



Botley West Solar Farm

Stakeholder Briefing Pack

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 MW of clean affordable power to the National Grid and provides a real opportunity to contribute to the UK's climate goals and to help deliver Oxfordshire's Energy Strategy and transition to net-zero.

The project is split into three site areas, connected by underground cables, located across the administrative areas of Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, and Vale of White Horse. Together, these site areas would generate enough clean electricity to power approximately 330,000 homes. For context, that's enough to power every home in Oxfordshire.

This briefing pack has been produced to share with you our plans for Botley West at this early stage and explains how your local communities can get involved in our consultation.

Who We Are

PVDP GmbH is a developer of solar power projects. It has an 18-year track-record of delivering large-scale solar projects in Europe and Japan - over 1000 megawatts (MW) to date.

Our approach is to design solar projects, and manage these from inception to generation, employing experts to advise on planning, environment, ecology and the law.

We are engaging with local stakeholders to explore benefits for local communities and support Oxfordshire's energy policy and renewable targets.

Why Solar?

The UK is seeing the effects of climate change like never before – only recently experiencing the hottest day on record¹. The UK Government has committed to clear targets for decarbonising our electricity system². Demand for electricity is increasing and there is an urgent need to reduce household bills. A secure, low carbon, low-cost electricity supply is needed.

Solar is the most affordable renewable energy in the UK³. It does not require any subsidies, so there are no extra costs to the taxpayer. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has identified abundant, cheap renewable resources in the UK, namely solar and wind, as the long-term, sustainable solution to high energy prices and to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels⁴.

The security of energy supply for the UK has recently come into sharp focus⁵. Homegrown clean electricity at scale is key to securing a reliable source of power for UK homes and businesses.

Oxfordshire is leading the way in the fight against climate change, with ambitious targets that can make a real difference. The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy⁶, signed up to by all councils within Oxfordshire, includes:

- **Calls for a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030**
- **A five-fold increase in solar energy by 2030.**

The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy sets out that “The majority of the low carbon energy needed in Oxfordshire is likely to be met by solar PV.” Botley West will contribute significantly to this target, helping both the county and the nation reduce the impacts of climate change and deliver a secure supply of low carbon power.

¹<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/press-office/news/weather-and-climate/2022/red-extreme-heat-warning-ud>

²<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

³<https://solarenergyuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Briefing-Fact-Checker-1.pdf>

⁴https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1098100/review-electricity-market-arrangements.pdf

⁵<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy>

⁶<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Oxfordshire%20Energy%20Strategy.pdf>

Botley West Solar Farm

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.

The proposals are being developed through agreement with supportive landowners with a genuine 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.

The project has secured a grid connection from National Grid to connect 840 MW of clean electricity at a new National Grid substation, which will connect to the existing Walham – Cowley 400kV overhead line.

Some areas of the sites are within Oxfordshire's green belt. Green belt land is important, and only through demonstrating very special circumstances should it be used for development. We recognise this policy, and we are developing the project to demonstrate how these special circumstances will be addressed.

The sites for Botley West avoid statutory landscape designations and are on relatively low lying or undulating land with high solar irradiation. The sites provide the opportunity to enhance and maintain local wildlife habitats, achieving a net gain for biodiversity.

Botley West presents a fantastic opportunity to bring about environmental gains in Oxfordshire. Botley West will not only mitigate any potential biodiversity losses that may arise but will also bring a biodiversity net gain to the site area.

The project will be designed and developed in response to community and stakeholder feedback. We will undertake multiple phases of consultation during the design process, which will include discussing potential opportunities for greater connectivity around the sites and environmental enhancements.

Benefits of Botley West Solar Farm



Botley West could generate enough clean, renewable electricity to power approximately **330,000¹** homes.



Botley West will contribute to **decarbonising** our electricity network and deliver **secure homegrown** power. Solar is one of the cheapest forms of electricity generation in the UK, helping to address rising energy prices.



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



Botley West will significantly help deliver Oxfordshire's **transition to net-zero**, by **removing 14.4 million tonnes of carbon²** over its operational lifetime.



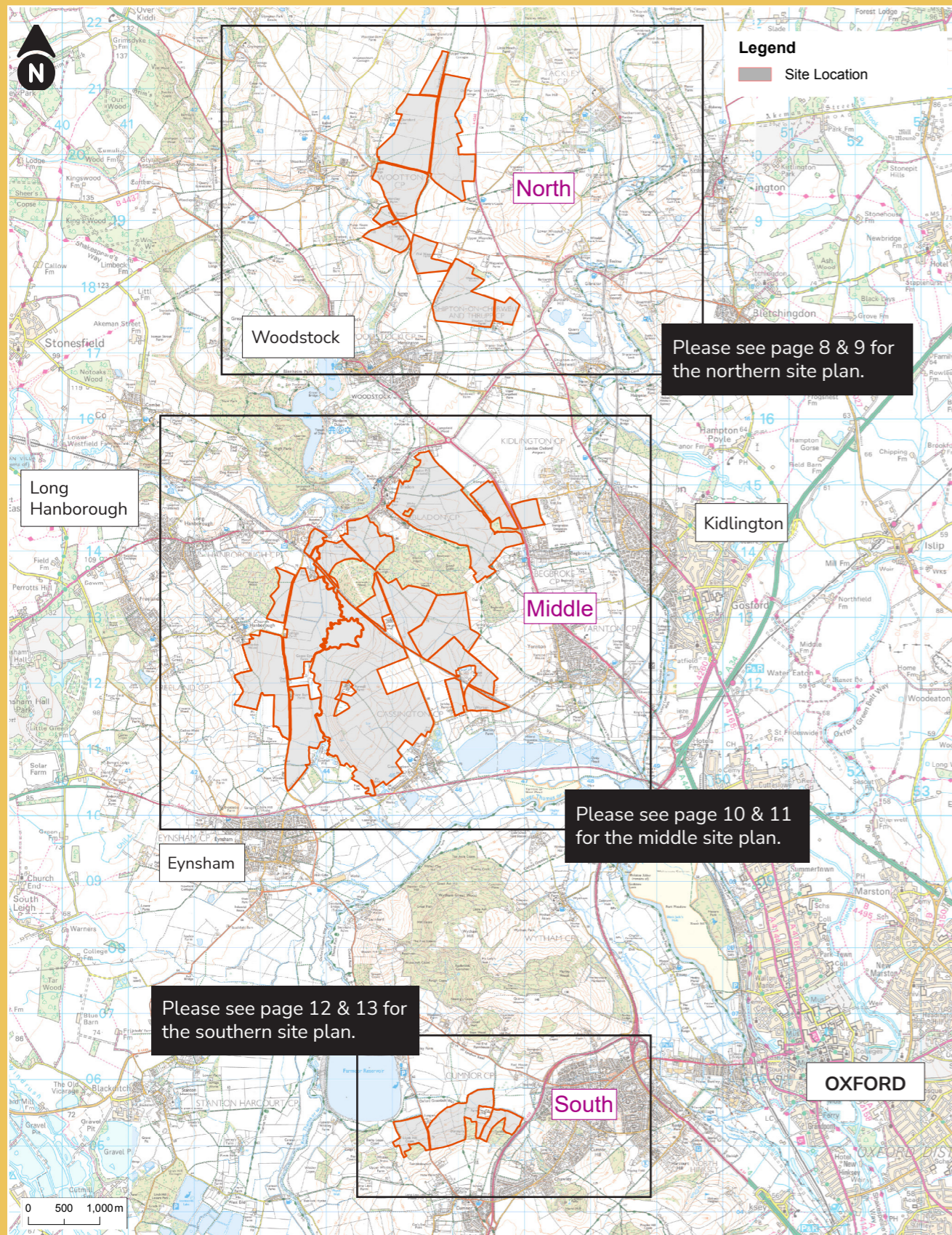
Botley West will lead the way in **achieving Oxfordshire's Energy Strategy³** agreed target of 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, and 100% net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

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

² Based on Solar Trade Association's statistic that for every 5 MW installed, a solar farm will save 2,150 tonnes of CO₂

³ <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Oxfordshire%20Energy%20Strategy.pdf>

Overview Site Location Plan



Our Proposals

We want to illustrate how Botley West could look, once developed. These plans can be found on pages 8 - 13 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.
- Is proposed within a project area that has been refined having regard to the local area and neighbouring properties.



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.

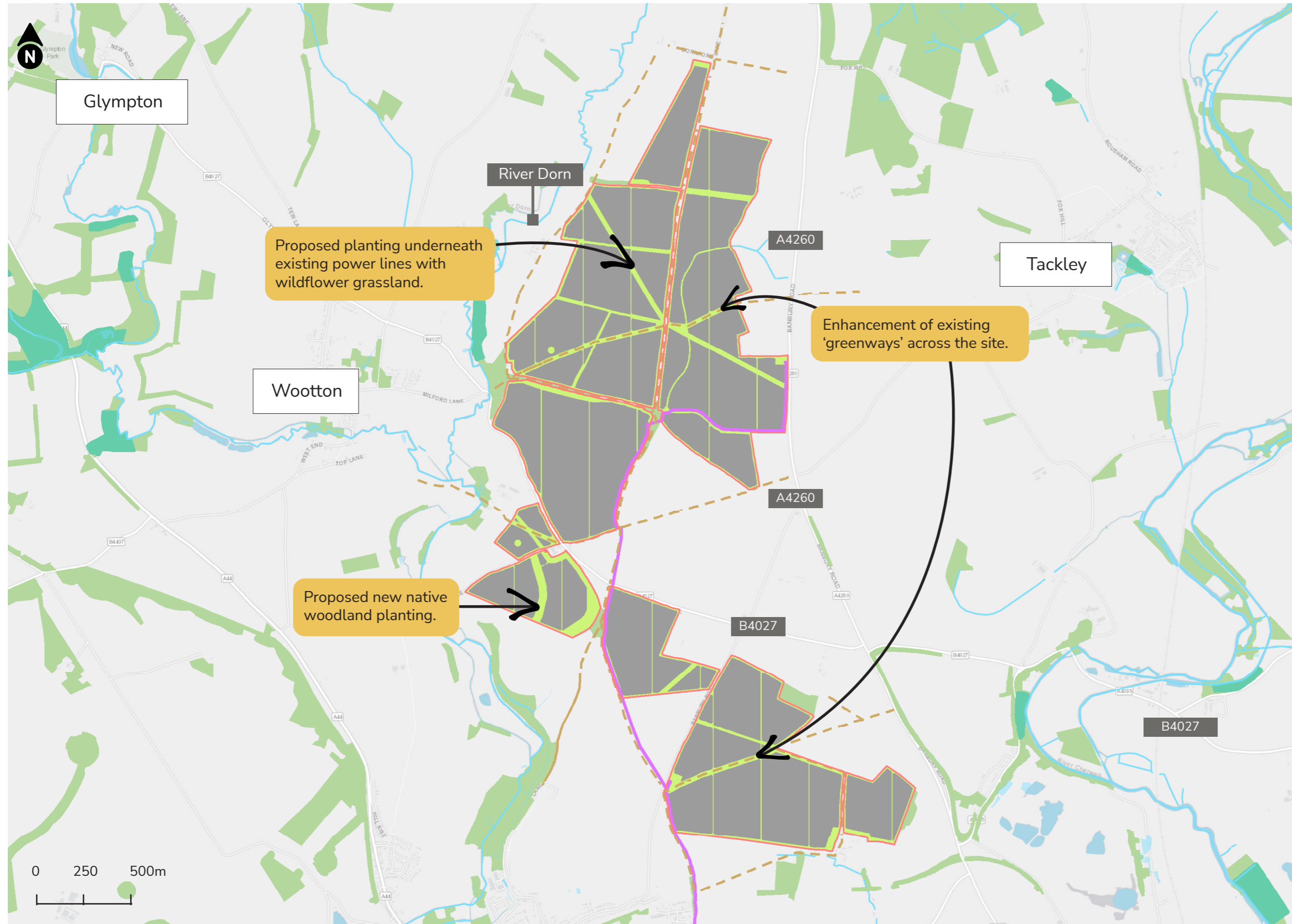


Provides the opportunity for continued agricultural use. This could include sheep grazing, bee keeping, allotments and community gardens.



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.

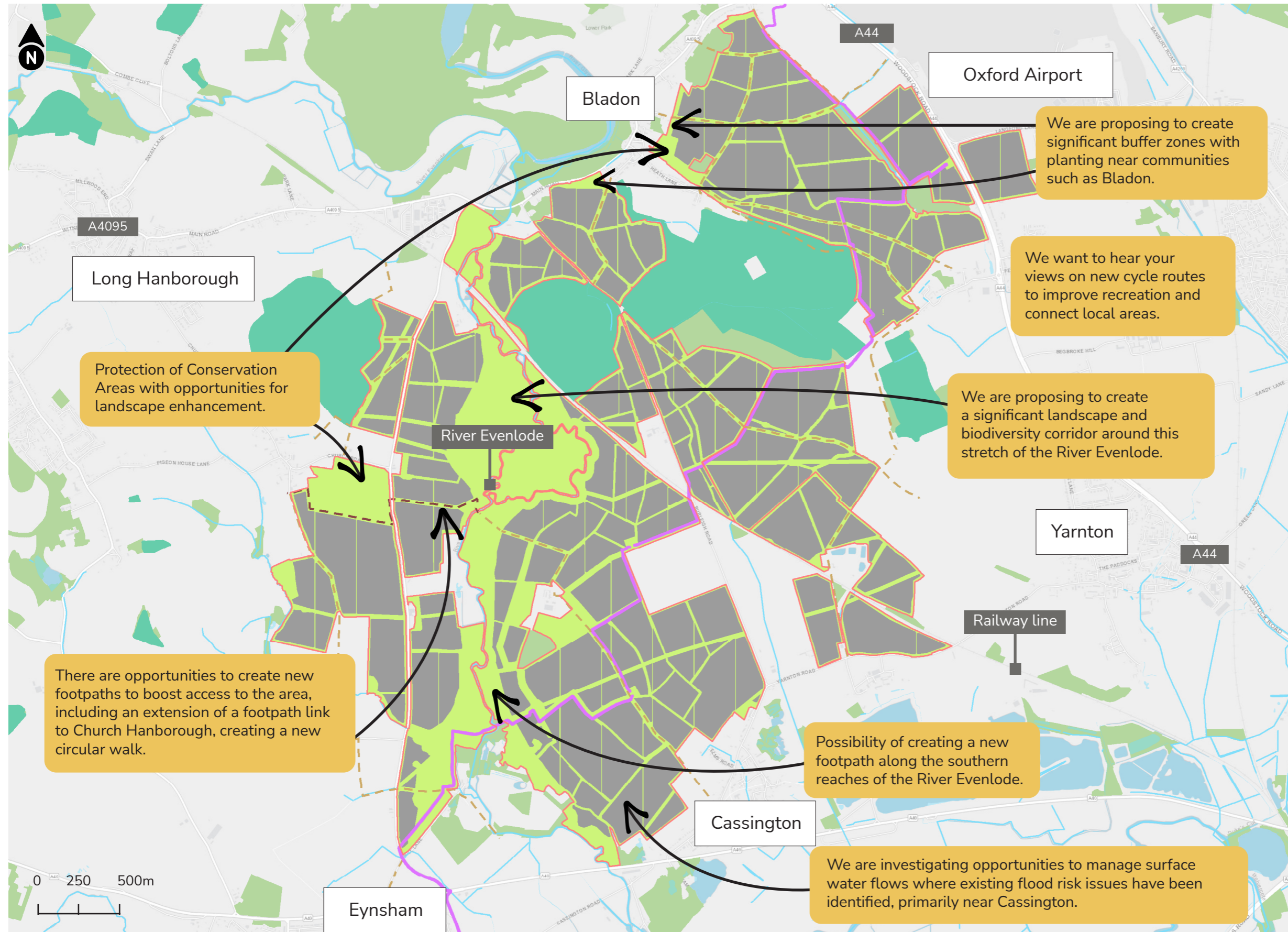
Our Proposals: Northern Site Area



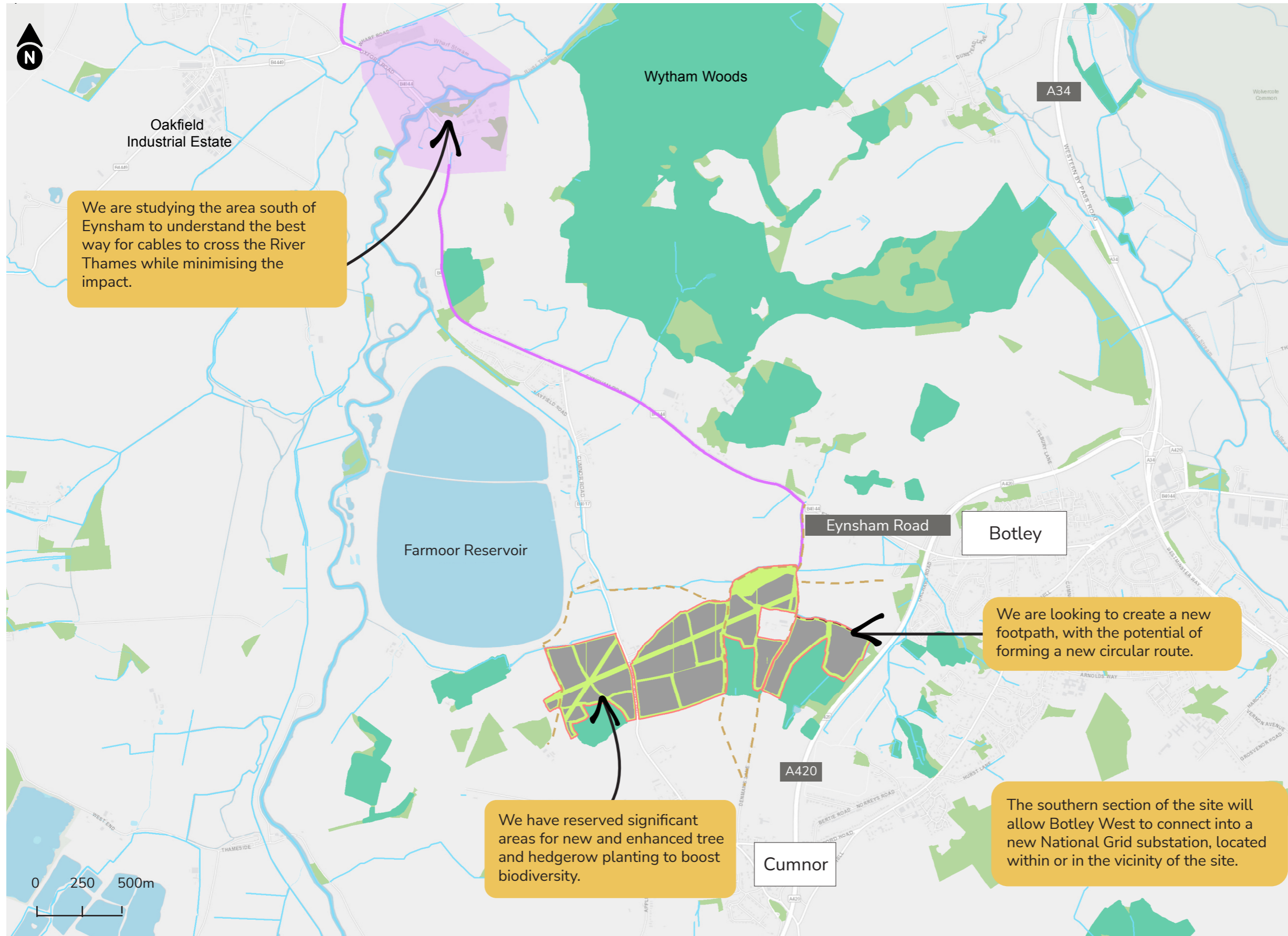
Legend

- Site Location
- Installation Area
- Proposed Mitigation and Enhancement Areas
- Indicative Cable Route
- Ancient Woodland
- Other Woodland
- Watercourse

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

We are studying the area south of Eynsham to understand the best way for cables to cross the River Thames while minimising the impact.

We are looking to create a new footpath, with the potential of forming a new circular route.

We have reserved significant areas for new and enhanced tree and hedgerow planting to boost biodiversity.

The southern section of the site will allow Botley West to connect into a new National Grid substation, located within or in the vicinity of the site.

The Local Environment

There is a need to act on increasing biodiversity in the UK. The UK has seen a 50% loss of biodiversity since the start of the Industrial Revolution, impacting the health of our ecology, animals and ourselves in the future. Botley West Solar Farm will not only mitigate any potential biodiversity losses that may arise but will also aspire to bring a biodiversity net gain to the site area.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be carried out for Botley West. Through this process we will identify and develop appropriate ways of mitigating potential impacts caused by the project, as well as potential opportunities and enhancements.

Well-designed solar farms have the potential to deliver major benefits to the environment. The development of our proposals for Botley West will be guided by our **design principles**.

Design Principles



We want Botley West to be developed in a way that respects existing wildlife, heritage assets and other important natural features.



We want Botley West to blend in with the local area.



We want our proposals for Botley West to include opportunities for the local community, environment, and wildlife.



We want Botley West to make a vital and timely contribution to our transition towards a renewable, reliable, and homegrown energy supply.

Our Consultation Process

Botley West will be developed through iterative consultation with local communities and stakeholders, providing opportunities to get involved and share thoughts and ideas. We will undertake at least two rounds of public consultation, where communities can provide their feedback on our proposals.

Through consultation we will develop an understanding of issues that need to be addressed in the development of Botley West and opportunities that should be explored. This could include improved recreational access, local amenities, and educational opportunities.

In between the rounds of consultation, we will continue to share information and be on hand to respond to enquiries, ensuring local communities understand how their feedback is shaping our proposals.

Ahead of our formal second round of consultation, we will consult host local authorities on our draft Statement of Community Consultation to ensure we deliver a successful and meaningful consultation with local residents.

We will shortly be holding in-person public consultation events for the project. These events will provide a great opportunity for communities to view the proposals, provide feedback and talk to members of the project team.

All feedback received to the consultation will be considered in the design and development of our plans. A full report of our consultation will also be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the project.

Our Phase One Consultation

Our first phase of public consultation on Botley West Solar Farm will commence on 3 November 2022, and will be open for six weeks until 15 December 2022.

Our Phase One Consultation will comprise the following activities:



Community consultation events

We will hold a series of consultation events across the consultation area to provide an opportunity for local residents to meet with members of the project team and have their questions answered.



Dedicated project website

Our dedicated consultation website, www.botleywest.co.uk, will host all consultation documents and information so that they are freely available.



Consultation leaflet

Our consultation leaflet will be sent to over 22,500 properties in the area, providing information on how people can provide feedback during the consultation period.



Communications lines

A freephone information line, project email address, and freepost address are available for anyone wishing to get in touch with the project team. These details are available at the end of this document.



Local media

We will advertise our Phase One Consultation and consultation events in local newspapers and media publications to inform local communities.

The DCO Process

As the capacity of Botley West Solar Farm will exceed 50 megawatts (MW), the project is classed as a **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP)**.

We must apply for consent through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process. Applications are made to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), who then recommends to the Secretary of State for BEIS, who will make the final decision on whether to grant consent to Botley West Solar Farm.

Once PINS has received the DCO application they will consider whether to accept the application for examination. To be accepted, we must satisfy PINS that our pre-application consultation, both with statutory consultees (such as the local planning authorities and Natural England) and local communities, has been undertaken fairly and in compliance with relevant legislation.

To help demonstrate this to PINS, we will submit a Consultation Report alongside the DCO application, outlining how the consultation process has been carried out in accordance with the Planning Act 2008. This report will contain details of the consultation methodology and the feedback submitted in response to the consultation. It will also show how feedback has influenced our proposals for Botley West.

If the application is accepted, it will enter a six-month examination period. During the examination, either a single inspector, or a panel of inspectors appointed by PINS, will evaluate the application, and ask questions of us as the developer, and of statutory consultees. The inspector(s) will also consider the representations of all stakeholders and community members who have made representations.

Following PINS' examination, there will be a determination of the application by the Secretary of State. If the application is approved, the DCO will be granted, subject to Requirements (equivalent to planning conditions), and authorisation given to begin construction and operation of Botley West Solar Farm.

For more information regarding PINS and the DCO process, please visit the PINS website here: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/the-process/>



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