Botley West Solar Farm

Phase One Community Consultation Leaflet

November 2022

Introduction

Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP) is proposing a new solar farm in the west of Oxfordshire called Botley West Solar Farm.

Botley West Solar Farm (Botley West) could deliver 840 Megawatts (MW) of clean affordable power to the National Grid. The project presents a real opportunity to contribute to achieving the UK's climate goals and to help deliver Oxfordshire's Energy Strategy and transition to net-zero.

The 840 MW of electricity that could be delivered by Botley West is equivalent to powering approximately 330,000 homes. For context, that's enough to power every home in Oxfordshire[1].

This consultation leaflet introduces who we are, our proposals for Botley West, and how you can get involved in our Phase One consultation.

Details on how to get in touch and find out more about Botley West Solar Farm can be found on the back cover of this leaflet.

Who We Are

Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP) is a developer of solar power projects. We have an 18-year track-record of delivering large-scale solar projects in Europe and Japan.

Our approach is to design solar projects and manage these from inception, generation, and through to decommissioning.

PVDP will therefore be the Applicant for this project.

Why 'Botley West'?

Botley West Solar Farm will connect into a new National Grid substation, proposed to be built and located west of Botley, hence the name Botley West.

[1] You can see how we calculated this figure on our website

Our Phase One Consultation

We are at an early stage of developing the proposals for Botley West. The design of the solar farm will be informed by feedback we receive and the results of our ongoing Environmental Impact Assessment process.

Our Phase One consultation starts on **3 November 2022**. It will run for **six weeks**, closing on **15 December 2022**. A further consultation event is planned in Spring 2023.

During this time, you can engage with our proposals in a number of ways:

Attend one of our community information events
We are holding a series of 'drop-in' events across the area. These events provide an opportunity to view materials and discuss the proposals with members of the project team.

Details of our information events can be found on **page 18.**

Visit our project website
Our dedicated website **(www.botleywest.co.uk)** provides the latest project information, including relevant documents and answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ's). Here you can view and download all consultation documents and information.

Contact our team
A freephone information line, project email address, and freepost address are available for anyone wishing to get in touch. These details are listed on the back page of this leaflet.

Provide your feedback
We want to hear any views you may have on our proposals. You can submit your feedback via our website, by completing a feedback form at one of our events, by writing to us, or by email. Please get in touch with us if you're not sure how best to provide your feedback.

Location

We are developing proposals for a site area of approximately 1400 hectares, excluding connecting cable routes, within the administrative areas of West Oxfordshire, Cherwell and Vale of White Horse. Within the site area we will be installing solar panels and other infrastructure on approximately 1000 hectares, leaving significant areas for mitigation and enhancements for the local landscape, wildlife and recreational use.

Why here?

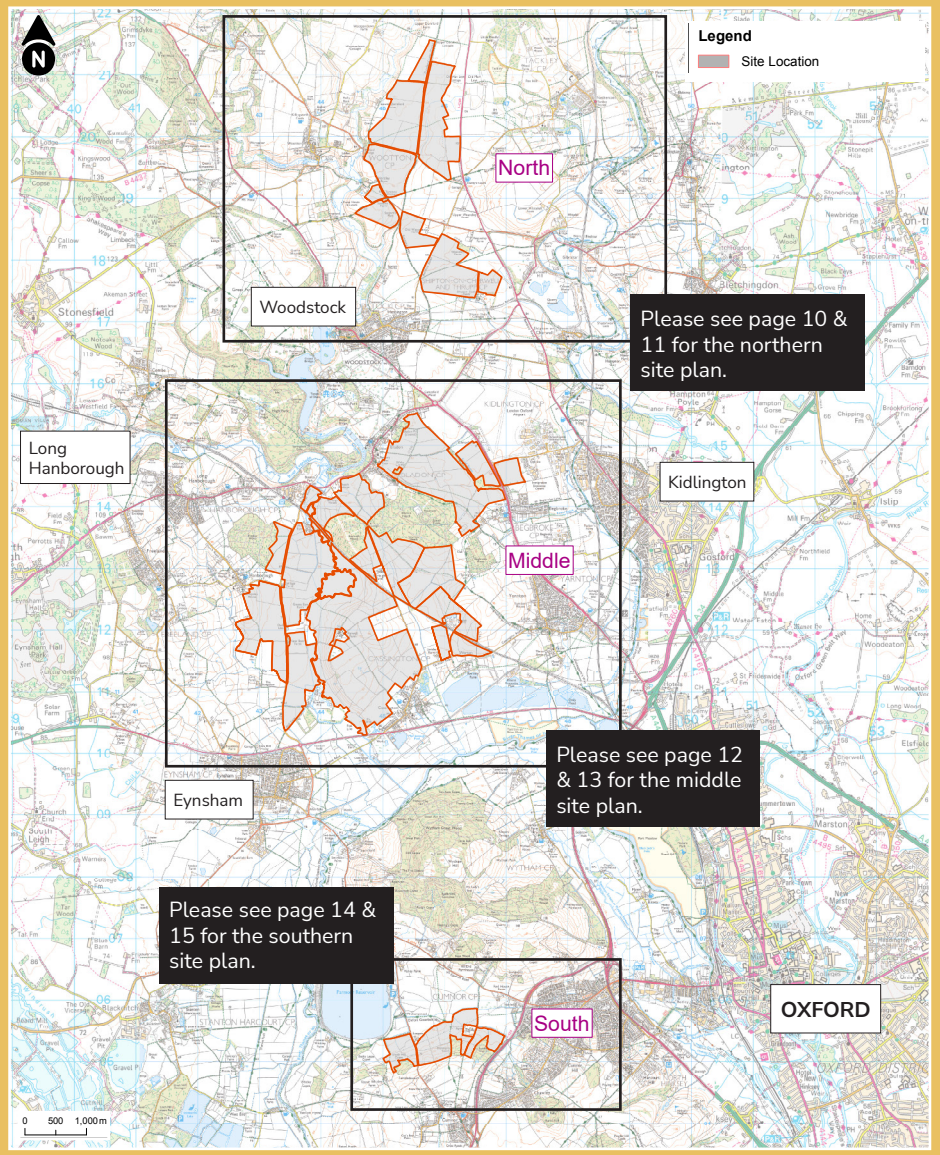
The location of the proposed site was driven by a number of different factors. Discussions were held with National Grid to identify where their priorities were to meet demand and manage the UK electricity supply network. As a result PVDP became aware that National Grid had decided to invest in reinforcing and extending the grid network in the area, partly in response to Oxfordshire's fast-growing economy and the increasing demand for electricity. Following these discussions, a high-level site search exercise was undertaken by PVDP to consider the availability and suitability of land to accommodate a solar farm.

Those elements in combination led to focus on land in Oxfordshire and ultimately to the proposed application site. The precise project boundaries and overall size of the project have been influenced by landownership, commercial viability and availability of a grid connection. The boundaries have been continually refined based on known or assumed physical and environmental constraints.

The proposals are being developed through agreement with supportive landowners with a genuine and long-standing connection to the local area, including Blenheim Estate and Merton College. By working with these landowners, Botley West will be developed to align with their long-term strategies for sustainably managing their estates.

Ambitious climate targets have been set at both the national and local level, with Oxfordshire Authorities leading the charge with their climate goals. Botley West will make a significant contribution towards achieving these.

Overview Site Location Plan



The Opportunity

Solar energy is key to decarbonising the UK's economy. Botley West will significantly contribute to this, helping to deliver local and regional targets.

Fighting climate change

The UK is seeing the effects of climate change like never before – recently experiencing the hottest day on record[2]. The UK Government has committed to clear targets for decarbonising our electricity system[3]. A secure, low carbon, low-cost electricity supply is needed.

Botley West will contribute to **decarbonising** our electricity, significantly helping to deliver Oxfordshire's **transition to net-zero**, by **removing 14.4 million tonnes**[4] of carbon over its operational lifetime.

Securing our energy supply

The security of the UK's energy supply has recently come into sharp focus[5]. Homegrown clean electricity at scale is key to securing a reliable source of power for UK homes and businesses.

Botley West will deliver **secure homegrown** power directly to the National Grid, helping to reduce our reliance on imported energy.

[2] Met Office, 'Record breaking temperatures for the UK', July 2022
[3] UK Government, 'Net Zero Strategy', October 2021
[4] Based on Solar Trade Association's statistic that for every 5 MW installed, a solar farm will save 2,150 tonnes of CO_2
[5] UK Government, 'British Energy Security Strategy', April 2022

Providing affordable, low-carbon energy

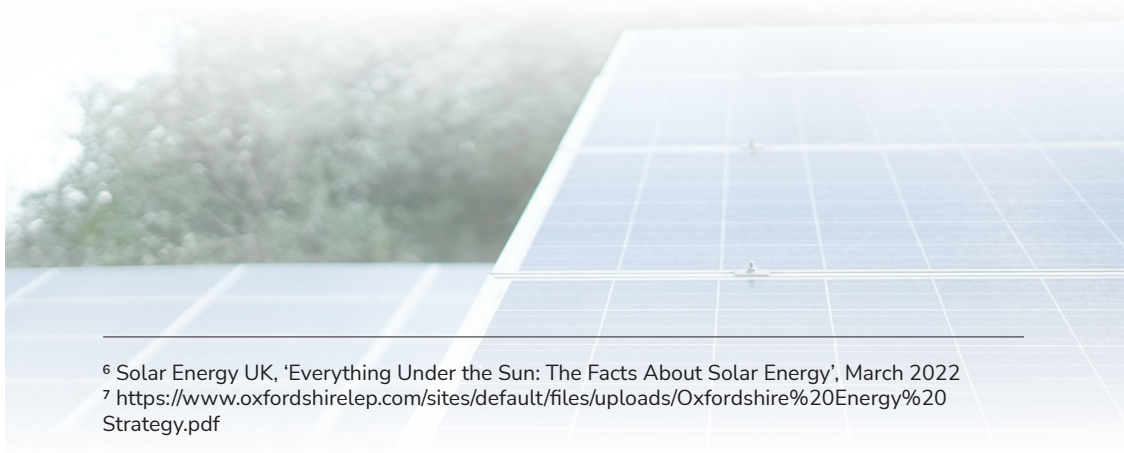
Demand for electricity is increasing alongside household bills. Solar is the most affordable renewable energy in the UK[6]. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has identified solar and wind as the main renewable resources to tackle high energy prices and reduce our reliance and fossil fuels in the long term.

Botley West could generate enough low-cost clean and renewable electricity to power approximately **330,000** homes.

Supporting Oxfordshire's ambitious climate targets

Oxfordshire is leading the way in the fight against climate change, with ambitious targets that can make a real difference. The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy[7], signed up to by all councils within Oxfordshire, has been adopted to act against climate change.

Botley West will lead the way in **achieving Oxfordshire's Energy Strategy** agreed target of 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, and 100% net zero carbon emissions by 2050.



[6] Solar Energy UK, 'Everything Under the Sun: The Facts About Solar Energy', March 2022
[7] https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Oxfordshire%20Energy%20Strategy.pdf

Boosting biodiversity and respecting the local environment

Botley West presents a rare and fantastic opportunity to bring about significant environmental gains in Oxfordshire. Our proposals are being developed to deliver a meaningful net gain in biodiversity across the site area. This could be achieved through enriching existing landscape and ecological features, improving soil quality, and introducing new habitats to provide an attractive area for a variety of wildlife.

Botley West will add to Oxfordshire's **biodiversity** by helping to protect and rebuild habitats on land currently used for agriculture.

Contributing to Oxfordshire's economy

As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, Botley West represents an investment in the area. We will be developing a Supply Chain, Skills and Employment Plan to set out how this investment may provide opportunities to the local economy.

Botley West will provide **supply chain and employment opportunities** during the construction and operational phases.

Protecting the land

Solar farms are temporary in their nature and are quick to build, as well as quick to remove. Typically, solar farms have a lifespan of between 35 and 40 years.

Following the end of Botley West's operation, the solar equipment will be removed, and the site will be returned to agricultural use.

Our Proposals

We want to illustrate how Botley West could look, once developed. These plans can be found on pages **10 - 15** and on our website.

Throughout the proposed site we intend to build in measures to avoid or minimise any adverse environmental effects, and to secure as many public or environmental improvements as is reasonably possible.

To that end, the current concept already:

- Provides 5 - 10 metre buffers for existing trees, hedgerows and woodland, and a 15 metre buffer for ancient woodland areas.
- Provides significant buffer zones in areas close to roads, nearby properties and other sensitive receptors.
- Provides protection for potentially vulnerable locations, as we have removed certain areas from the development boundary.

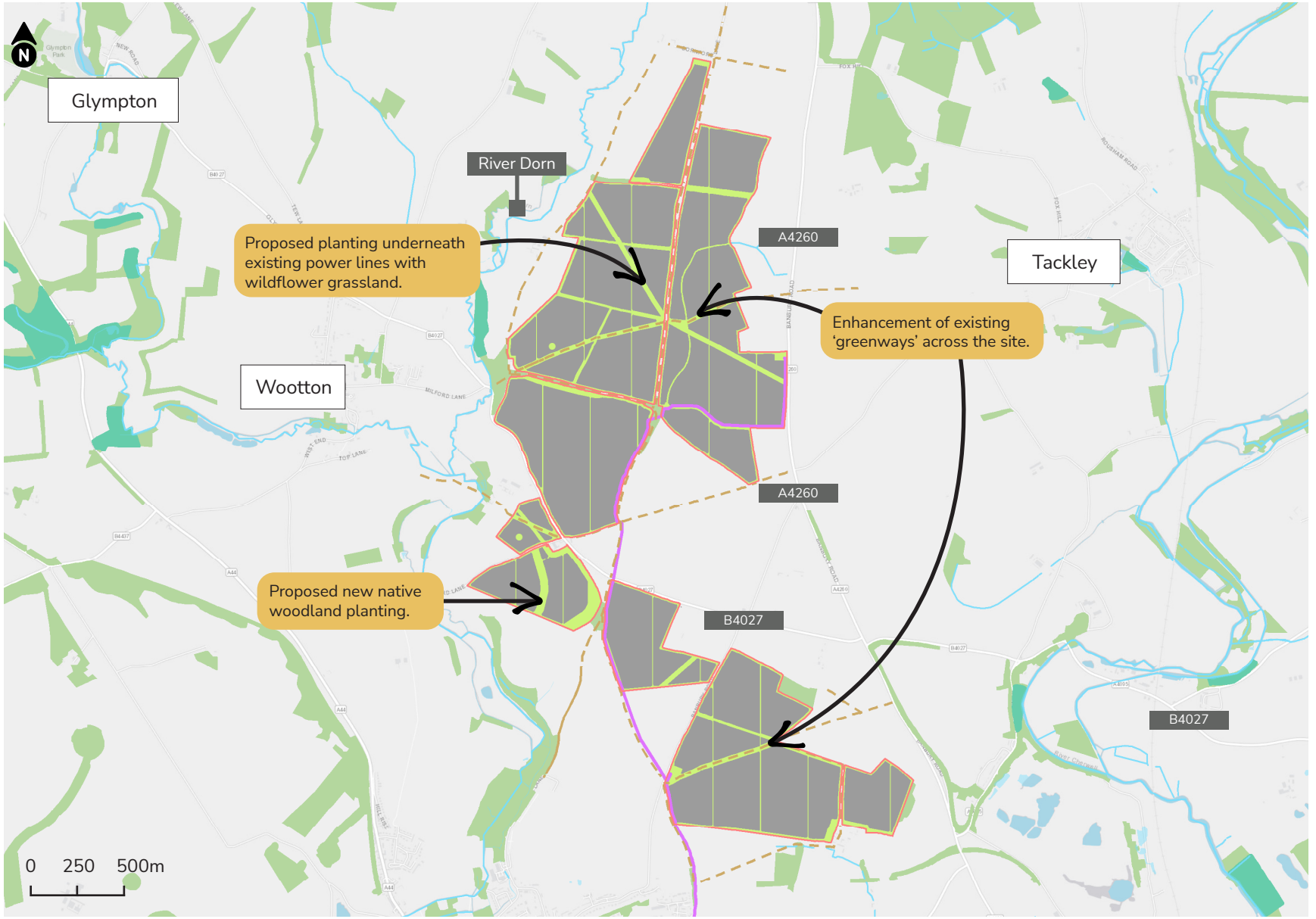
Seeks to avoid adverse impacts on designated heritage assets.

Assumes the retention of existing field patterns and the protection of existing trees, hedgerows and woodland. Where possible, we will enhance existing landscape and ecological features, including the planting of new woodland.

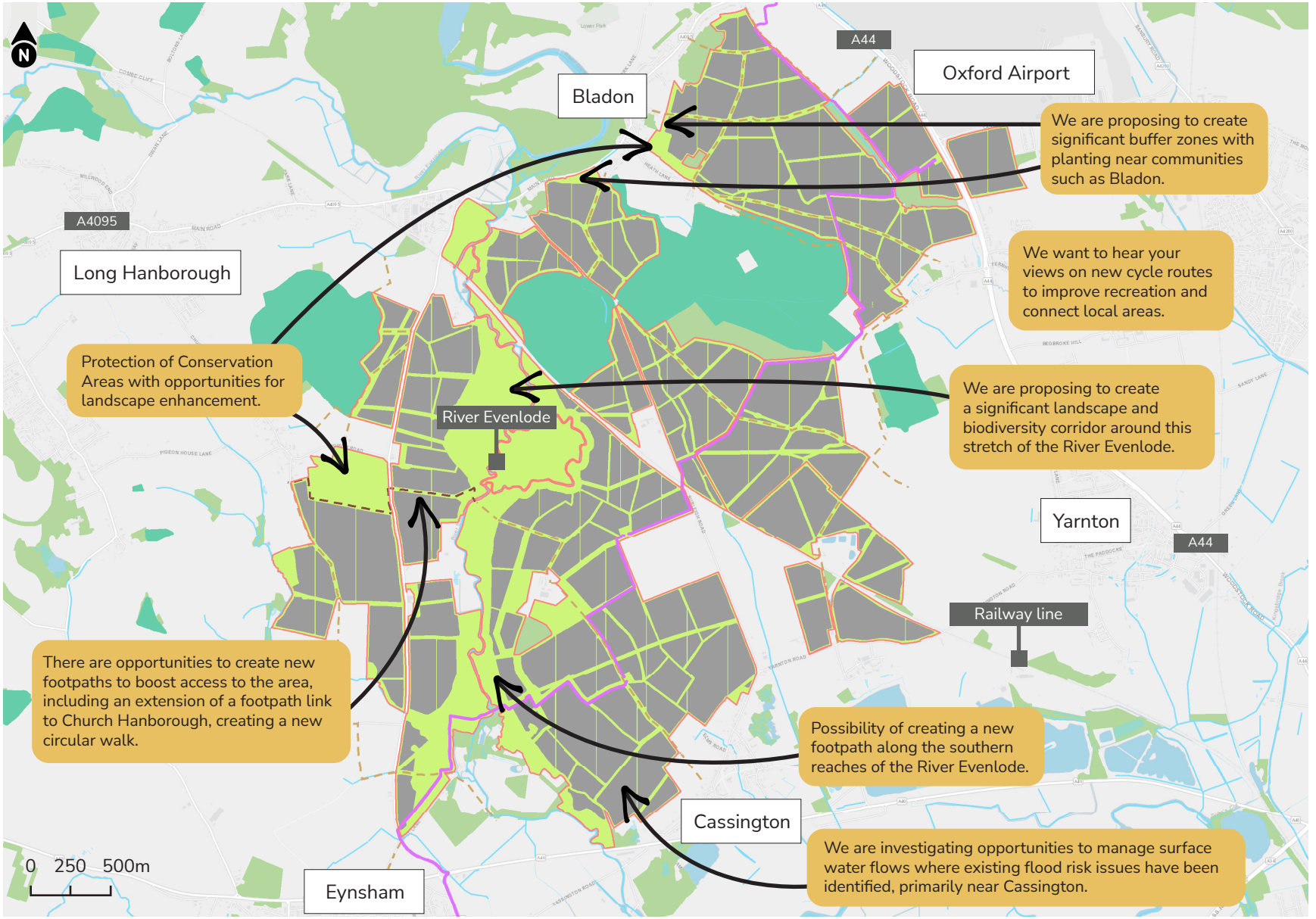
Provides the opportunity for continued agricultural use. This could include sheep grazing, bee keeping, allotments and community gardens.

Assumes the height of the panels we intend to use will be between 1.8m and 2.5m, keeping the height of the panels as low as possible whilst allowing opportunities for sheep grazing.

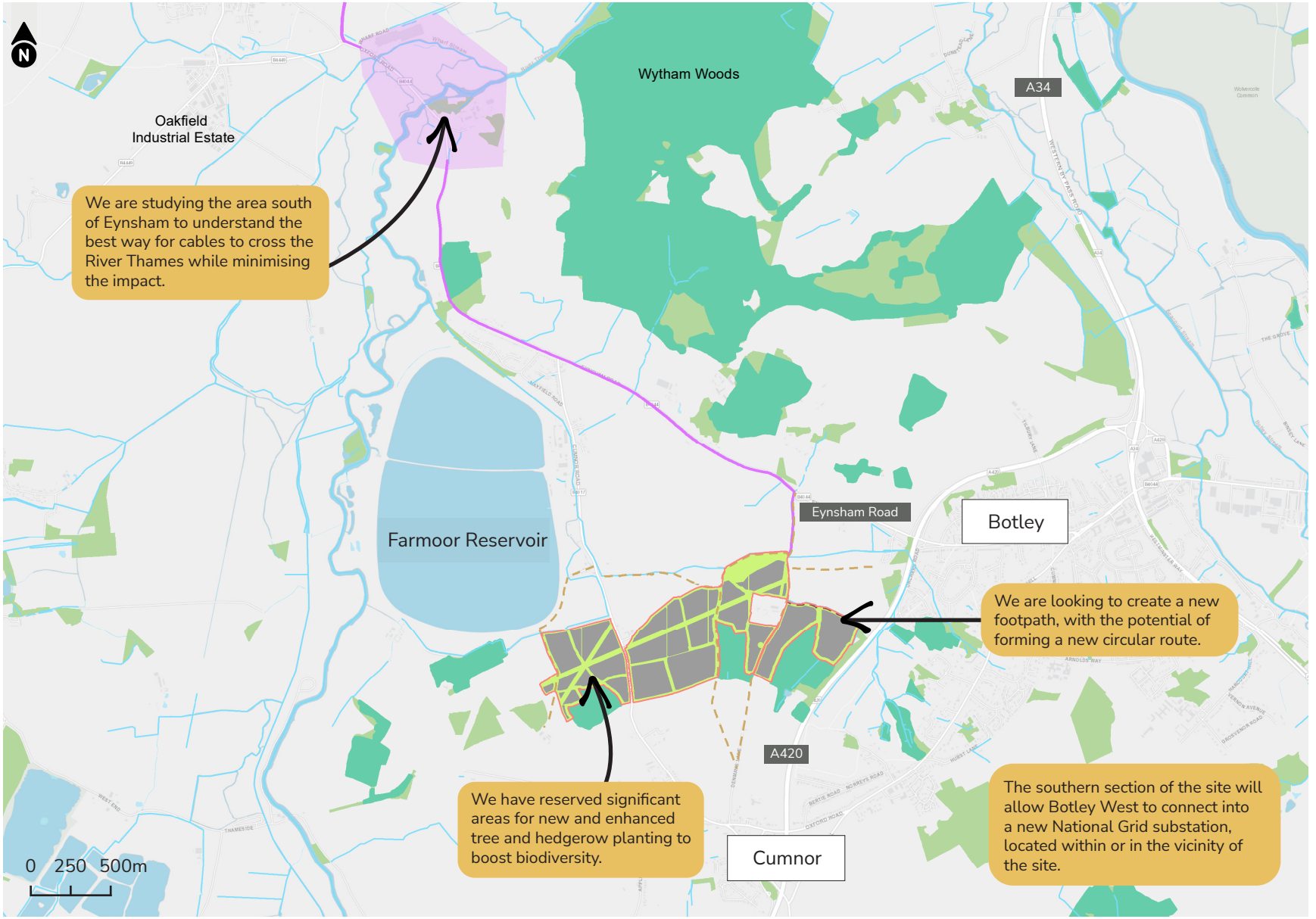
Our Proposals: Northern Site Area



Our Proposals: Middle Site Area



Our Proposals: Southern Site Area



Legend

- Site Location
- Installation Area
- Proposed Mitigation and Enhancement Areas
- Cable Route Study Area
- Indicative Cable Route
- Public Right of Way - Existing
- Public Right of Way - Proposed
- Ancient Woodland
- Other Woodland
- Watercourse

The Planning Process

The amount of clean energy that could be produced by Botley West means that the solar farm is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

Therefore, the development can only be authorised by submitting a Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). Local councils play an important role as consultees in this process.

PINS will review the application and conduct a robust examination of the application before providing a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Secretary of State will then make the final decision on whether to grant the consent for the Botley West Solar Farm.

For our application to be accepted, we will need to demonstrate how we have properly assessed the environmental aspects of the scheme and that we have undertaken meaningful consultation with stakeholders and local communities.

You can read more about the DCO planning process by viewing the PINS website here: **infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/the-process**

Our Consultation Process

We will carry out at least two rounds of consultation with local communities and stakeholders as our proposals develop. We want your feedback to help us understand the most important issues to address and the best opportunities to explore.

This is our first phase of consultation on our initial proposals. We intend to hold a second phase next year, once we have more detailed designs and preliminary environmental information available.

Our second phase of consultation will include sharing the findings of our Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), which will set out any identified potential environmental effects, and the mitigation measures that we will introduce to manage these.

In between rounds of consultation, we will continue to share information and be on hand to respond to enquiries to show how your feedback is shaping our proposals.

Ahead of our second phase of consultation, we will consult with your local planning authorities and publish a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC), describing how we are engaging throughout the project, and how we will seek and collect your feedback to shape our proposals.

Information Events

Please come and meet the team at one of our community information events.

These events will be an opportunity for you to view our early-stage proposals and directly discuss them with members of the project team. We encourage anyone with an interest in our proposals to come along. You are welcome to drop-in at any point during the opening hours.

Location	Date
Woodstock Community Centre New Road, OX20 1PB	**Saturday 19 November** 11am – 4pm
Hanborough Pavilion & Village Hall Roosevelt Road, OX29 8JG	**Wednesday 23 November** 12.30 pm – 4.30pm
Cassington Village Hall The Green, OX29 4AX	**Friday 25 November** 1pm – 5pm
Tackley Village Hall Medcroft Road, OX5 3AH	**Saturday 26 November** 11am – 3pm
Cumnor Village Hall Leys Road, OX2 9QF	**Wednesday 30 November** 1.30pm – 5.30pm
Community Webinar	**Monday 5 December** 5.30pm – 7pm

Details on how to access our Community Webinar can be found on our website: **www.botleywest.co.uk**

Indicative Project Timeline

- **Autumn 2022** Phase One Community Consultation on initial proposals
- **Winter 2022/23** Scoping Report submitted to PINS
- **Winter 2022/23** Consultation with local authorities on draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)
- **Spring 2023** Phase Two Consultation on more detailed design proposals and Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)
- **Winter 2023** DCO application submission
- **2024** DCO examination process
- **Early 2025** Anticipated DCO decision from Secretary of State
- **Summer 2025** Start of Construction

All future dates are indicative and may change.

Contact us

Email: info@botleywest.co.uk

Freephone Information Line: 0808 175 3085
Available Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm
Voicemails can be left outside of these hours

Freepost: BWSF
You will not need a stamp to send any correspondence to the freepost address

Website: www.botleywest.co.uk

If anyone needs this document in large print, audio or braille formats, please contact us using the details above.

Please note that all graphics and maps in this document are for illustrative purposes.