

Kingsway Solar

Stage One Consultation Newsletter

31 October – 12 December 2024

Introducing Kingsway Solar

Welcome to the first stage of consultation for Kingsway Solar.

Kingsway Solar is a proposed solar farm and battery storage project to be located on parcels of land around the areas of Balsham, West Wrating, Weston Colville, and Weston Green in Cambridgeshire. Kingsway Solar would have the potential to supply around 500 Megawatts (MW) of electricity to the national grid. It will also include an approximate 14km Grid Connection to National Grid's planned Burwell South substation, to be located to the south of the existing substation at Burwell.

As we launch consultation, we're writing to introduce Downing Renewable Developments (DRD) and our initial proposals for Kingsway Solar. The newsletter outlines what the Scheme would deliver, highlights the benefits that Kingsway Solar would bring and provides details on how to get involved with this consultation, which will allow us to understand what matters most to you as our plans develop.

Our consultation formally opens on 31 October. It will be open for six weeks, closing at 11:59pm on 12 December.

We are in the very early stages of designing and developing Kingsway Solar. We want to hear your views on the potential development as we start to develop our plans and an initial design.

More information, including our feedback form and details of upcoming events, can be found on our website www.kingswaysolarfarm.co.uk.



Generating around 500MW of electricity, enough to power approximately 175,000 homes. This is roughly the equivalent of powering Huntingdonshire, Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds.



Enhancing biodiversity and local ecology.



Generating renewable electricity to support the transition to Net Zero and the UK's ambition to be increasingly self-sufficient in energy.



Providing opportunities for local communities and the local economy.



Oakfield Solar, Hampshire, UK, operated by DRD since 2020

About us

Kingsway Solar is being developed by DRD.

DRD was founded by Downing LLP (Downing) to deliver solar, battery storage, and onshore wind projects across the UK and Europe.

Downing has over a decade of extensive experience in owning and operating renewable energy, battery storage, and other infrastructure.

Kingsway Solar Farm Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Downing LLP and will be the applicant in the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for Kingsway Solar. More information about DRD can be found on our website, www.downing-renewables.co.uk.

“Downing has a long history of making sustainable investments to help transition the world from fossil fuels to renewable energy. We are excited by the opportunity that Kingsway Solar can bring on a national and local scale, and look forward to working with the community and stakeholders to bring this project forward”

- David Vernon, Head of NSIP Projects, DRD

Why propose a solar farm?

The way we produce our energy is evolving. As the demand for electricity continues to grow, there is an urgent need for affordable and reliable energy sources to be developed, such as solar. Solar farms support the UK’s needs by reducing carbon emissions and the demand for imported and domestic fossil fuels.

Why propose a solar farm here?

Our search for a suitable solar farm location was primarily driven by the need to find opportunities for connecting to the national grid, which are limited to certain regions in the UK. By 2030, National Grid need to build five times the amount of infrastructure they have in the last 30 years. Projects like the Great Grid Upgrade, the largest electricity grid overhaul in

generations, are part of efforts to carry our clean, secure energy from where it is generated to where it is needed. These projects by National Grid are currently creating opportunities for new renewable energy developments as part of the UK’s renewable energy transition.

In this case, a planned new substation at Burwell was identified as a suitable grid connection opportunity. This was the starting point that led to careful consideration of site options, based on a range of key factors, including:

- Land characteristics and environmental qualities and constraints for solar development
- The availability of willing and engaging landowners
- Access to established strategic transport links (such as the A11)
- The ability to include areas for environmental enhancement and recreation areas

While we have already carried out a range of surveys, further studies and assessments will be undertaken to better understand the environmental characteristics of the site and the surrounding area, which will help guide our design.

What’s happened on the project so far?

When we conducted initial assessments to find the most appropriate locations we had some early conversations with stakeholders. Since those initial meetings we have identified what we now believe to be the most appropriate land within the local area. This has resulted in some areas of land being removed and some added.

By making changes to the land included for the project, we have the opportunity to enhance the flexibility of Kingsway Solar while maintaining its overall generating capacity. This approach will allow us to minimise, and where necessary mitigate, potential impacts on the surrounding environment, ensuring that we can develop the project sustainably and effectively.

Kingsway Solar Community Benefits

Renewable energy generation offers significant benefits to the UK, but we are equally committed to directly supporting the communities living alongside our projects through community benefit schemes. Building a strong relationship with the community is important to us and we are continually exploring ways to better support local initiatives.

Recent examples from other DRD projects include:

- Providing rooftop solar installations
- Installing Electric Vehicle charging points
- Providing Permissive Paths for walking and recreational use
- Creating STEM, apprenticeship and temporary employment opportunities

During the first stage of consultation, we are seeking feedback on suggested community benefits packages and how these could be managed – such as through the local council or a trust.

The Scheme

We have a long-term vision for Kingsway Solar where we endeavour to provide biodiversity and habitat improvements, work with local farmers and agriculture, as well as invest in the local community.

We are developing a site comprising around 1,500 hectares of land:

- West
- Central
- East

The land in the scheme would encompass the development of the solar panels and related infrastructure, including the grid and cable connections, and areas reserved for potential environmental mitigation and enhancement zones and recreational areas.

We are designing the Scheme in line with the following design principles:



Sustainability

Kingsway Solar will be designed to support the transition to Net Zero and assist the UK in achieving Net Zero targets by 2050. Our design will be flexible to take advantage of new sustainable and efficient technologies that emerge.



People

Meaningful engagement will be carried out with communities and stakeholders. We will, where possible, work with local communities to understand how best to protect and enhance their environment and the local area.



Environment

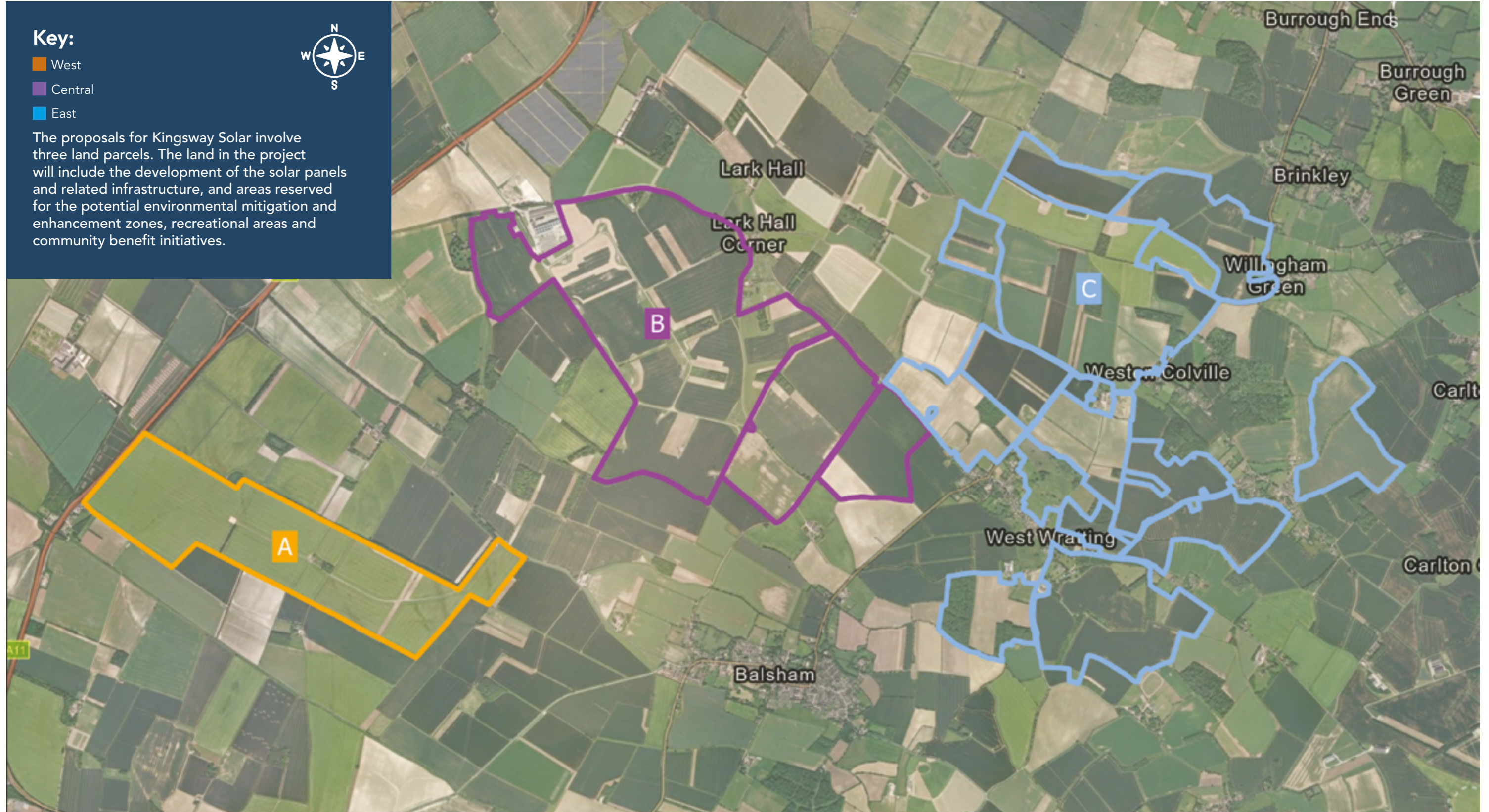
We will look to manage, protect and, where possible, enhance the landscape and design the Site sensitively with consideration to the local heritage, culture and in support of its ecological value. The Scheme will utilise topic environmental studies to inform design and suitable mitigation measures and will be supported by a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that details all of the relevant measures.

Key:

- West
- Central
- East



The proposals for Kingsway Solar involve three land parcels. The land in the project will include the development of the solar panels and related infrastructure, and areas reserved for the potential environmental mitigation and enhancement zones, recreational areas and community benefit initiatives.





The Connection Corridor

We are exploring options for connecting the solar farm into a new National Grid substation to be located south of the existing substation at Burwell (to be named Burwell South).

The preferred grid connection corridor is not yet confirmed and will be determined following an ongoing study of connection routes. We will also be connecting the parcels.


We will continue to progress the options, taking into account any feedback received through this consultation to select a preferred corridor and develop subsequent route options. Some of the key environmental considerations that will inform the preferred option will include landscape and visual amenity, ecology and ornithology, water bodies, historic features and archaeology, land use, as well as tourism recreation and local amenity.

Our proposal currently assumes that we will connect to the grid via an overhead line. This would likely be lattice towers carrying 400 kilovolt (kV) lines.

We may investigate placing connecting infrastructure underground, if required, to mitigate particular impacts identified through environmental studies and consultation.

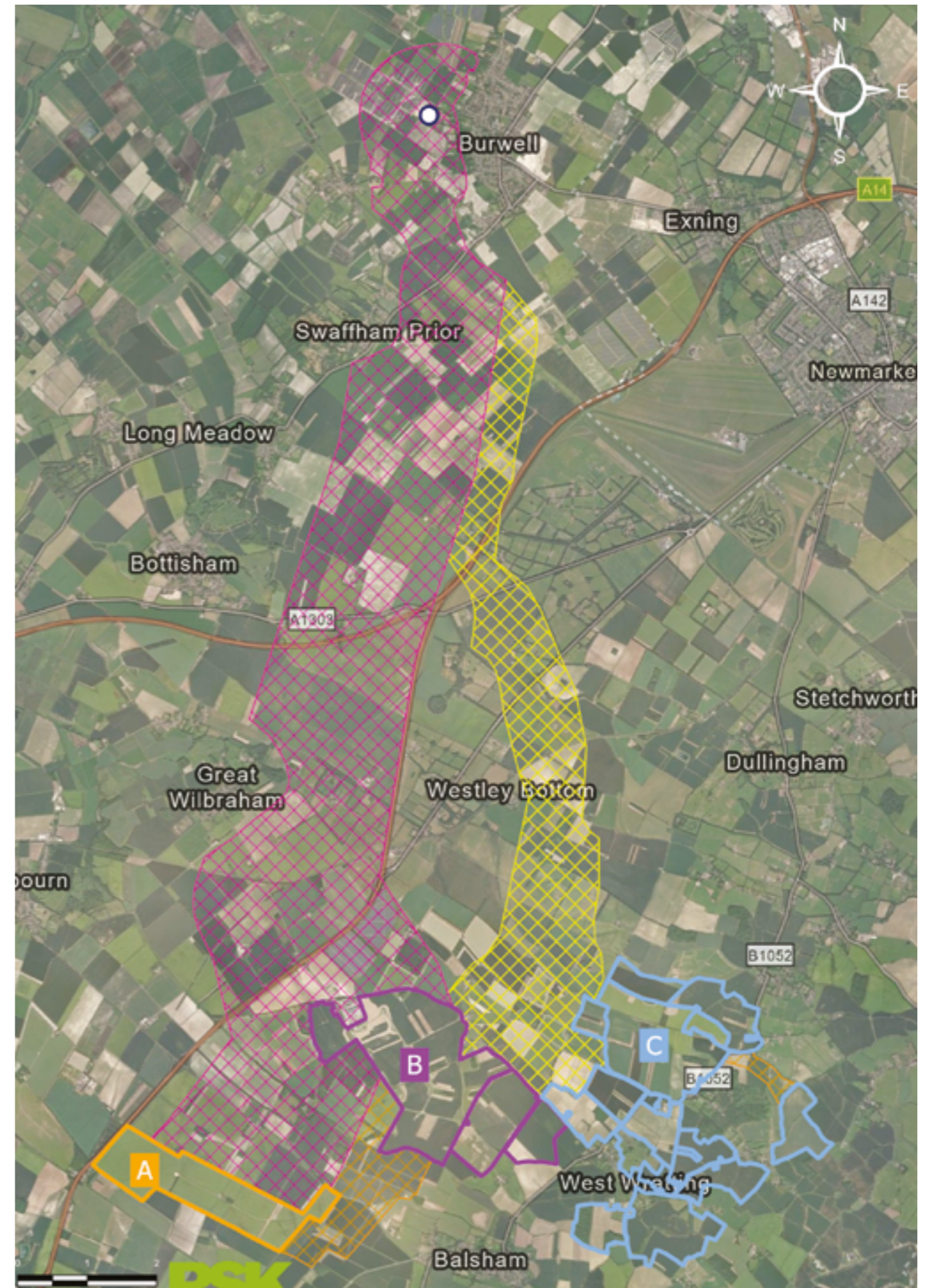
Key:

- East
- West
- Existing Burwell substation*



The proposals for Kingsway include a connection into the national grid at Burwell. We currently have two corridor options for this connection, west and east, shown on the map as pink and yellow. We will refine these through considering feedback in this consultation and ongoing environmental assessments. Connections will also be needed to connect the panel areas, to allow power to move around the site.

**The location of the new substation is to be confirmed by National Grid, and we have therefore included a large area for the connection corridor around Burwell.*



The Environment

As a developer we are committed to benefiting the environment in a number of ways. We want to find opportunities to both enhance the environment and minimise and/or mitigate any negative impacts.

Some of the key environmental matters that we are investigating include:

- agricultural land and soils
- air quality
- climate change
- ecology and biodiversity
- heritage and archaeology
- glint and glare
- landscape and visual amenity
- noise and vibration
- socioeconomics and health
- traffic and transport
- water bodies and hydrology.



We understand that the protection of agricultural land is a key concern in Cambridgeshire. We are completing an independent agricultural land classification (ALC) survey to assess the quality of the land within the Site and its surrounds. This will inform our efforts to prioritise development in areas of lower agricultural value. This will update the previous ALC surveys that exist, that are 36 years old. These assessments are undertaken with methodologies agreed with Natural England.

In respect of wildlife habitats in the local area, we are exploring opportunities to protect, preserve and manage any existing areas and features of environmental significance within the Site. Importantly, we will seek to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) through the Scheme. BNG is a way of creating and enhancing natural habitats, and it is a prominent theme in UK infrastructure development. We will look to achieve BNG by:

- Creating new wildlife habitats, grasslands and wildflower meadows; and
- Employing measures such as the installation of Bee Hotels, log piles and bird and bat boxes.

During the first stage of consultation, we are seeking feedback on what environmental mitigation or biodiversity enhancements can be implemented to ensure that we make improvements to BNG above and beyond legislated targets stipulated by the government for BNG.

The development process

Solar projects with a generating capacity of over 50 MW, like Kingsway Solar, are classified as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) under the Planning Act 2008. As an NSIP, approval for Kingsway Solar must be secured by applying to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero for a Development Consent Order (DCO). The Secretary of State will appoint an Examining Authority who will examine the application and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will decide if the Scheme should be approved.

The process is independently managed by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) and the views of community members, local authorities and other interest groups will be carefully considered during examination of the DCO, and everyone with an interest will have frequent opportunities to formally provide views including during both stages of consultation (non-statutory and statutory) and the formal examination process.

Our consultation will adopt the following approach:

Stage one – Non-statutory Consultation, Autumn 2024 (this round)

Stage two – Statutory Consultation, Early 2025

Consultation plays a crucial role in shaping our proposals. We value the local insights provided in your responses and, where appropriate, will aim to incorporate them into our plans. As part of our stage two statutory consultation, we will also publish a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) outlining how the local community can get involved.



Bourne Park Solar, Dorset, UK, operated by DRD since 2020

Have your say on Kingsway Solar

How to have your say

We want to hear your views. You can provide feedback by:

- Completing our feedback form online at www.kingswaysolarfarm.co.uk
- Completing a hard copy of the feedback form and returning it to FREEPOST DOWNING KINGSWAY
- Submitting your comments or completed form by email to enquiries@kingswaysolar.co.uk

Our consultation documents, and an online version of this newsletter, are available on our website www.kingswaysolarfarm.co.uk

If you wish to receive paper copies of these documents or need them in another format, please get in touch by freephone on **0800 012 9881**, or by email at enquiries@kingswaysolar.co.uk

Please submit your response by **23:59pm on 12 December 2024**.

Meet the team

As part of our consultation, we are holding a series of public information events. At these events, you will be able to meet the team and ask questions about our proposals.

Date	Time	Location
Friday 15 November	14:00 – 20:00	Balsham Village Hall, Balsham, Cambridge CB21 4DS
Saturday 16 November	10:00 – 14:00	West Wrattling Village Hall, 79 High Street, West Wrattling, CB21 5LU
Monday 25 November	14:00 – 20:00	Great Wilbraham Memorial Hall, Angle End, Great Wilbraham, Cambridge CB21 5JG
Monday 2 December	18:00 – 19:00	Online webinar (pre-register to attend using the contact details above)

