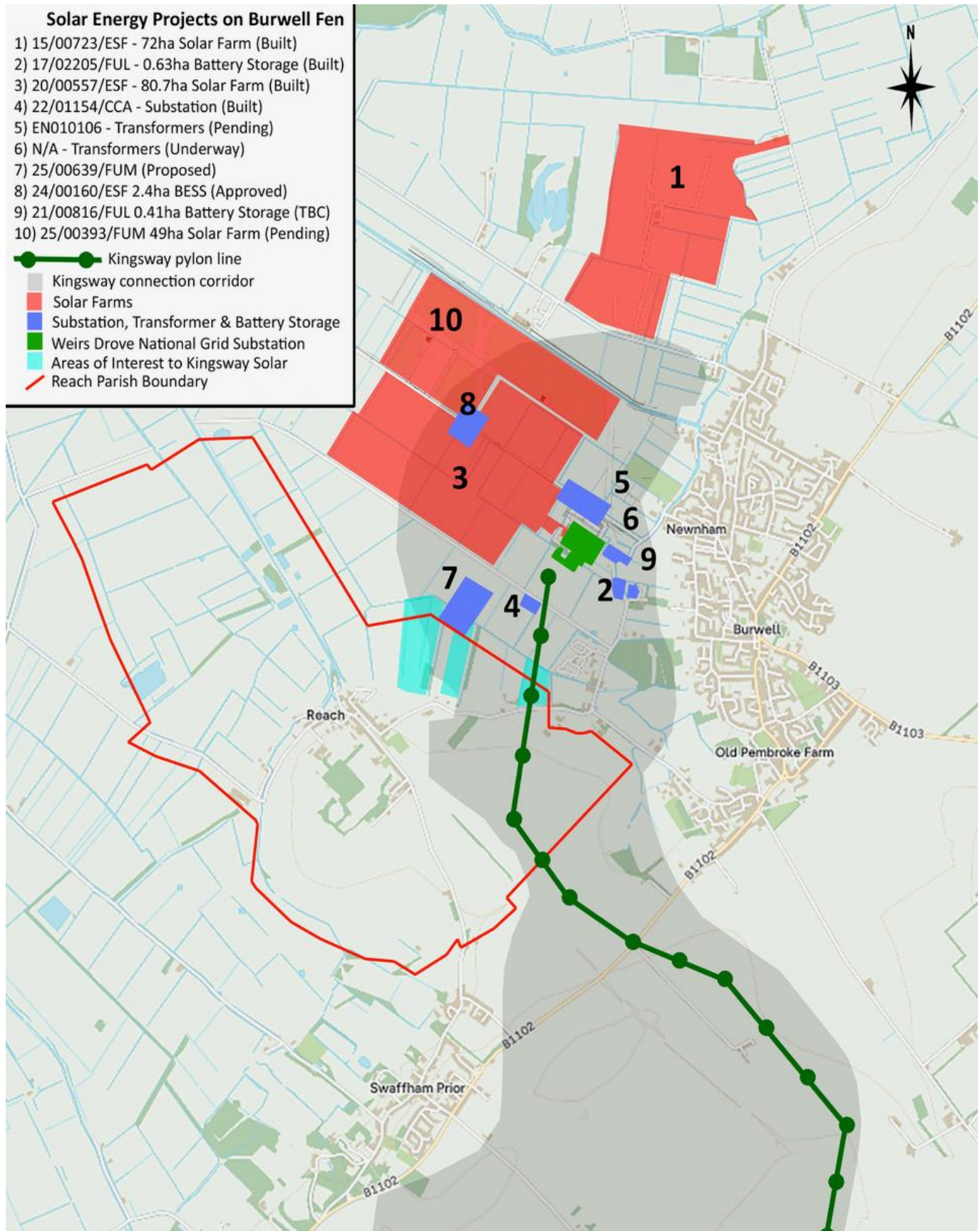


Kingsway Solar Farm Update



Kingsway Solar formally applied for approval to build a solar farm to the south of Reach on 17 September. As a nationally significant infrastructure project, the application will be overseen by the Planning Inspectorate. This note provides background to the application, outlines the likely implications for Reach should it be approved and offers suggestions about what you can do in response to the application.

Background

Kingsway Solar wants to install solar panels and large storage batteries on 1,500 hectares (3,706 acres) of farmland near Balsham, West Wrating, Weston Colville, Willingham Green, Carlton, Brinkley and Six Mile Bottom and to connect it to the national grid at a new substation at Burwell using overhead cable and pylons. The proposed connection route runs close to Reach.

The solar panel development will cover an area larger than Heathrow Airport and the 14 km cable route will use pylons up to 65 metres tall.

In 2024 the Parish Council informed Kingsway that it was unhappy with the principle of the development and with the approach that Kingsway proposed to take in assessing the environmental impact of the scheme. Our views went unheeded. We now plan to object to the development based on the strong opposition to it expressed by residents at a Parish Council meeting of 5 August and in light of more detailed, but far from definitive, information about Kingsway's plans.

How will the proposed development affect Reach?

The overhead pylon route and the new substation will fundamentally change the character of the countryside between Reach and Burwell.

In its Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) Kingsway has provided an indicative route for the overhead cable and pylon route. With thanks to Steve Boreham, this has now been added to the map of cumulative energy developments between Reach and Burwell. Whilst the route is indicative and may be changed, it is not good news for the village. The proposed route will run much closer to the centre of Reach than the existing overhead cable route that cuts across Burwell Road. Many residents of Burwell Road will have the views from their homes industrialised should the connection be approved. Users of the 24Acres will also find the overhead cable very intrusive. Furthermore, the pylons will run close to the Devil's Dyke for several hundred metres and thus will be very visible from the path on top of the Dyke and from Swaffham Road. The proposed overhead cable would complete a 'curtain' of overhead cables around the north and east of Reach.

Kingsway's proposal is the tenth energy scheme on land between Reach and Burwell. Its approval is dependent on an eleventh, the construction by National Grid of a new substation termed 'Burwell South'. This will be of a similar size and visual impact to the existing substation at Weirs Drove. National Grid has not yet confirmed its location (even to Kingsway) but the likely site is several hundred metres closer to Reach. It seems almost certain that the new sub station will have capacity to take further feeds from local green energy schemes, opening up the prospect of more arable fields around the village going over to solar panels and battery storage compounds and more overhead cables bringing in energy from solar farms further afield.

What can we do?

The PC has joined the alliance of Parish Councils opposing Kingsway to share costs and to strengthen our voice. With funding support from local residents, the PC has commissioned a preliminary assessment of the impact of the proposed pylon route on the landscape around the village. We will publish the assessment when we have it and will be using it to respond to Kingsway's PEIR. We have to respond by 29 October and would welcome your views beforehand. However, there is nothing to stop you expressing your own views directly to Kingsway <http://www.kingswaysolarfarm.co.uk>. Indeed we would encourage as many of you as possible to do so as this will demonstrate the strength of opposition to the application to Kingsway and the Planning Inspectorate. We would encourage you not to use Kingsway's template but instead to follow the guidance of the Kingsway Solar Community Action (KSCA) group.

<https://kingswaysolarcommunityaction.co.uk/get-involved-in-kingsway-solar-farm-objection/consultation-period-is-here/>. KCSA is running a number of letter-writing workshops and the PC is exploring if one can be organised close to Reach.

The PC is also pressing central and local government to revise planning frameworks and guidelines to take far more account of cumulative impact of energy developments on landscapes and communities.

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