

Botley West Solar Farm  
Summary Briefing Paper

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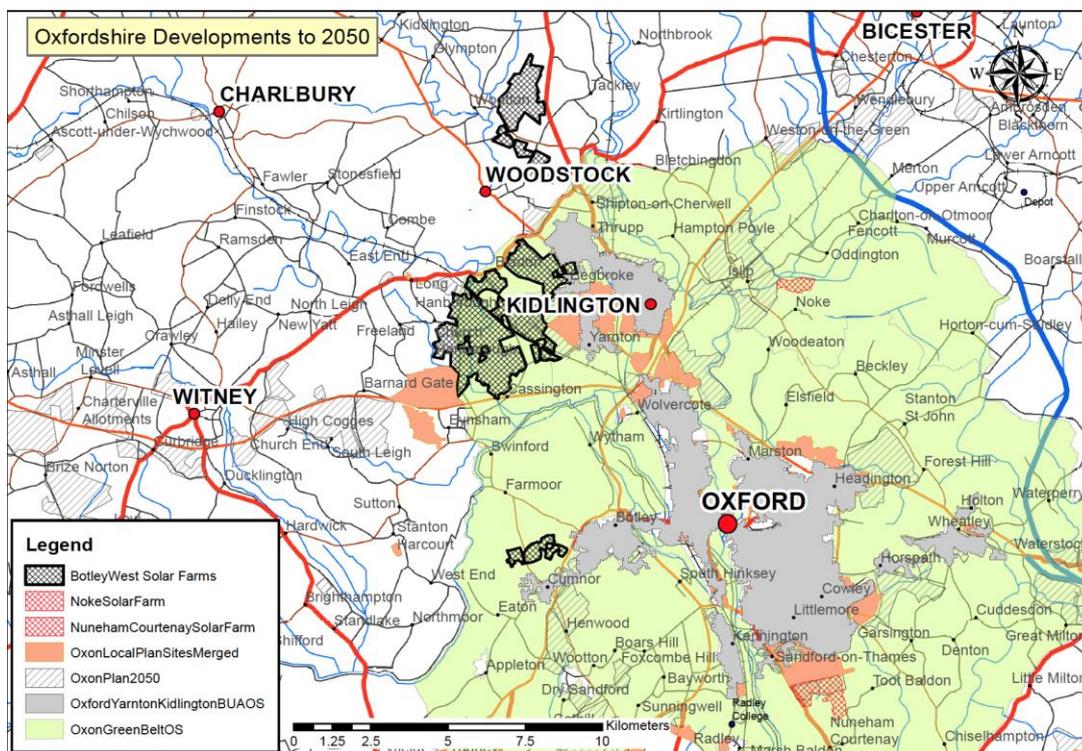
## Summary Briefing Paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary of the Botley West Solar Farm planning proposal from Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP), the main points for discussion by the PC and the timetable for further consultation and opportunities for the PC to comment.

### The Proposal

To provide a very large solar panel array comprising three interconnected sites, collectively on 1400 hectares of agricultural land. The sites span areas close to Woodstock, Bladon, Launton, Cassington, Eynsham and Botley and are on land owned by Blenheim Estate and Merton College. The overwhelming majority of the solar panels (73.1%) are within the greenbelt around Oxford with only the north Woodstock site being outside the greenbelt. This total development will use 3.1% of the Oxford greenbelt designation, bringing the total of greenbelt under threat of development (or already breached) to 15% up to 2050. Target date for completion and commissioning of Botley West SF is end of 2025.

### The sites



The sites are shown in relation to Oxford City and the main settlements of Kidlington, Woodstock and Eynsham. The Oxford green belt is shown shaded green.

The rationale given by PVDP for the selection of sites is the commitment from the land owners and the areas identified by National Grid where there is increasing demand for further electricity generation.

### **Impact of the development**

- The Solar Farm will almost exclusively use existing agricultural land, reducing its agricultural productivity.
  - Not all agricultural productivity may be lost. Small animal grazing is possible on areas of solar panel installation as are other complementary positive land uses (bee-keeping, wilding for establishing meadows which increase biodiversity by providing important protected habitats).
  - When solar productivity ends, the land can be returned to other use with no footprint. Array installation need not impact on historical boundaries, hedge/ditch patterns or archaeology.
- It is proposed to deliver 840 MW of electricity to the National Grid.
  - Claims of generation capacity tend to be exaggerated and are frequently justified in terms of the number of (local) houses that can be supplied with power. This is misleading: the power generated goes to the National Grid and does not specifically benefit local housing over any others.
  - There is no doubt that the UK needs more clean energy generation and this would make a significant contribution. However, SP energy generation in winter (when there is more demand) drops to 20% of summer capacity and energy storage is limited.
- It will decarbonize the environment by removing 14.4 million tonnes of carbon during its lifetime of 40-50 years.
  - This projected carbon reduction may be affected by an accelerated redundancy due to technological advance – the SP farm may have a lifespan of 20 years rather than 40-50 years. However its impact in this area is still significant.
- It will use large tracts of the Oxford Green Belt. The Green Belt is a protected swathe of land which has already been compromised by the various developments in the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan. This development will degrade the Green Belt further.

- There is no advantage to using Green Belt land. Its proximity to Oxford city and towns and villages is irrelevant given that the generated capacity goes nationwide.
- Some gains could be made in mitigation **IF** there was a condition to increase biodiversity not only in the protected corridors identified on the Plan (Evenlode river course, ancient woodlands) but on the SP array sites themselves by promoting and managing appropriate wilding of the land.

### **Suggested responses to the consultation**

1. Accept that new forms of clean electricity generation are needed and that solar panel arrays are acceptable in the right places.
2. Refuse to accept that sites in the Oxford Green Belt (or any other designated Green Belt) are justifiable based on proximity to high demand communities, or enthusiasm from land owners.
3. Insist that any land used for solar panel installation includes the mandatory regeneration of the land for increased biodiversity and complementary bio-positive uses with proper land management to achieve this.
4. Refuse to accept this development proposal as a National Infrastructure Project which heavily tilts the decision process towards the developer and the examiner at the expense of District and Local Councils and communities.

### **Timetable of Events**

#### **Woodstock Community Centre, Saturday 19 November**

New Road, OX20 1PB 11am – 4pm

#### **Hanborough Pavilion & Village Hall, Wednesday 23 November**

Roosevelt Road, OX29 8JG 12.30 pm – 4.30pm

#### **Cassington Village Hall, Friday 25 November**

The Green, OX29 4AX 1pm – 5pm

#### **Tackley Village Hall, Saturday 26 November**

Medcroft Road, OX5 3AH 11am – 3pm

#### **Cumnor Village Hall, Wednesday 30 November**

Leys Road, OX2 9QF 1.30pm – 5.30pm

#### **Community Webinar, Monday 5 December 5.30pm – 7pm**

Details on how to access the Community Webinar can be found on the website:

[www.botleywest.co.uk](http://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 dates subject to change.