

Oxford-Cambridge Expressway: Impact on Brill

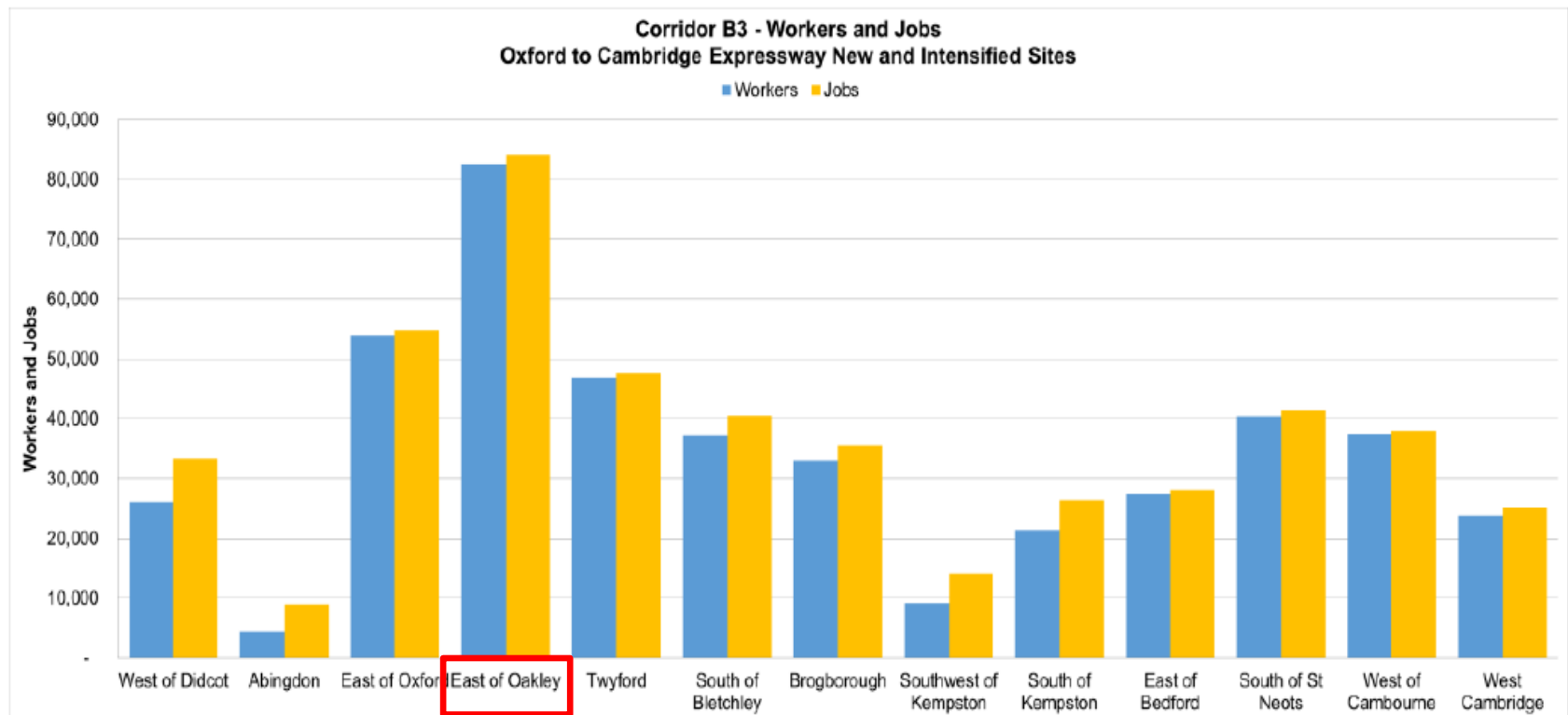
- On behalf of the No Expressway Group (NEG), David Rogers (retired Professor of Zoology, University of Oxford) and Olivia Field (Chair of NEG) have dug out a lot of information from Highways England (HE) about possible routes, housing and population growth associated with the three possible corridors through which the Ox-CAM expressway might run. The NEG has now released a full report, available on request from noexpresswaygroup@gmail.com, or david.rogers@zoo.ox.ac.uk.
- This is a summary of their main findings.
- In a nutshell, Brill and its neighbours could suffer the greatest impact of the Expressway because of development in an area that HE calls 'east of Oakley'.

Potential for 82,000 new workers, East of Oakley

- Highways England has calculated how many new workers the 'Knowledge Arc' could absorb , to be based in different parts of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and other counties all the way to Cambridge.
- Its consultants appear to regard an area labelled 'East of Oakley' (Bucks) as a kind of *empty quarter* on the grounds that it has less existing housing or allocated housing from Local Plans.
- They calculate that East of Oakley could accommodate 82,000 new workers, *far more than anywhere else along the entire expressway 'Arc' from Oxford to Cambridge.*

Population influx, 'East of Oakley'

Figure 10.3: Corridor B3 aspirational growth potential estimate of workers and jobs



Source: Highways England **Oxford Cambridge expressway, Corridor Assessment Report** June 2018 p.250: for growth in other areas, see p.248-249

How many houses for 82,000 workers 'East of Oakley' ?

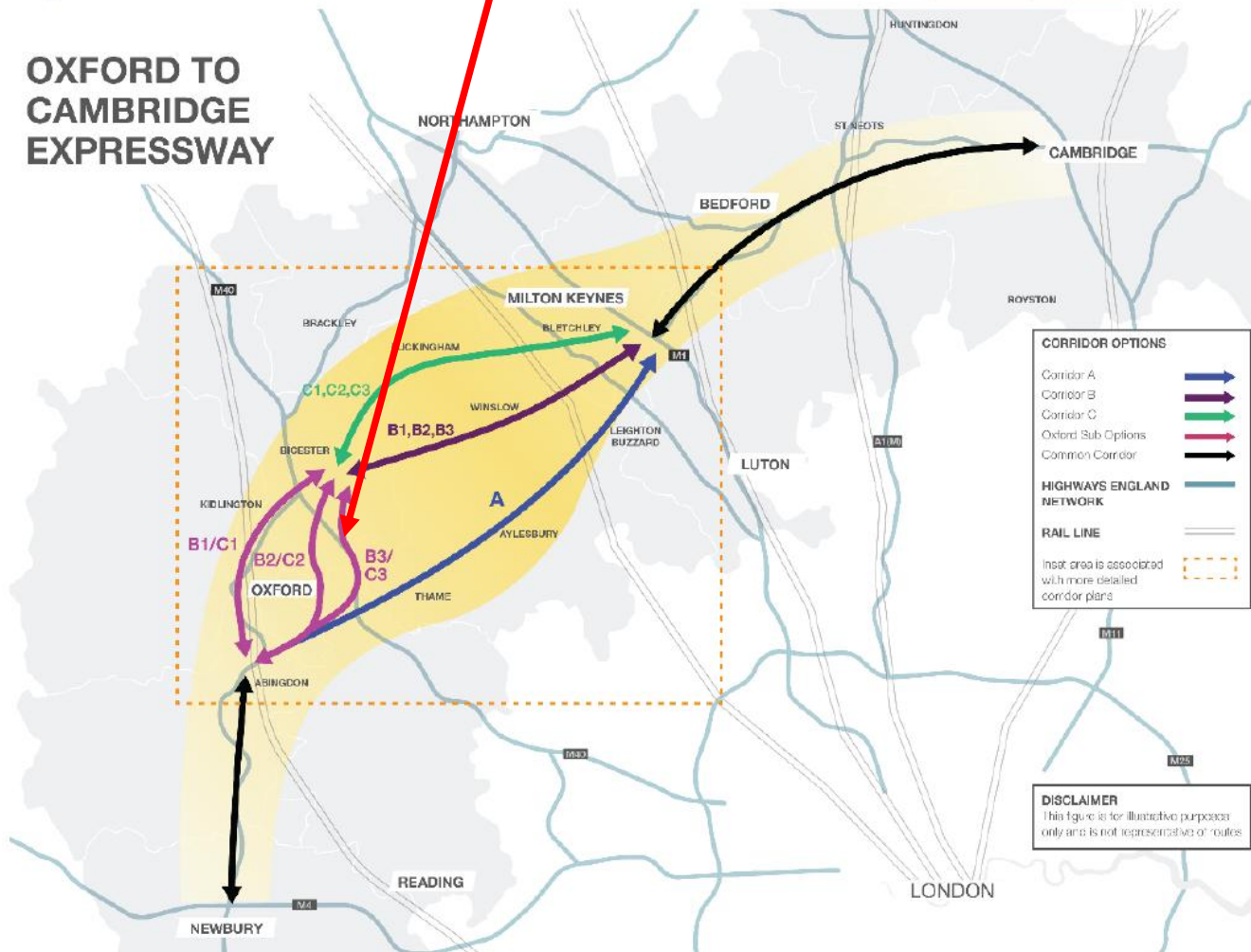
- Using Highways England's own figures (1.27 workers per dwelling and 2.33 people per dwelling), the 'East of Oakley' proposal of 82,000 workers would involve building **64,600 houses** for a total population of 150,440 people over the next thirty years or so.
- That is about the same size as Oxford City (population 154,600 in 2017).

Routes and housing

- In September 2018, HE announced that it had selected Corridor B for further study and route selection. It produced the Corridor Assessment Report (CAR) of over 1000 pages in total (including Appendices)(Ref 1, above), outlining its reasons for choosing Corridor B
- The map below shows HE's sub-options in light purple for three possible routes to link Oxford to the expressway.
 - B2 was ruled out because it would have seriously affected the RSPB reserve at Otmoor.
 - B1 (to the west) and B3 to the east of Oxford are currently being assessed
- B3 would be the closest to 'East of Oakley', the area with the greatest potential for more workers and houses.

The B3 route to 'East of Oakley'

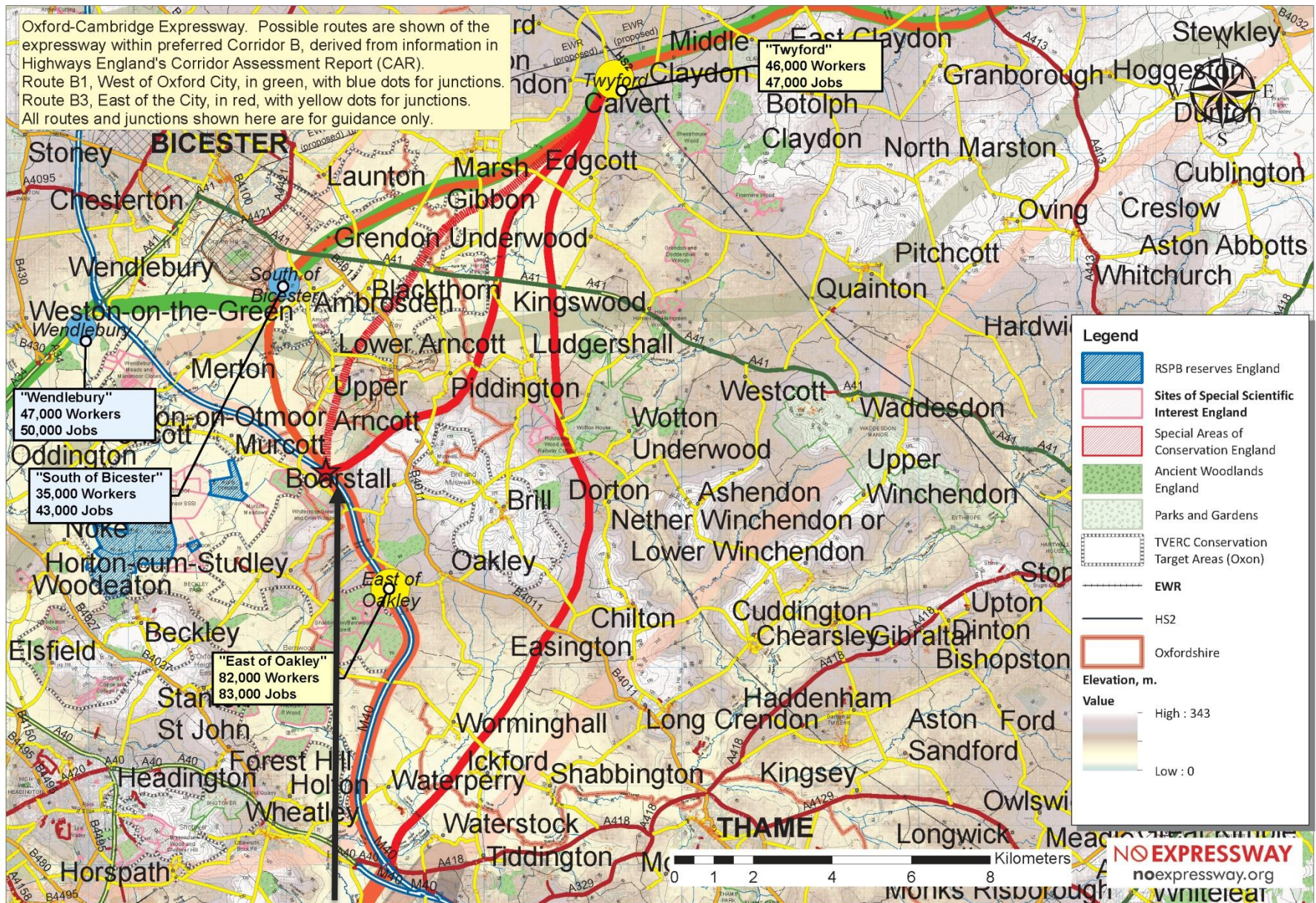
Figure 0.2: Illustrative schematic of corridors and Oxford sub-options



Source: Highways England, Oxford Cambridge expressway, Corridor Assessment Report June 2018 p. 7

More detail on the B3 route near Oakley

- The CAR provides the following information about B3 :
‘Oxford sub-option 3 [B3]: this route passes to the south of Oxford via a new road but instead of turning north it continues east to junction 8A of the M40. From this point the route utilises the M40 by turning north to a new junction, approximately 11 km away, before turning north to pass the A41 west of Bicester and joining the east-west rail corridor.’
NB: west of Bicester is a typo: they should have written east of Bicester.
Source: Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Corridor Assessment Report Appendix G: Traffic Appraisal for Corridor Assessment PCF Stage 1, May 2018 pp 9 – 10.
- As Highways England has not provided a map of the possible B3 Route, David Rogers created one.



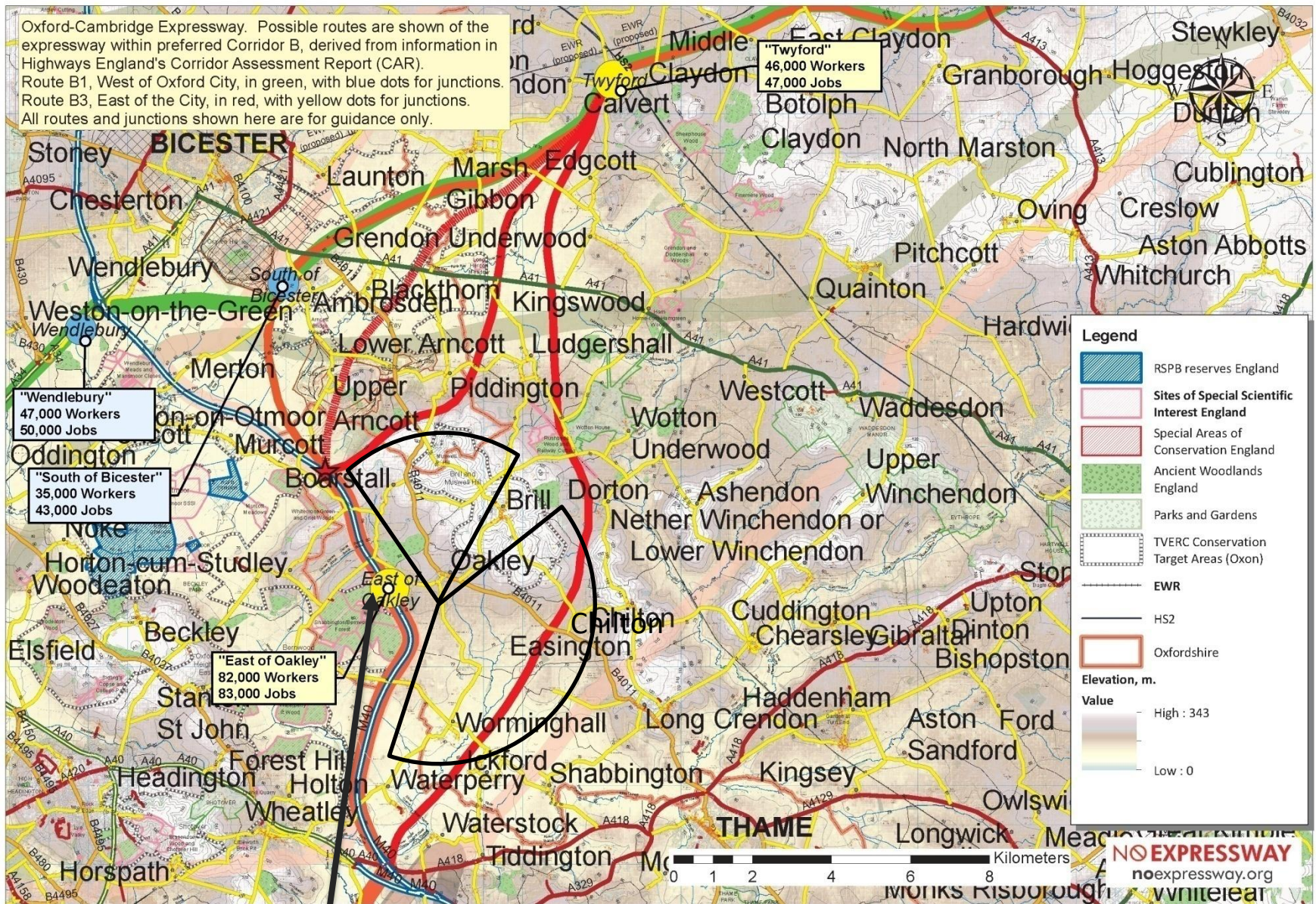
Route B3 would have a new M40 junction, probably between Oakley & Boarstall (the latter is 11 km north of junction 8A) from which the expressway would head towards Twyford.

What the map shows about possible routes

- Rogers's map reflects how HE may have had to change its thinking about the B3 route from the new M40 junction . The broken red line (via Blackthorn) represents a route that would have crossed land which the Ministry of Defence (MOD) originally planned to vacate in the 2020s. Now that the MOD has decided to retain all this land, this route can no longer run through there.
- The map shows two possible routes for B3 that *would avoid MOD land*: an orange route to the west and a red route to the east via Piddington, each arising from 'Boarstall' junction on the M40. Alternatively, HE may now decide to move that junction, either North or South, with consequent changes in the route as well.
- Furthermore Rogers draws an entirely new route (in red), well to the east, that would not use the M40 at all. He surmises that Highways England may not want to over-crowd the M40 and that developers may put HE under pressure to forge a route through the 'empty quarter' east of Oakley to 'unlock' the maximum amount of land for housing (a phrase frequently used in the Corridor Assessment Report).

Location of houses 'East of Oakley'

- According to the NEG Report, Highways England conceives of new housing being within 4 kilometres of any new Expressway junction since one of its objectives is to reduce trip times for new workers living and working in the 'ARC.'
- If B3 uses a new junction on the M40, it is likely to be somewhere between Oakley and Boarstall. That point would be the centre of a circle with a 4 km radius describing the East of Oakley area for an estimated **64,600 new houses**.
- However, there should not be any new Expressway housing to the west of the M40 where RSPB Otmoor and other natural barriers would constrain development (land west of the M40 'loop' around Oxford was excluded from the preferred Corridor, although that is not a complete guarantee of its future status) . Development on the elevated terrain around Brill might also be avoided.
- So new housing 'east of Oakley' might be built within two segments of a circle to the East of the M40 , possibly but not necessarily with a gap to avoid development near Brill.

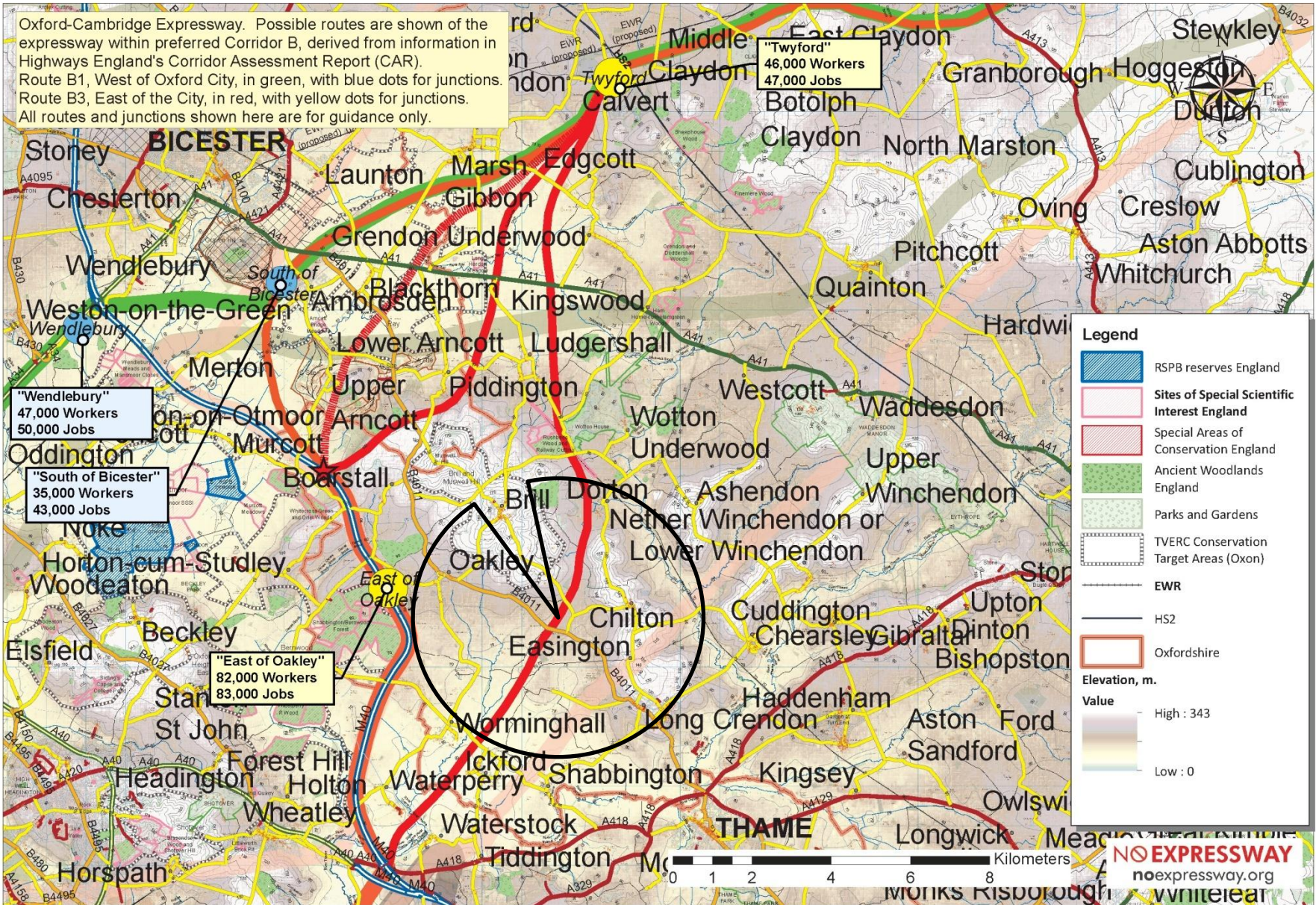


64,600 new houses 'east of Oakley' might be built within two segments of a circle to the East of the M40 , possibly but not necessarily with a gap to avoid development near Brill.

Housing near a cross-country route

- If Highways England goes instead for an alternative easterly route, such as that drawn in red by Rogers, then there would be a new junction somewhere between Wheatley and Twyford. Here we imagine it near Chilton, but it could be anywhere along the expressway “East of Oakley”.
- This new ‘Chilton’ junction would then become the centre of a 4km radius circle covering ‘east of Oakley.’
- Some of that area goes beyond Corridor B as drawn by HE: we imagine that housing associated with the expressway could extend to parishes such as Long Crendon on the edge of the corridor but within 4 km of a new ‘Chilton’ junction.

'East of Oakley' area for housing if the route goes cross-country to the east of M40



Conclusions

- People in Brill and neighbouring communities need to know about the development threat from the Expressway and how to resist it.
- The concentration of Expressway housing 'east of Oakley' would have a terrible impact on their quality of life and landscape.
- Developers and Highways England might argue that the figures given above for development along the expressway are based on realising the full capacity for traffic at each expressway junction, i.e. they are maximum figures, not realistic ones.
- However, the totals of workers across the entire expressway translate to 'only' 360,000 new houses (maximum), a figure far below the aspirational value of more than 550,000 houses in the National Infrastructure Commission's original Report which proposed a total of one million homes across the Arc by 2050 (a figure that includes houses already in Local Plans).
- To realise this ambition, there will be pressure to exploit expressway capacity to the full. Needless to say, there will also be pressure elsewhere to accommodate the spare aspirational capacity that the expressway alone cannot handle.
- Some might argue that they should persuade the government to opt for a route that goes west of Oxford but there is already a very strong lobby against that 'sub-option' (B1).
- **So no expressway is really the only option if you live in Brill or anywhere around it.**

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