# Botley West Solar Farm faces growing opposition as Planning Inspectorate review intensifies



At the heart of the continuing debate around the Botley West Solar Farm is a clash between the urgent demand for renewable energy and the deep-rooted concerns of local communities. Recently, the Stop Botley West group held a protest that gathered approximately 50 supporters who marched from Blenheim Palace—a site of significant cultural heritage—through the areas impacted by the proposed solar farm, estimated to cover nearly 3,500 acres across Botley, Woodstock, and Kidlington. Professor Alex Rogers, the chair of the group, voiced the collective apprehension regarding the scale and placement of the solar panels, asserting, “Losing this valuable green space will have an impact on physical and mental health,” thereby linking environmental issues to broader social well-being.

This demonstration comes at a pivotal moment, as the Planning Inspectorate is currently conducting a six-month examination of the project, which began earlier this May. The examination will culminate in a recommendation to the Energy and Net Zero Secretary, Ed Miliband, who will make the final decision. Over 1,000 community members have raised objections, primarily regarding the project's potential destruction of local biodiversity and agrarian landscapes. Critics have also highlighted that the solar farm entails substantial alterations to the local environment, with the Oxford Preservation Trust questioning the sufficiency of proposed landscape mitigation measures to counter the anticipated changes to both the Green Belt and local recreational spaces.

In stark contrast, proponents of the Botley West project, including Photovolt director Mark Owen-Lloyd, have countered that the initiative is crucial for Oxfordshire's energy transition. He stressed that the solar farm could generate up to 840 megawatts of electricity, enough to power over 330,000 homes. Owen-Lloyd also pointed out that the land used for the project would be largely poor-quality farmland, allowing the opportunity for ecological recovery. He argued that with current targets necessitating 70 gigawatts of installed solar power by 2035, the land required for this project represents a fraction of what is used for recreational purposes, such as golf courses.

However, concerns surrounding biodiversity were echoed in the statement from the Stop Botley West Campaign, which challenged claims of biodiversity gains associated with the solar farm. They have raised alarms about the removal of hedgerows that are vital habitats for local species, questioning the straightforward categorisation of biodiversity benefits arising from large-scale developments. The Land Is Ours campaign group further illustrated this perspective by asserting that the development would occupy a staggering 75% of Green Belt land and be detrimental to delicate ecosystems around Blenheim Palace.

The Planning Inspectorate's examination continues, having begun with open meetings in Oxford. While the developers present their case for a cleaner energy future, local opposition continues to advocate for a reassessment of the environmental impacts, including calls for a new consultation process to ensure broader community engagement. Virtually every aspect of the project is under scrutiny, as communities weigh the need for renewable energy against the preservation of their local environment and heritage.

With objections mounting and the Inspectorate's review ongoing, the future of the Botley West Solar Farm remains uncertain. Proponents argue that such initiatives are essential for sustainable energy, while opponents remain steadfast, insisting that alternative solutions that preserve green spaces should be pursued.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25228610.oxfordshire-botley-wests-photovolt-hit-back-criticisms/?ref=rss), [[4]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24396217.campaigners-call-new-botley-west-solar-farm-consultation/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25228610.oxfordshire-botley-wests-photovolt-hit-back-criticisms/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk/botley-west-solar-farm-0), [[5]](https://stopbotleywest.com/biodiverstiy)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://tlio.org.uk/stop-botley-west/), [[6]](https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/23257690.botley-solar-farm-ocean-glass-steel-objectors-say/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25228610.oxfordshire-botley-wests-photovolt-hit-back-criticisms/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk/botley-west-solar-farm-0> - The Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT) has expressed concerns regarding the Botley West Solar Farm proposal, highlighting its potential adverse impact on Oxford's Green Belt. They note that the introduction of numerous solar panels could fundamentally alter local landscapes. While acknowledging the project's potential to contribute to renewable energy, OPT questions whether the proposed landscape mitigation measures are sufficient to address the dramatic changes anticipated over the next generation. They also raise concerns about the loss of recreational open space for local communities and the environmental impact of solar panel production and disposal.
3. <https://tlio.org.uk/stop-botley-west/> - The Land Is Ours (TLIO) campaign group has raised significant objections to the Botley West Solar Farm proposal. They highlight the project's vast scale, covering 3,500 acres and affecting over 15 villages, with more than 2 million solar panels and 110 km of footpaths. The development would occupy 75% of Green Belt land, with 45% of the panel area on best and most versatile farmland. Additionally, the site is within the setting of Blenheim Palace and threatens rare water meadows by the Thames, as well as other heritage assets. TLIO advocates for alternative renewable energy solutions that do not compromise green spaces and productive farmland.
4. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24396217.campaigners-call-new-botley-west-solar-farm-consultation/> - Campaigners have called for a new consultation on the Botley West Solar Farm, expressing concerns over the adequacy of the previous consultation process. They argue that important affected villages, including Wootton, Tackley, and Combe, were not included in consultation meetings. Additionally, they criticise the quality of information provided, stating that accessible information, maps, and photomontages were insufficient. Professor Alex Rogers, chair of the Stop Botley West Community group, emphasised the need for an accessible, informative, and accurate consultation process, given the project's potential impact on vital issues such as loss of Green Belt land, productive arable land, and damage to biodiversity.
5. <https://stopbotleywest.com/biodiverstiy> - The Stop Botley West Campaign has raised concerns about the project's impact on biodiversity. They question the effectiveness of the proposed biodiversity gain, noting that the removal of hedgerows for infrastructure could negatively affect species that depend on them, such as the yellowhammer. The campaign highlights the complexity of biodiversity and cautions against simple claims of benefits from large-scale projects like Botley West. They advocate for a more nuanced understanding of the environmental impacts and the needs of species, including those threatened nationally.
6. <https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/23257690.botley-solar-farm-ocean-glass-steel-objectors-say/> - Objectors to the Botley West Solar Farm have described the planned development as creating an 'ocean of glass and steel'. The proposal spans three sites near Woodstock, Kidlington, and Cumnor, with Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP) stating it could deliver 840MW of green energy, enough to power 330,000 homes. However, local councils and residents have raised concerns about the project's impact on the Green Belt, local landscape character, and the potential loss of recreational open space. Blenheim Estate, which owns much of the land, believes the proposal will help safeguard energy supplies but acknowledges the need for further consultation.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-67761121> - Developers of the Botley West Solar Farm have proposed offering energy discounts to residents living near the panels. The 1,000-hectare (2,471-acre) project would cover sites near Botley, Kidlington, and Woodstock. Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP) intends to deliver affordable renewable power to residents at preferential rates. The project aims to provide 840MW of power, enough to supply around 330,000 homes, equivalent to every home in Oxfordshire. However, campaigners have raised concerns about the farm's impact on wildlife and the Oxford Green Belt, advocating for alternative methods of creating green energy, such as rooftop solar installations.