

Oxford City Planning Committee

26<sup>th</sup> May 2026

<b>Application number:</b>	25/03223/FUL		
<b>Decision due by</b>	6th April 2026		
<b>Extension of time</b>	31st May 2026		
<b>Proposal</b>	Installation of an underground high voltage cable to support solar farm (South Oxfordshire Reference P23/S4132/FUL)		
<b>Site address</b>	Land At Watlington Road, Cowley, Oxford		
<b>Ward</b>	Blackbird Leys Ward		
<b>Case officer</b>	Tracy Harvey		
<b>Agent:</b>	Miss Rhiannon Herridge	<b>Applicant:</b>	Burcot Solar Farm Limited
<b>Reason at Committee</b>	The application constitutes major development.		

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## 1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1. Oxford City Council Planning Committee is recommended to:
  - 1.1.1. **approve the application** for the reasons given in the report and subject to the required planning conditions set out in section 12 of this report and grant planning permission
  - 1.1.2. **agree to delegate authority** to the Director of Planning and Regulation to finalise the recommended conditions as set out in this report including such refinements, amendments, additions and/or deletions as the Director of Planning and Regulation considers reasonably necessary

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 This planning application seeks full planning permission for the installation of an underground high voltage electricity cable linking a consented solar farm (within South Oxfordshire District Council) to the local electrical distribution network. The route in Oxford is within the highway corridor along part of Watlington Road. The cable will be buried and land reinstated following construction. The scheme would result in temporary construction impacts only, with negligible permanent landscape and ecological effects. Subject to standard construction controls and reinstatement, the proposal accords with national and local policy supporting renewable energy and necessary grid connections.

### 3. LEGAL AGREEMENT

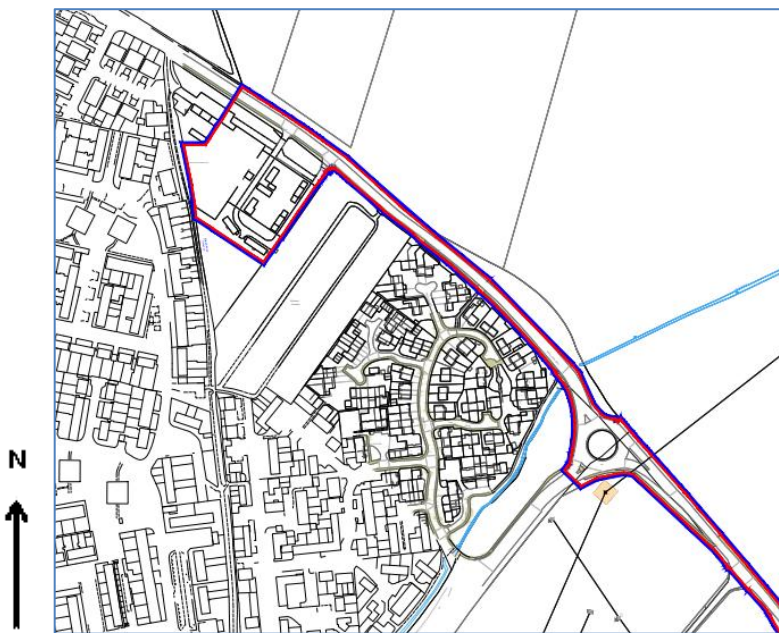
3.1 This application is not subject to a legal agreement.

### 4. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

4.1 The proposal is not liable for a CIL payment.

### 5. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

5.1 The application site comprises land along Watlington Road (B480), Cowley, including sections of highway, highway verge and adjacent land required for trenching and temporary works. The surrounding area contains a mix of commercial, industrial and residential uses with highway infrastructure and established vegetation/hedges. To the northeast of the proposed route are open fields and to the southwest are allotments and residential properties. No designated heritage assets in Oxford City are located within the immediate works corridor. The location plan for the works within the City Council boundary is below:



© Crown Copyright and database right 2020.  
Ordnance Survey 100019348  
Extract from Drawing Number EPD-025-GA-CR-S1 from Ethical Power

### 6. PROPOSAL

6.1 The proposal is part of a wider scheme to link the Burcott Solar Farm with the national grid at the Cowley Substation off Watlington Road. Approximately 400m of the 8.4km route is within the Oxford City Council administrative boundary along the Watlington Road (B480). The overall proposals include:

- Excavation of a trench typically 0.8–1.2m deep and approximately 0.4–0.6m wide for the installation of a 33–66kV underground cable
- Use of horizontal directional drilling (HDD) at sensitive locations (e.g. junctions, watercourses, or mature hedgerows) to avoid surface disturbance.

- Temporary construction compounds and welfare/laydown areas within the working corridor.
- Reinstatement of all land to prior condition, including topsoil management and re-seeding where disturbed.
- No above-ground operational infrastructure proposed other than standard underground cable markers as required by utility standards.

4.2 The submission documents included a Construction Method Statement; Flood Risk Assessment; Ecological Impact Assessment (with baseline habitat plans); Arboricultural Impact Assessment; Archaeological Assessment; Water Vole Survey and detailed Cable Route drawings including trench profiles.

4.3 A parallel planning application is under consideration by South Oxfordshire District Council (their reference P25/S3614/FUL) for the remainder of the route.

## 7. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

7.1. The table below sets out the relevant planning history for the application site:

<p>21/00780/T56 - Application for prior approval to install 1no. 20m telecommunications streetworks pole, 1no. equipment cabinet, 1no. meter cabinet and associated ancillary development.. Prior Approval Required 6th May 2021.</p> <p>25/00192/PDT - Replacement of 3no. existing antennas with 3no. new antennas, installation of 1no. dish and 2no. ground based equipment cabinets. Internal upgrade to existing cabinet and ancillary development thereto. Permission not required 31st January 2025.</p> <p>25/02995/PDT - Upgrade of an existing telecommunications base station comprising the replacement of 20m pole and installation of 6no. antennas, together with internal upgrades to existing cabinet and ancillary works.. Permission not required 18th November 2025.</p> <p>25/03072/SCREEN - Proposed high voltage cable to be installed between a permitted solar farm facility at Burcott Farm in South Oxfordshire (South Oxfordshire LPA ref: P23/S4132/FUL) and Cowley Local Substation in Oxford. Environmental Impact Assessment Not Required 31st December 2025</p>
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## 8. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

8.1. The following policies are relevant to the application:

Topic	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	Local Plan	Other planning documents or legislation	Submission Draft Oxford Local Plan 2045
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<b>Conservation/ Heritage</b>	133, 189-208	Policy DH1: High quality design and placemaking Policy DH4: Archaeological remains		Policy S2 - High Quality Design Policy HD1 - Principles of high-quality design Policy - HD5 Archaeology
<b>Natural environment</b>	136, 180- 186	G1 - Protection of Green/Blue Infrastructure G2 - Protection of biodiversity		Policy G1 - Protection of green infrastructure G6 - Protection of biodiversity
<b>Transport</b>	109-118	M1 _ Local Cycle Connection Route		
<b>Environmental</b>	7, 8, 10, 11, 152, 155, 161-168	S1 - sustainable development RE3 _ Flood Risk Management RE4 - Drainage RE8 - Noise and vibration RE9 - Land Quality G7 - Protection of existing Green Infrastructure features	National Policy Statements EN1 and EN3 Section 40 of the National Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006 Section 102 and Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Habitats Regulations 2017. Energy Statement TAN	S1 - sustainable development G7 - Flood Risk and Flood Risk Assessments R5 - water resource and quality G8 – SuDS R8 - Amenity impacts of development R7 - Land contamination
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		RE7 - managing the impact of development V8 - Utilities	Climate Change Act 2008	S3 - Infrastructure Delivery in New Development

6.2 There is no Neighbourhood Plan for this area.

6.3 The Submission Draft Oxford Local Plan 2045 was approved at Council on 26th January 2026 for Regulation 19 consultation and submission to the Secretary of State. This emerging plan includes relevant draft policies set out above, which are a material consideration albeit of limited weight, and which support the approach of the referenced Oxford Local Plan 2036 policies.

## 9. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

7.1. Site notices were displayed around the application site on 14th January 2026 and an advertisement was published in The Oxford Times newspaper on 15th January 2026.

### Statutory and non-statutory consultees

Oxfordshire County Council (Highways)

- 7.2 No objection. However, any work carried out on the highway will require the appropriate licenses and necessary traffic management measures.

Oxfordshire County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority)

- 7.3 No comments as the proposals do not increase flood risk. Appropriate Environment Agency and land drainage consent to be provided.

Environment Agency

- 7.4 No objection subject to suggested conditions.
- 7.5 Ecology watercourses and riparian corridor - The works in the vicinity of the main river watercourse could have a detrimental impact to water vole if not carried out in an appropriate way. Water Vole are listed as being of 'principal' importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). A condition should therefore be included to prevent impacting water vole species and habitat.
- 7.6 Would like to make it clear that this condition is requested under the assumption that the crossing of the Northfield brook will be completed by Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD). The construction method statement (ethical power limited, submitted to LPA on 14/11/2025) outlines how watercourses will be crossed using this method and provided the locations of proposed HDD within a separate document (Cable Route with HDD, ethical power, 13/11/2025). However, this map did not show the Northfield brook crossing as using HDD but as no other methods or planning statements were proposed on how this watercourse will be crossed, must assume this was an omission and HDD is to be used for this crossing.
- 7.7 Fluvial flood risk - The application site lies partly within Flood Zones 2 and 3 in accordance with the Flood Map for Planning. Flood Zones 2 and 3 are defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated Flood risk and coastal change Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) as having a medium and high probability of flooding. The application is also in close proximity to the Northfield brook main river. The submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is satisfactory in demonstrating that the proposal will not have a significant adverse impact on flood risk providing the measures proposed within the FRA are carried out.
- 7.8 Note the applicant has stated the works will fall under an Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) exemption, meaning a FRAP would not be needed. This is not guaranteed, and the applicant will need to apply for an exemption. The proposed development will only meet the NPPF's requirements in relation to flood risk if the suggested flood risk planning condition is included.

### Thames Valley Police

- 7.9 Do not object to this application.
- 7.10 There are concerns, however, that the risk of crime are not adequately addressed within the construction methodology statement.
- 7.11 High Voltage cable is a very high value target for organised crime, and solar farms across the country are experiencing a significant increase in the theft of cable and other materials during the construction phase of the development. As such, it is imperative that site security is considered equally as important as site safety. The Construction Management Plan for this development specifically should consider site security, and recommend the applicants consult the guidance provided by Secured by Design, to make sure all opportunities are taken to prevent crime from the outset. The guidance can be found here:  
[https://www.securedbydesign.com/images/CONSTRUCTION\\_SITE\\_SECURITY\\_GUIDE\\_A4\\_8pp.pdf](https://www.securedbydesign.com/images/CONSTRUCTION_SITE_SECURITY_GUIDE_A4_8pp.pdf)
- 7.12 It is requested a Construction Management Plan (CMP) condition, including security measures, be placed upon any planning approval.

### Natural England

- 7.13 No objection. Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscape.

### Active Travel England

- 7.14 Wish to offer no comment.

### Historic England

- 7.15 Wish to offer no comment

### South Oxfordshire District Council

- 7.16 South Oxfordshire District Council has no in principle objection to the proposals within the City boundary.
- 7.17 South Oxfordshire District Council are currently considering a parallel planning application (P25/S3614/FUL) for the section of the high voltage cable within South Oxfordshire. It is likely that the applicant will be submitting further information with a view to addressing comments made by technical consultees. The target decision date will therefore be likely to be extended.

### **Public representations**

7.18 No representations received.

## **10. PLANNING MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

8.1 Officers consider the determining issues to be:

- Principle of Development
- Visual Impact
- Heritage
- Ecology and Biodiversity
- Trees and Arboriculture
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Highway and Public Rights of Way
- Amenity
- Land Quality
- Planning Balance

### **a. Principle of development**

8.2 Policy S1 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 (OLP)– Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development is the core, overarching policy of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 and reflects national planning policy. It outlines a positive approach to development where the Council will actively support and approve proposals that contribute to sustainable development.

8.3 The cable is integral enabling infrastructure for a consented solar farm. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts. The NPPF continues to give strong emphasis to supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. National and OLP Policy S1 give significant weight to renewable energy and associated grid connections. The principle is therefore acceptable, subject to site-specific impacts being satisfactory.

### **b. Visual Impact**

8.4 Policy D1 (High Quality Design and Placemaking) of the OLP requires all new development in Oxford to deliver well-designed, locally distinctive places that respond positively to the city's historic character, landscape and townscape, while also creating safe, inclusive and accessible environments. It expects proposals to make a positive contribution to their surroundings, including high-quality architecture, strong street layouts, active frontages and good public realm, and to protect residential amenity (e.g. lighting, noise, outlook and privacy). Development must also promote healthy, sustainable communities, prioritising walking, cycling and social interaction, and demonstrate a clear design rationale showing how the scheme integrates with its context and enhances the overall quality of place.

8.5 As the cable is underground, permanent visual effects are negligible. Temporary visual effects during construction (fencing, plant, traffic

management) are short-term and reversible. No aboveground substations or cabinets are proposed within the City boundary. There are no objections to visual aspects of the scheme and which accords with policy DH1 of the OLP.

### **c. Heritage**

- 8.6 The NPPF makes clear that the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development, and that creating well designed places, effects on the natural environment and conserving and enhancing the historic environment are important components of this. The NPPF sets out that where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
- 8.7 The Oxford Local Plan (OLP) sets out that development proposals that affect archaeological features and deposits will be supported where they are designed to enhance or to better reveal the significance of the asset and will help secure a sustainable future for it. Proposals which would or may affect archaeological remains or features which are designated as heritage assets will be considered against the policy approach in policy DH3.
- 8.8 Archaeological remains or features which are equivalent in terms of their significance to a scheduled monument are given the same policy protection as designated heritage assets and considered against policy DH3. Proposals that will lead to harm to the significance of non-designed archaeological remains or features will be resisted unless a clear and convincing justification through public benefit can be demonstrated to outweigh that harm, having regard to the significance of the remains or feature and the extent of harm. Where harm to an archaeological asset has been convincingly justified and is unavoidable, mitigation should be agreed with Oxford City Council and should be proportionate to the significance of the asset and impact.
- 8.9 The application proposal is of interest as the northern part of this route (within the city boundary) crosses through an area of general potential for Roman archaeology associated with the line of the Dorchester-Alchester Road and associated settlement, burial areas and pottery manufacturing compounds.
- 8.10 The applicants submitted Archaeological Desk Based Assessment for this route notes low potential for the specific route because of previous likely disturbance from cabling and road construction. A recent watching brief on another cable route along Watlington Road and Grenoble Road revealed only modern construction to 1.2m.
- 8.11 Taking into account the results of the desk-based assessment, Historic Environment Records and recent archaeological work, this scheme is unlikely to have significant archaeological implications (within the City boundary). The proposals are therefore considered to have no harm to the heritage asset. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan policies, DH3 in particular.

#### **d. Ecology and Biodiversity**

- 8.12 The NPPF recognises that the planning system should conserve and enhance the environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for, planning permission should be refused. Local Plan policy G1 Protection of green and blue infrastructure which states that development should prevent any harm to the green and blue infrastructure network.
- 8.13 Oxford Local Plan (OLP) policy G2 states that development that results in a net loss of sites and species of ecological value will not be permitted. Compensation and mitigation measures must offset the loss and achieve an overall net gain of 5% for biodiversity and for major development this should be demonstrated in a biodiversity calculator. In this case, the applicant has confirmed that no hedgerows are to be removed within the City boundary. On that basis, the development would not give rise to a loss of biodiversity value. However, as there is still some potential for variation within the described route a general condition provides a safeguard. An informative is suggested to aid the application of Biodiversity Net Gain should a variation in route be necessary.
- 8.14 Policy G8 requires new development that affects green infrastructure to demonstrate how these have been incorporated within the design, including health and wellbeing and biodiversity enhancement.
- 8.15 The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has a duty to, in exercising its functions, to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity (section 40 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006). It must consider whether there is a reasonable likelihood of protected species being present and affected by development at the application site. The presence of a protected species that may be affected by the development is a material consideration for the LPA in its determination of a planning application (paragraphs 98, 99 ODPM and Defra Circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and geological conservation). The LPA has a duty as a competent authority, in the exercise of its functions, to secure compliance with the Habitats Directive (Regulation 9(1) The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 '2017 Regulations'). The Habitats Directive is construed from 31 December 2020 to transfer responsibilities to UK authorities to enable it to function as retained EU law. This applies to European sites (SACs and SPAs) and European Protected Species, both in and out of European sites.
- 8.16 The 2017 Regulations provide a licensing regime to deal with derogations. It is a criminal offence to do the following without the benefit of a licence from Natural England: 1. Deliberate capture or killing or injuring of a European Protected Species (EPS) 2. Deliberate taking or destroying of EPS eggs 3. Deliberate disturbance of an EPS including in particular any disturbance which is likely a) to impair their ability – i) to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or ii) in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory

species, to hibernate or migrate; or b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong. 4. Damage or destruction of an EPS breeding site or resting place.

- 8.17 Water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) are a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which makes it an offence to destroy or damage their habitat or to destroy or disturb places used for shelter or protection. They are listed under 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 Environment Act 2021 as a species of principle importance.
- 8.18 As the desk-top survey indicates within the ECIA, there are isolated populations of water vole within this area and along this stretch of water course. There is agreement with the Environment Agency on the need for a water vole survey as part of an Ecological Survey of the Northfield Brook. However, in accordance with the DEFRA/ Natural England Standing Advice and Circular 06/2005 a survey should be undertaken to inform the planning decision rather than after.
- 8.19 Following the Environment Agency comments, a water vole survey has been provided by the applicants. The survey indicates no evidence of water vole(s) in the vicinity of the culvert crossing at Northfield Brook. A condition is suggested to ensure that the survey is updated if the works do not start promptly. On the basis however that water voles were not found to be present, a licence will not be required from Natural England.
- 8.20 The observation within the survey in respect to a least damaging proposal to cross the Brook is via trenching over the culvert. A condition is suggested to secure the use of trenching in this location. Noting that the applicant has indicated some flexibility in the proposed construction method (i.e. the use of Horizontal Directional Drilling rather than trenching), it is reasonable to suggest conditions to secure on the least damaging construction proposal. Also amending the suggested Environment Agency proposed condition to reflect the new information and in the event that the applicant requires a change in construction method.
- 8.21 The route is bound on either side of Watlington Road with native hedgerow/ native hedgerow with trees. These are principal habitat of conservation importance (priority habitat). The area has potential for nesting lapwing and brown hairstreak butterfly. Lapwing impacts are adequately covered in the ECIA, however, brown hairstreak butterfly as a principal species of conservation importance (priority species) has not.
- 8.22 An area to the north of the Watlington Road, near the cable terminus, has previously been classified as lowland meadows, principal habitat of conservation importance (priority habitat), mapping indicates arable field in this area. The applicant has, during the course of the application, confirmed that the cable is proposed to be installed within the carriageway via trenching or HDD as a result the impacts are likely to be limited. If, however, it is trenching on the verges of Watlington Road or adjacent fields, then a concern will be damage to the principal habitat hedgerows that run parallel along the

proposed cable route. Given, there is still some variation in the described route a general condition is suggested to provide a safeguard for when the route is finalised.

- 8.23 The proposals, as a result of the additional information and survey, are therefore considered acceptable in ecological and biodiversity terms, in accordance with the NPPF and policies G2 and G8 of the OLP subject to the suggested site-specific conditions.

#### **e. Trees and Arboriculture**

- 8.24 Policy G7 of the Local Plan seeks the protection of existing Green Infrastructure features and states planning permission will not be granted for development that results in the loss of green infrastructure features such as hedgerows, trees or woodland where this would have a significant public amenity or ecological interest. It must be demonstrated that their retention is not feasible and that their loss will be mitigated.
- 8.25 The policy goes onto state that planning permission will not be granted for development resulting in the loss of other trees, except in the following circumstances, that it can be demonstrated that the retention of the trees is not feasible; and where tree retention is not feasible, any loss of tree canopy cover should be mitigated by the planting of new trees or introduction of additional canopy cover, and where loss of trees cannot be mitigated by tree planting on site then it should be demonstrated that alternative proposals for new green infrastructure will mitigate the loss of trees, such as green roofs or walls.
- 8.26 Policy G8 states development proposals affecting existing Green Infrastructure features should demonstrate how these have been incorporated within the design of the new development where appropriate. This applies to protected and unprotected Green Infrastructure features such as hedgerow, trees and small public green spaces.
- 8.27 No Tree Preservation Orders or Conservation Area designations apply to the locations within the administrative boundary of Oxford City Council. However, there are several trees present in the rear gardens of properties on Green Hill as well as adjacent hedgerows running parallel to the highway.
- 8.28 Within the area of interest in Oxford (along the B480), the potential significance of any arboricultural implications essentially depends on which side of the footpath the proposed trench is excavated. If it is located on the side nearest to the road, there will be less harmful effects because this is further from the centre of the hedge bounding the estate (Green Hill), and trees situated within the gardens of Green Hill and so will have less impact on the rooting environment of this vegetation, notwithstanding root protection areas (RPA's). Furthermore, there are existing services located in this verge (roadside).
- 8.29 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been provided. This confirms that works near retained trees will adopt HDD or hand-digging in RPAs with

protective fencing to BS5837 and full verge reinstatement. There is likely to be relatively little potential for harm, and taking a precautionary approach, such harms can be adequately mitigated through appropriate means of working as stipulated in an arboricultural method statement (AMS), and controlled through the suggested conditions and special methods of design and working may need to be considered in the event of any arboricultural issues identified in a detailed Tree Constraints Plan and Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Subject to the suggested conditions, the proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan policies, particularly policies G7 and G8 of the OLP.

#### **f. Flood Risk and Drainage**

- 8.30 In accordance with the NPPF, development in flood risk areas should not be permitted if there are reasonably available alternative sites, appropriate for the proposed development, in areas with a lower risk of flooding. The sequential test establishes if this is the case. Development is in a flood risk area if it is in Flood Zone 2 or 3, or it is within Flood Zone 1 and the strategic flood risk assessment shows it to be at future flood risk or at risk from other sources of flooding such as surface water or groundwater. In this case, a small section of the route goes over Northfield Brook and hence is within Flood Zone 3. Policy RE3 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 (OLP) seeks to minimise flood risk from new developments.
- 8.31 The development is exempt from the sequential test in flood risk areas as it relates to developments where there is no built form development within the site boundary. The proposals do not include any land raising or other potentially vulnerable elements. As indicated by the Planning Design and Access Statement and the Flood Risk Assessment (Nijhuis FRA J-16059, rev 01), following completion of the cable installation, the cable will be below ground and ground levels returned to existing levels. The development will therefore not impact on flood risk off site, and neither will the cables be impacted by flooding. In this case, the underground cable runs along a highway which contains other elements of infrastructure. It is not considered that the development will result in a flood risk.
- 8.32 Potential flood risk due to surface water flooding exists during the construction phase. This is addressed in section 2.5 of the applicants submitted Flood Risk Assessment, which includes measures such as requiring site management to sign up to warnings, workers to avoid at risk areas during prolonged rain events, and for a risk assessment to be undertaken following periods of rainfall and storm events. It is considered that these measures can be addressed with a suggested planning condition.
- 8.33 Flood maps indicate an area of surface water flooding on the Watlington Road and to the north of the roundabout. This appears to represent a local low point as the flooding appears isolated, and not a surface water flow path. This can therefore be managed locally on site, without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 8.34 In summary, the Flood Risk Assessment confirms that the shallow, buried

infrastructure will not impede overland flows, method statements and pollution prevention in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will manage risks during construction. The development is not considered to increase flood risk on or off site. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and policy RE3 of the OLP.

#### **g. Highway and Public Rights of Way**

- 8.35 Policy M1 of the OLP states that planning permission will only be granted for development that minimises the need to travel and is laid out and designed in a way that prioritises access by walking, cycling and public transport.
- 8.36 Watlington Road is identified as a cycle route. However, once installed there will be no impacts on the highway, cycleway or public rights of way. During construction temporary traffic management will be required. No long-term highway capacity or safety effects are anticipated. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and policy M1 of the OLP.

#### **h. Amenity**

- 8.37 Policy RE7 of the OLP seeks to ensure a standard of amenity and make sure that development protects amenity and would not result in unacceptable impact on neighbours.
- 8.38 The nearest residential properties are located in Green Hill with their rear gardens backing on Watlington Road and an existing vegetation screen. The key potential disturbance to residents will be during construction works. There will be no disturbance to residents during the operational phase.
- 8.39 Construction activity will be temporary and controlled by a submitted Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), with prescribed working hours, best practicable means for noise, dust suppression and vibration monitoring where proximate to sensitive receptors such as the residential properties. It is considered that there are minimal environmental impacts from the development installation in terms of noise etc. An informative has been suggested to ensure local amenity is not impacted from the installation by way of the Code of Considerate Practice promoted by the Considerate Contractors scheme. Subject to the suggested conditions, the proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy RE7.

#### **i. Land Quality**

- 8.40 The Council has a statutory duty to take into account, as a material consideration, the actual or possible presence of contamination on land. As a minimum, following development, land should not be capable of being determined as contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Policy RE9 of the OLP requires a land quality assessment report where proposals would be affected by contamination or where contamination may present a risk to the surrounding environment. The

report should assess the nature and extent of contamination and the possible impacts it may have on the development and its future users, biodiversity, the natural and built environment; and set mitigation measures to allow the development to go ahead safely and without adverse effect.

- 8.41 There may be some made ground present within the road verges along the proposed route within the city boundary, and this could contain minor contamination risks. However, any excess arisings will be removed from site as waste so there is minimal potential for contaminated material to be left in situ or mobilised from site. Any existing hardstanding will be re-instated following completion of cable installation, although it is understood that most of the proposed trenching route will be in soft verges. The only perceived potential contamination risk is therefore limited to possible exposure of construction workers to contaminated soils, and it is expected that appropriate health and safety workplace practices will be adopted to mitigate this risk. It is therefore considered that there are no requirements for any specific land quality recommendations or mitigation measures to add to any planning permission that may be granted. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and policy RE9 of the OLP.

#### **i. Planning Balance**

- 8.42 No conflicts with development plan policies have been identified, and officers consider that the proposal is in accordance with the development plan overall. The proposal provides essential enabling infrastructure for renewable energy generation, contributing to decarbonisation and energy security objectives. Environmental effects are localised, temporary and can be satisfactorily mitigated by condition. On balance, the benefits outweigh the limited short-term impacts.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 Having regards to the matters discussed in the report, the starting point for the consideration of this application is in accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which makes clear that proposals should be assessed in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 9.2 The NPPF recognises the need to take decisions in accordance with Section 38 (6) but also makes clear that it is a material consideration in the determination of any planning application (paragraph 2). The main aim of the NPPF is to deliver Sustainable Development. The NPPF also goes on to state that development plan policies should be given due weight depending on their consistency with the aims and objectives of the Framework. The relevant development plan policies are considered to be consistent with the NPPF.
- 9.3 The underground cable is necessary to enable export from a consented solar farm. Subject to the recommended conditions securing best-practice construction management and ecological safeguards, the proposal accords with the development plan and material considerations. It is recommended that the Committee resolve to grant planning permission for the development

proposed subject to the suggested planning conditions and informatives.

## **10 CONDITIONS**

### *Time Limit*

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission.

### *Ecology Survey Timing*

2. If the development hereby approved does not commence by May 2027, further ecological survey(s) shall be considered, in accordance with Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys to establish if there have been any changes in the presence of roosting bats, and identify any likely new ecological impacts that might arise from any changes through professional validation or additional surveys. The results of professional validation and/ or the survey(s) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Where validation and/ or survey results indicate that changes have occurred that will result in impacts not previously addressed in the approved scheme, a mitigation and compensation scheme will be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. Works will then be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme, under licence from Natural England.

Reason: To ensure protected species are protected in accordance with The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

### *Approved Plans*

3. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents, including the Location Plan (EPD-025-GA-CR-S1 (Rev 5)) Cable Route drawing (EPD-025-GA-CR-S1 REV 3), Trench Profile (EPD-025-GA-CR-TP-01 (Rev 1)), Ecological Impact Assessment, Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Rev B), Archaeological Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment, Archaeological Assessment, Construction Method Statement, Ecology by Design letter of 05/03/2026, Ecology by Design letter (Water Vole Survey) 05/05/2026 and Planning/Design & Access Statement unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt, to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and in the interests of proper planning

### *Prior to commencement*

*Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)*

4. No development shall commence until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, to include noise/dust/vibration controls, pollution prevention, surface water management, biosecurity, soils handling, and community liaison. The CEMP shall be complied with at all times.

Reason: To ensure that the overall dust, air quality, risks and impacts on local residents during the construction phase of the proposed development will not be significant, in accordance with Policy RE6 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036.

*Construction Environmental Management Plan: Biodiversity (CEMP: Biodiversity)*

5. Prior to the commencement of development (including ground works and vegetation clearance) an ecological protection scheme in the form of a Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP shall be based on a crossing technique for Northfield Brook using a trenching technique above the culvert and should include the following:
  - a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
  - b) Identification of "biodiversity protection zones".
  - c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts on biodiversity during construction (may be provided as set of method statements).
  - d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
  - e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
  - f) Responsible persons and lines of communication
  - g) The role and responsibilities on site of a qualified ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
  - h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs where required.

The approved CEMP: Biodiversity shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the site preparation and construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: The prevention of harm to species and habitats within and outside the site during construction in accordance with Policy G2: Protection of biodiversity and geo-diversity of the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2036 and to ensure protection of species in accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, and the Habitats and Species

Regulations (2017).

### *Construction Security Management Plan (CSMP)*

6. Prior to commencement of development, a Construction Security Management Plan (CSMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CSMP shall detail proposed site security measures, to include (but not be limited to):
- Perimeter fencing and hoarding details;
  - Access control measures for personnel and vehicles;
  - Lighting, surveillance, and alarm provisions during construction;
  - Measures to prevent unauthorised access outside of working hours;
  - Security protocols for storage of tools, materials, and plant machinery.

The approved CSMP, including the site security measures, shall be implemented in full for the duration of the construction works and adhered to at all times unless otherwise agreed in writing beforehand with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the security of the site, protect public safety, and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour during the construction phase in accordance with Policy RE7 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036.

### *Ecological Protection Scheme*

7. If there is a need to change crossing technique for the Northfield Brook from trenching to Horizontal Directional Drilling or other technique, no development, groundworks or engineering works within 10 metres of the Northfield Brook watercourse shall take place until a revised ecological protection scheme (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The revised CEMP: Biodiversity shall be based on:

- A revised ecological survey of the Northfield brook and its riparian corridor, together with any necessary protection measures to safeguard the watercourse habitat during construction.
- Detailed plans and method statement for the proposed drilling, including the location of drilling entry and exit points beneath the watercourse.

No work shall take place within a minimum 5 metre standoff from the top of each bank of the watercourse. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved CEMP: Biodiversity.

Reason: To protect water vole and its habitat within the development site, and to avoid damaging the site's ecological value in accordance with the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2036 Policy G2, and to ensure protection of species in accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, and the Habitats and Species Regulations (2017).

### *Flood Risk Assessment*

8. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment (reference J-16059, dated 11 November 2025 and prepared by Nijhuis Saur Industries) and the following mitigation measures it details:

- the proposal will not result in any topographic level changes, in accordance with section 1.2.

These mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to works commencing and subsequently in accordance with the scheme's timing/phasing arrangements. The measures detailed above shall be retained and maintained thereafter throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To prevent an increase in the risk of flooding elsewhere, in accordance with paragraph 181 of the NPPF and Local Plan policy RE3 of the Oxford City Local Plan 2036.

### *Tree Protection Plan (TPP) & Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS)*

9. No development or enabling works, shall take place until a Tree Constraints Plan (TCP), Tree Protection Plan (TPP) and Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS), produced in accordance with the current BS. 5837: "Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations", has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The TPP shall include a scale plan indicating the positions of barrier fencing and/or ground protection materials used to protect Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of retained trees and hedges/hedgerows, and/or to create Construction Exclusion Zones (CEZ) around retained trees. The approved physical protection measures shall be in place prior to the commencement of any development, including demolition or enabling works, and shall be retained for the duration of construction, unless otherwise agreed in writing beforehand by the Local Planning Authority.

The Local Planning Authority shall be informed in writing when physical measures are in place, to allow Officers the opportunity to inspect them prior to the commencement of development. The AMS shall detail any access pruning, or other facilitation pruning proposals, including to roots, and shall set out the methods of any workings or other forms of ingress into the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) or Construction Exclusion Zones (CEZs) of retained trees. Such details shall aim to avoid damage to the branches, stems, and roots of retained trees, through impacts, excavations, ground skimming, vehicle compaction and chemical spillages including lime and cement. The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with of the approved AMS unless otherwise agreed in writing beforehand by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect retained trees during construction in accordance with

policies G7, G8 and DH1 of the Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036.

#### *Arboricultural Monitoring Programme (AMP)*

10. Development, including demolition and enabling works, shall not begin until details of an Arboricultural Monitoring Programme (AMP) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). The AMP shall include a schedule of a monitoring and reporting programme of all on-site supervision and checks of compliance with the details of the Tree Protection Plan and/or Arboricultural Method Statement, as approved by the Local Planning Authority. The AMP shall include details of an appropriate Arboricultural Clerk of Works (ACoW) who shall conduct such monitoring and supervision, and a written and photographic record shall be submitted to the LPA at scheduled intervals in accordance with the approved AMP.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policies G7, G8 and DH1 of the Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036.

#### *Hedgerow Protection*

11. No hedgerows (or part of) considered to be Section 41 habitat of principal importance are to be removed, damaged or destroyed unless a mitigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved mitigation strategy.

Reason: To ensure that the Local Planning Authority undertakes its responsibilities in accordance with Sections 40 and 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy G2 of the Oxford City Development Plan 2036.

### **Informatives**

#### **1. Biodiversity Net Gain:**

Where a total length of hedge to be removed is >5m (either in a single length or in combination across several locations within the Oxford City Council area) then the applicant will be required to submit, for agreement with the Council, a Biodiversity Gain Plan and all required supporting information in accordance with the separate statutory deemed condition under Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Any Mitigation Strategy or BNG proposals should take account of the following: a species-rich hedge typically takes 5 to 7 years to become fully established and appear as a thick, mature, and functional boundary. While the plants will begin growing immediately, this timeframe allows the mixed species (such as hawthorn, blackthorn, and hazel) to develop strong roots and dense structure.

The establishment timeline and factors involved for consideration by a Biodiversity Gain Plan and associated Habitat Management and monitoring Plan for the species indicated is:

#### Establishment Timeline

Year 1-2 (Rooting & Initial Growth): Roots establish, but there is little visible height growth. Some immediate pruning is recommended to encourage bushy growth at the base.

Years 3-5 (Active Growth): The hedge grows, often adding 30-60cm of growth annually, beginning to function as a barrier.

Years 5-7 (Full Establishment): The hedge reaches a mature appearance, usually over in height, and can be managed with periodic trimming.

Year 7-10 (Laying): A well-maintained hedge can be laid (laid flat) around this time to ensure it remains dense and acts as a functional boundary habitat (in accordance with Section 41 of NERC) for the next 50+ years.

#### Factors Affecting Growth Rate to be considered by any mitigation strategy

Plant Size: Starting with larger plants (e.g., 2-3L pots) will fill out faster, while "bare root" whips (cheaper, smaller) take 1-2 years longer to fully establish but often catch up in health.

Maintenance: Proper weed and grass control in the first 2 years is critical. Competing vegetation can severely delay establishment.

Species Mix: A blend of native species like Hawthorn, Blackthorn, and Dogwood typically grows at a similar rate, while others like Holly are much slower.

Protection: In rural areas, protection from browsing wildlife (rabbits, deer) is essential for successful establishment.

## 2. *NPPF*

In accordance with guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, the Council tries to work positively and proactively with applicants towards achieving sustainable development that accords with the Development Plan and national planning policy objectives. This includes the offer of pre-application advice and, where reasonable and appropriate, the opportunity to submit amended proposals as well as time for constructive discussions during the course of the determination of an application. However, development that is not sustainable and that fails to accord with the requirements of the Development Plan and/or relevant national policy guidance will normally be refused. The Council expects applicants and their agents to adopt a similarly proactive approach in pursuit of sustainable development.

## 3. *Work within the Highway:*

Works within the public highway will require separate licences and permits under the Highways Act. All reinstatement shall comply with the Oxfordshire County Council specification.

#### 4. *Considerate Constructors Scheme*

Your attention is drawn to the attached note relating to demolition and the requirements of The Building Act. 3 Oxford City Council strongly encourages that when this permission is implemented, all building works and the management of the development site are carried out in accordance with the Code of Considerate Practice promoted by the Considerate Constructors scheme. Details of the scheme are available from Considerate Constructors Scheme PO Box 75 Ware Hertfordshire SG12 9UY 01920 485959 0800 7831423 enquiries@ccscheme.org.uk  
www.considerateconstructorsscheme.org.uk

## 11 APPENDICES

- **Appendix 1** – Site location plan

## 12 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1998

- 12.1 Officers have considered the implications of the Human Rights Act 1998 in reaching a recommendation to approve this application. They consider that the interference with the human rights of the applicant under Article 8/Article 1 of Protocol 1 is justifiable and proportionate for the protection of the rights and freedom of others or the control of his/her property in this way is in accordance with the general interest.

## 13 SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

- 13.1 Officers have considered, with due regard, the likely effect of the proposal on the need to reduce crime and disorder as part of the determination of this application, in accordance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community subject to the suggested condition from Thames Valley Police.

**Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan (northern route section)**

