

Public speakers

23 January 2023

1. Helen Marshall has asked the following questions on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire

CPRE Oxfordshire is pleased to note that the Environment Advisory Group (Agenda Item 9b – [Minutes of EAG meeting, 12 December](#)) is starting to consider a piece of work on solar development within the county. At the moment, solar energy proposals in the county – from the agglomerations around Tetsworth and Nuneham Courtenay to the 10km² Botley West (Blenheim) proposal - are being driven by what is effectively speculative development, sacrificing greenfield sites and with little benefit to the local community.

Even the most ambitious route within the Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCo) report suggested that only 1% of Oxfordshire's land area is needed for solar energy production, and therefore there are clear choices to be made about its location. It could be accommodated on existing roofs without touching undeveloped land at all and in particular there is no justification for allowing solar development on designated landscape like Green Belt and AONB, locally valued landscape, or best value agricultural land.

We believe that a county-wide strategy for renewable energy is now needed as a matter of urgency, to ensure we get what is needed quickly and in the most appropriate and least damaging locations, prioritising brownfield sites and rooftop renewables. We would expect the public to be fully engaged at all stages in the development of this strategy - not 'once the actions are agreed a communications piece should follow to "bring the public along"' (as started in the EAG Minutes with regards to the PaZCo Action Plan).

Will the Future Oxfordshire Partnership now commit to:

- a) The development of a county-wide strategy for renewable energy (if necessary, delivered by embedding in individual Local Plans)?
- b) Full public engagement in the development of this strategy?
- c) An ambitious timetable to put these actions in place as quickly as possible?

Response

The councils are currently developing a route map of realistically achievable actions arising from the PaZCO report. We plan to bring an update to the FOP meeting in March in which we expect to provide more detail on the councils' approach to renewable energy.