured its circumference and canopy reach and referred to root protection guidance published by Forestry England and Woodland Trust.

We conclude that, like the earlier cable route proposed, the new cable route options would take the cable too close to the veteran tree in question and would cause serious and unacceptable damage to its root system.

Furthermore we have inspected the surroundings of the veteran oak tree. They include a large number of mature oak trees in the immediate vicinity of the cable route on land owned by Merton College on the southern boundary of Worton Heath/Bladon Heath ancient woodland. It is therefore likely that the cable route options could damage the root systems of other established veteran trees as well as the one that is the subject of this consultation.

We believe the Applicant's claim that the cable routes would avoid or minimise the environmental effects on the established veteran tree is incorrect and misleading and that the proposed amendment would cause unacceptable environmental harm.

Stop Botley West Campaign
3rd September 2024