

Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

We are working with 9 partners on a major new flood scheme for Oxford, which will reduce flood risk to homes, businesses and vital transport routes into the city.

One of the key steps to bring the much-needed scheme to reality is to ensure we have access to all the land that's essential for it to work. To do this, we made a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for the land, which runs through fields to the west of the city. Read on to find out more.

May 2025

Approval granted to purchase scheme land



Welcome to another edition of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme newsletter. Following the news that Oxfordshire County Council resolved to grant planning permission for the scheme, we have now received good news on another major milestone. I am delighted to say that we have received approval to progress with purchasing the land we need to build the scheme.

If you've been following our progress, you may remember that we made a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), to acquire the land and rights over land needed to build the scheme. A public inquiry was held, which gave the opportunity for both support and objections to the CPO to be heard by an Independent inspector. The Inspector then submitted her report to the Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

We have now been informed that the Secretary of State has confirmed our CPO. This is fantastic news for Oxford and demonstrates the government's confidence in our plans.

We can reassure everyone that we will not need to ask anyone to leave their home, and have already been talking to those whose land is affected for a number of years. The land needed for the flood scheme is predominantly farmland and floodplain meadow. We always try to reach agreement directly, but the Compulsory Purchase Order provides certainty that the scheme can be completed and flood risk in Oxford reduced.

With this important decision made, many of you reading will be urging us to get on and start building. I absolutely feel the same way, but before we can start building the scheme we need to have all approvals in place. The project team is working hard to secure the remaining approvals, including finalising our planning permission with Oxfordshire County Council. We anticipate construction will begin in late 2026.

In the meantime, please visit our website and keep an eye on our social media for more updates.

Robbie
Robbie Williams
Project Director

Recap

What is a Compulsory Purchase Order?

It is normal practice when planning a scheme of this scale to make a CPO. This is to ensure we have access to all the land essential to the working of the scheme.

A CPO is a legal process that allows land, property and rights of access to be obtained from a landowner. This can only be done where there is a compelling case that the land is needed in the public interest and can only be applied for where land or access is vital for a scheme to function. Landowners are compensated for the land acquired under a CPO.

With the Secretary of State's decision to confirm our CPO, the Environment Agency can now progress to acquire the rights and interests in the land affected.

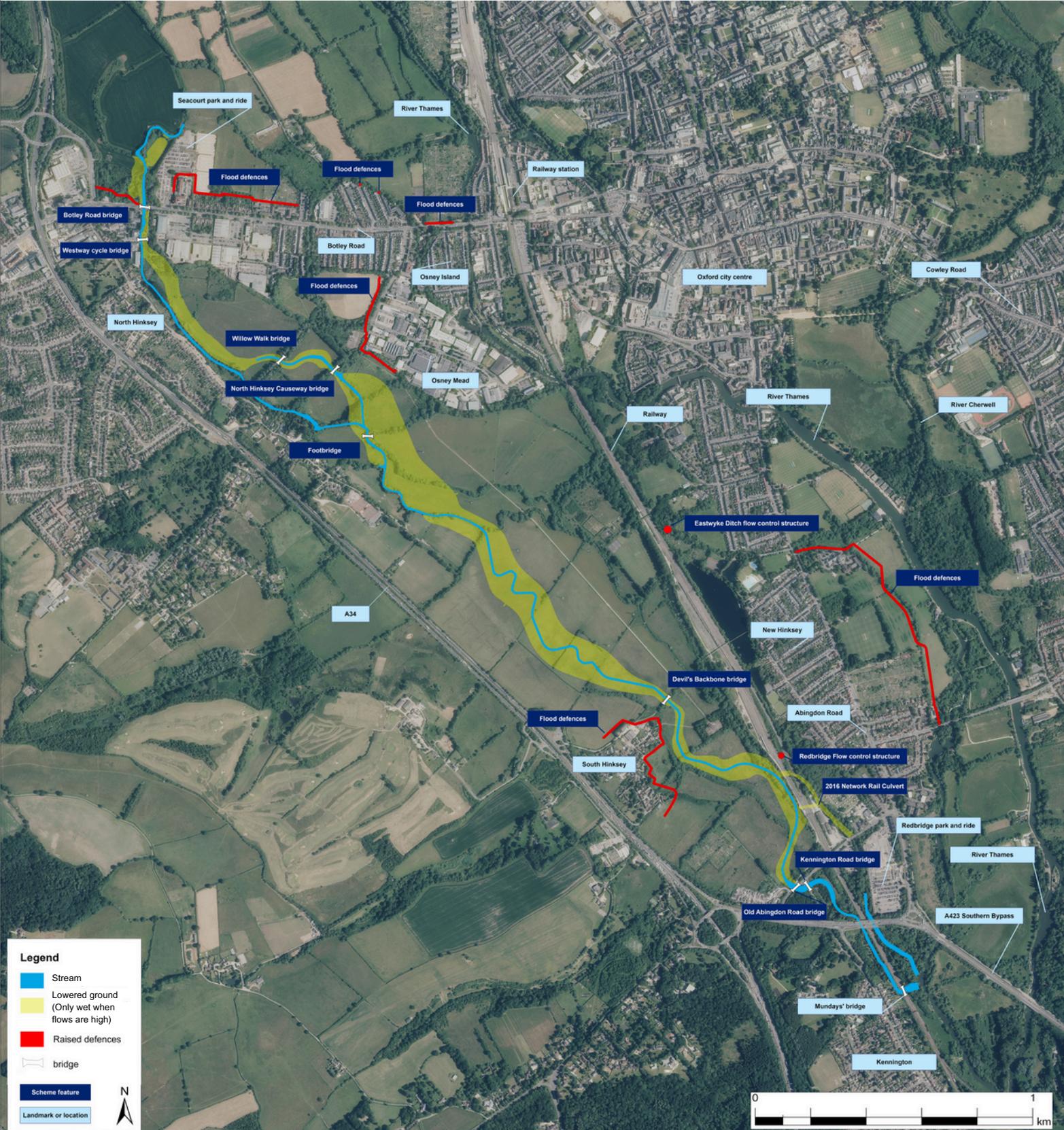
Which land is affected?

The scheme will be approximately 5km long, running from just north of Botley Road, down to south of the A423 near Kennington, as shown on the map below. Most of this area is farmland and flood meadow. It will be a nature-based scheme, working with the existing natural floodplain. We will create a new stream, with a gently sloping floodplain of new wetland habitat, grazing meadow and wildflowers.

The new stream will connect with the existing stream network including the Seacourt and Bulstake Streams and will meander through the floodplain to re-join the River Thames. This is shown on the map in blue. The yellow area on the map shows where we will lower the ground alongside the stream to create more space for water. This sloping floodplain will be covered in vegetation, creating valuable wetland habitat. When water levels in the River Thames rise, floodwater will overflow from the new stream and start to fill the lowered floodplain around it, reducing flood risk in the city.

The scheme keeps hard engineering to a minimum, but some structures will be built to complement the new stream where needed. These include new bridges for footpaths to cross the stream, culverts (tunnels) for floodwater to pass under main roads in the south of the scheme, and earth embankments and flood walls in some places to reduce risk to houses which would otherwise still flood.

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Next Steps

Before we can start building the scheme, we need to have all approvals in place.

Planning permission

In July 2024, Oxfordshire County Council's Planning and Regulation Committee resolved to grant planning permission to the scheme, subject to a legal agreement between the Environment Agency and the council. It is usual for a planning application of this complexity to be subject to a legal agreement, which in this case relates to the management and monitoring of the new habitats we will provide as part of the offsite biodiversity. We are currently finalising the details of the legal agreement with Oxfordshire County Council.

Planning application for rail sidings

We have been exploring whether it is feasible to remove some of the excavated material by rail, and intend to submit a separate planning application to construct a temporary access track to the Hinksey Rail Sidings. The temporary access track will all be removed and the land reinstated to its current use once construction is complete. Use of the railway will depend on us gaining permission to access the sidings, their availability, and agreements with the operator of the sidings.

A423 Bridge

The Environment Agency will need to coordinate construction of the scheme with Oxfordshire County Council's replacement A423 Kennington Bridge. The A423 bridge is in the south of the scheme area. It is crucial to the scheme because floodwater from the new stream will need to flow underneath it to re-join the River Thames. We have worked closely together to ensure the replacement bridge has been designed to include the flood scheme.

Find out more



www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxford-flood-scheme
<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/thames/oxfordscheme/>



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