



Oxford Railway Station

Phase 2 Enhancement Works

Application for Prior Approval – Supporting Planning Statement

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Colin Field MRTPI – Town Planning Manager



Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	PROJECT CONTEXT	4
3	SITE DESCRIPTION, HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND	11
4	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	14
5	PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK	16
6	PLANNING ASSESSMENT	23
7	CONCLUSION	30

Appendix A: Site Location Plan

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Supporting Statement has been prepared in order to support an application for Prior Approval in relation to the Oxford Corridor Phase 2 Capacity Improvement Scheme at Oxford Railway Station.
- 1.2 The description of development as described in the covering letter is as follows:
- 1.3 ***Proposed extension of Oxford Railway Station to provide a new additional through platform including new platform buildings and canopy; a new secondary station entrance building (western side); replacement and new rail, road and pedestrian bridges including safeguarding of future eastern side station capacity improvements; alterations to the highway to include new grade separated shared paths under the railway on Botley Road, creation of new junction between Roger Dudman Way and Cripsey Road; cycle parking area; and new public realm including hard and soft landscaping.***
- 1.4 This application for Prior Approval is submitted under Schedule 2, Part 18, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended.
- 1.5 This Statement incorporates context regarding the proposed project, outline the proposed works, and assesses the proposal against relevant planning policy and other relevant material considerations. Whilst these proposals are not a planning application, we have provided a planning statement and assessed the scheme against policy albeit as the application is for prior approval the issues for consideration are limited to siting and amenity. It is divided into the following sections:
- Project background;
 - Site description;
 - Proposed development and evolution of the design;
 - Planning policy framework;
 - Planning assessment to the siting and amenity; and
 - Conclusion.
- 1.6 The information contained within this planning statement should be reviewed in conjunction with the plans and supporting material listed in the covering letter that have been submitted as part of the application.
- Appendix A: Site Location Plan

2 Project Background

- 2.1 Network Rail is the statutory undertaker for maintaining and operating railway infrastructure of England, Scotland and Wales. As a statutory undertaker, Network Rail is under license from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport Scotland (TS) and regulated by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to maintain and enhance the operational railway and its assets, ensuring provision of a safe operational railway.
- 2.2 The overall aim of the project subject to this prior approval application is to facilitate a more efficient and a greater capacity railway station for the city as well as delivering a significant economic benefit to Oxford city centre as well the surrounding area. These works are the second phase of station improvements being delivered by Network Rail that provide the essential infrastructure that will facilitate further rail capacity and potential station masterplan in the future.
- 2.3 The first phase of station works to provide additional capacity on the eastern side of the main line comprised of the extension of two existing north bay platforms, replacement canopies, new operational building and reconfiguration of short stay and staff car parking, it was given prior approval in 2015. This part of the station is now used to support new and additional services by Chiltern Railways to London Marylebone via Bicester.
- 2.4 This current project forms part of a wider package of rail enhancement schemes which deliver significant economic and strategic benefits to the wider Oxford area and the country. When complete, there will be a more efficiently operated station, extra capacity for the rail network, extra facilities at the station and surrounding area. The overall programme of works are planned in 4 phases (2A/B/C/D), with the scheme development that took in Control Period 5 (April 2014 to March 2019) and delivery in CP6 (April 2019-March 2024).
- 2.5 For the Council's information, Phase 2A contains network operational works across a wider area in Oxfordshire and Network Rail will be discussing these with relevant stakeholders and making separate planning submissions to Cherwell District Council. None of these works fall within Oxford City Council's area. Phase 2B falls within Oxford City Council's area and the works (track) will be undertaken using permitted development rights. A brief outline of those works is however provided below:
- 2.6 Phase 2A: Level Crossings: Level crossing mitigations between Wolvercote Junction and Heyford are required to improve safety and create additional capacity by unlocking headway improvements. Bi-Directional Signalling shall also be commissioned through this area.
- 2.7 Phase 2B: Track Works – High Speed Crossovers: The project shall develop 75mph high speed crossovers at Oxford North Junction to support improved East West Rail service. These works will be undertaken utilising Network Rail's permitted development rights under Part 8 and 18 of the GPDO. These works whilst delivering railway benefits and efficiencies will not really be noticeable to the public as the crossovers are essentially additional railway track contained and linking existing track, allowing trains to move between parallel lines.
- 2.8 Phases 2C and 2D which are the subject of this prior approval application cover the works affecting the station environs are outlined below:

- 2.9 Phase 2C: Botley Road Bridge: Develop a new span to accommodate an additional west side island platform. Take account of the highway authorities' requirements for an improved carriageway / pedestrian and cycle capacity improvements of the existing Botley Road layout.
- 2.10 Phase 2D: Oxford Station works, Western Entrance and Track Works: Provide a new down-side twin-face platform to include western entrance access from Roger Dudman Way.
- 2.11 With the works outlined above in Phases 2C and 2D interfacing with the highway network, Network Rail has submitted a separate Form 006 (technical drawing submission) set of details to Oxfordshire County Council for their technical approval.

Strategic Context

- 2.12 Investment Rail is a key element of Oxfordshire's transport system, with over 20.5 million journeys made to and from Oxfordshire stations in 2018-19.
- 2.13 Journeys to and from stations in Oxfordshire have increased by 69 % in the 10 years to 2019 against a UK average of 42 %.
- 2.14 Oxford station is by far the busiest of Oxfordshire stations with 8.27 million journeys in 2018-19, an increase of 63 % over ten years. Oxford is the 5th busiest station in Network Rail's Wales & Western region.
- 2.15 Oxfordshire holds a strategically vital position for rail freight, particularly for intermodal and automotive flows between the Port of Southampton and the Midlands.
- 2.16 With the introduction of the December 2019 timetable, Oxford station is nearing full capacity and cannot robustly accommodate the further service enhancements set out in the 2024 train service specification.
- 2.17 Improving rail's service offering will support wider benefits including connectivity to jobs and housing and regional economic growth.

Pre-Application

- 2.18 Network Rail submitted a formal pre-app to Oxford City Council which outlined a consenting strategy of prior approval under Part 18 of GPDO and suggested topics to be included in the ES as NR assumed that the LPA would deem the project to be EIA development. (The exactly same consenting strategy of prior approval to the LPA was used for the now constructed Reading Station development which involved alterations to the highway, redevelopment railway station, relocated train maintenance depot and sidings, railway maintenance delivery unit and a completely new railway flyover/viaduct with a separate Order submitted to DfT deal with Land only issues).
- 2.19 Detailed and technical plans were submitted in the pre-app for feedback showing a baseline railway project and changes to the highway network in November 2018. A combined response from both the City and County was received in March 2019.
- 2.20 The overall conclusions of the response from both authorities was that the proposed

development would be welcomed in principle and in terms of facilitating improvements to the rail network. There were suggestions of further consideration is needed for specific aspects of the proposals and the Councils are willing to engage in further conversations with the main issues of feedback/ suggested changes should include:

- Road layout under Botley Road – two lanes rather than three;
- Consideration to the external appearance of Botley Road Bridge and would support a high quality design bridge that makes use of good quality materials;
- The proposed station building does not appear to respect the context of the surrounding built environment in terms of its form and massing. It should draw on the context of its surroundings in order that it represents high quality design;
- Any materials should be high quality to reflect the character and appearance of the surroundings which are typified by a largely traditional palette;
- The height of the building may have an impact of wider views through the site and public realm;
- Does not provide a sufficiently inspiring “gateway” for the City of Oxford;
- Does not seem to follow NR’s own guidance on new stations;
- Potentially consider a temporary entrance building for 5 years;
- It should be designed to integrate with the future proposed railway station on the eastern side;
- Potential concerns about width of station subway, needs to be future proofed;
- More cycle parking provision;
- The proposed would provide limited opportunity to integrate other uses into the station building; and
- A high standard of public realm similar to that introduced in Frideswide Square in 2015 should be achieved.

2.21 Since the receipt of pre-app advice, the design of the project has evolved and adapted both in the highway design and station building.

Design Advisory Panel

2.22 On 21 March 2021 the Network Rail project team presented the project to the joint Oxford/ Network Rail Design Advisory Panel which is co-ordinated and organised through the Design Council. In addition to the Design Council appointed panel the presentation was also attended by officers of the City Council. The panel were given an overview of the whole project, the interfaces with other nearby schemes in development to provide context and were asked to provide specific feedback to the station entrance design and the public realm.

2.23 At the DAP presentation it was described that the part of the station proposed for redevelopment to provide secondary entrance sits just beyond the city areas natural divide of Botley Road bridge and the railway line. It presents a visual ‘gateway’ opportunity. The site poses design challenges around levels, flooding, local environment and urban realm. Passenger use is predicted to be 20 % of the principle entrance on the east side of the railway.

2.24 Following receipt of the DAP feedback there were suggestions made about how the entrance building design, landscaping and new station subway could be improved. Network Rail subsequently appointed an internationally renowned architectural practice who has worked on railway station designs across the world with the precise remit of improving these elements of

the design as well as enhancing the finishing of engineered led bridge designs at Botley Road and the retaining wall to the new platform and railway track.

Evolution of design

- 2.25 Between 2018 and July 2021 the design of the station entrance building has evolved and developed through discussions with stakeholders and potential development partners. We are now proposing a simple rail only scheme but a number of options have been considered including a separate new YHA building with a station building with six storey over development, a station building with YHA above it, a two storey and a one and half storey station building fronting Botley Road, a single storey station building set back from the road and finally the single storey linear design subject to this application.
- 2.26 Below is the design of the two storey western entrance building that was first included at the 2018 pre-application this was set back slightly from the Botley Road frontage and provided a small area of public realm at the front.



VIEW FROM BOTLEY ROAD

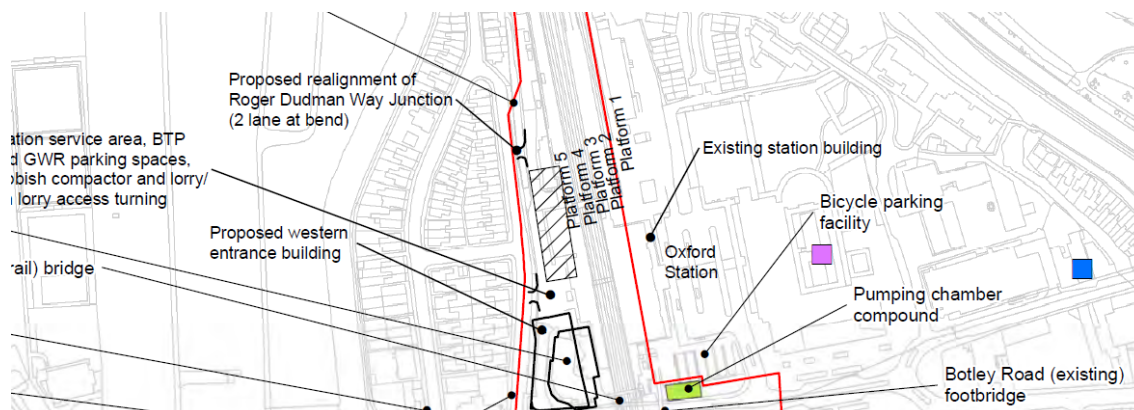
- 2.27 Another iteration which showed a station which provided for a replacement YHA re-providing the same rooms as currently exist. However, this would still mean that the YHA would probably need to close for a period of 2 years between demolition and reconstruction. The YHA have decided that working with Network Rail's property team they would rather explore opportunities of finding a new site rather than be reaccommodated as part of the station development. This would have directly fronted Botley Road.



2.28 A different concept would have been similar to the above but without the YHA above.



2.29 When we first submitted an EIA scoping document to the City Council in summer 2020, the scheme we asked to agree an EIA scope for, included a six storey office development above the station entrance building. The extract from the submitted plan to accompany the EIA scoping showed a completely separate standalone YHA building (shown hatched) and the mixed office and station entrance building using the whole of the developable area fronting Botley Road and Cripsey Road.

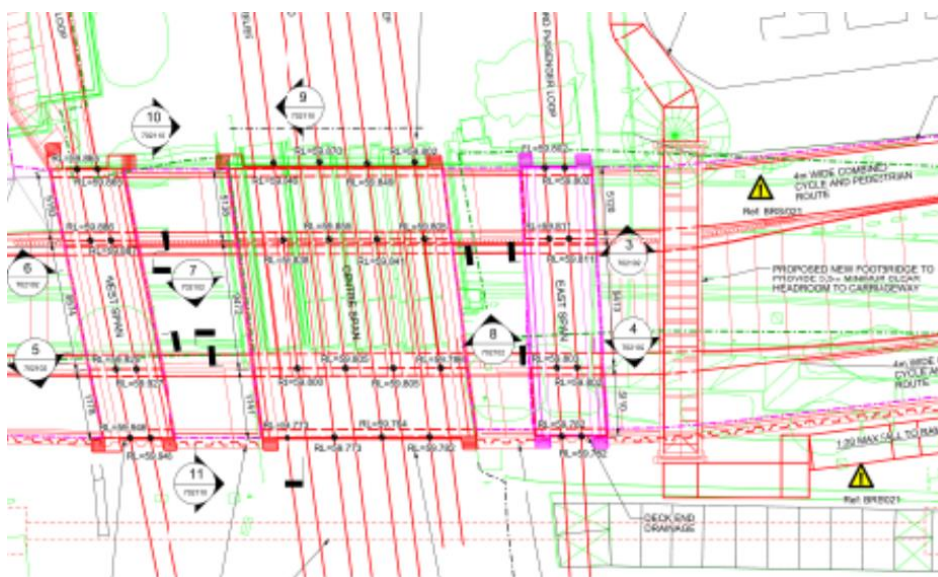


2.30 We resubmitted our EIA scoping in the autumn of 2020 and asked the council to consider the project with the scope of a single storey station entrance building only (baseline railway scheme) and to disregard an over the top commercial development and the free standing YHA.

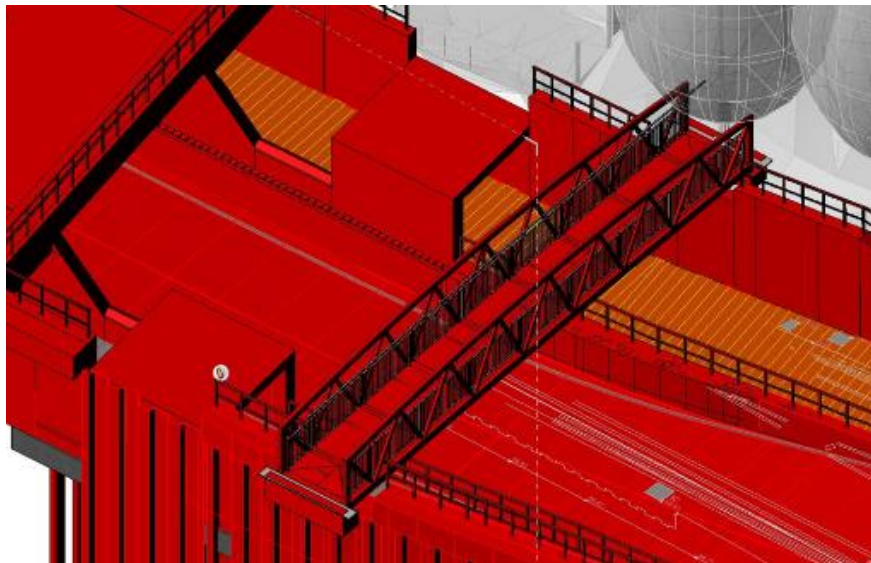
2.31 The design which we presented to the Design Advisory Panel set the building back from Botley Road to provide a more generous public realm at the front of the station entrance as shown on the image below. It incorporated a partial green roof, living wall over the retaining wall, public realm, seating and landscaping.



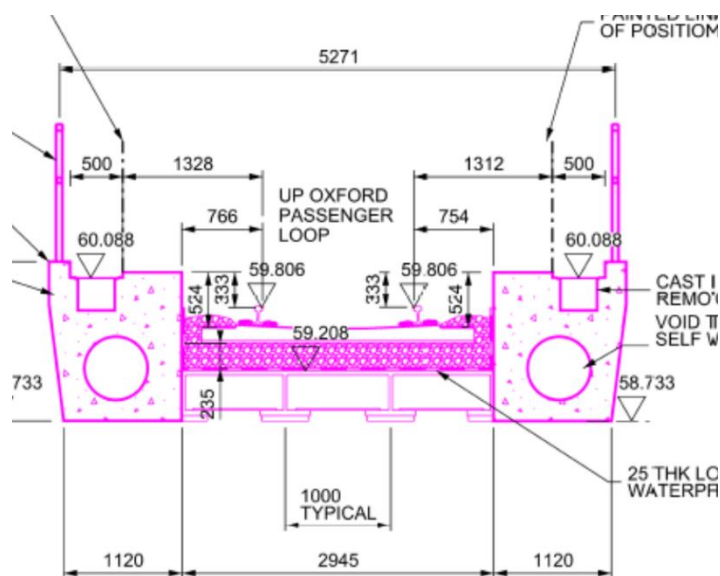
- 2.32 In addition as well as a change and evolution to the station we have changed the footbridge design over Botley Road as the existing footbridge needs to be demolished and replaced as with the new road layout and new 4m cycle/ pedestrian route either side of the road means that the existing bridge would not be wide enough to be reused. The original design submitted for pre-application feedback showed the below layout for a new footbridge and passive provision (pink outline on the left image) for future bridge to accommodate another railway track on it with the new footbridge to the side of it.



- 2.33 A 3D model extract below that shows how the footbridge would have originally been sited with the abutments and box (for the cycle/ pedestrian path) in between the footbridge and new railway bridge is shown below and this formed the basis of our pre-application submission. However as the Council have aspirations for a “landmark” footbridge to be installed in this approximate location much wider than the footbridge proposed by Network Rail as part of the future station masterplan proposals if the original design as shown below was installed as part of the Oxford phase 2 project this would remove the ability to install something different later. Therefore, we have proposed to install the new rail span bridge (required for phase 3) now as part of this prior approval which will be adapted for pedestrian use.



- 2.34 If the Councils aspired Landmark bridge does not come forward when Oxford Phase 3 works do, we will propose a footbridge similar to the above as part of the railway station and capacity scheme.
- 2.35 The proposed rail span is as the below section. The proposal would be to provide the footway at bottom ballast level, directly onto the bridge deck (with some interim waterproofing and non-slip surfacing). An additional pair of handrails would be provided at the inner ends of the higher level deck, to prevent pedestrians from climbing onto the upper level. The bridge width is 2945mm, so gives a small improvement on today's 2396mm width.



3 Site Description and Historical Context

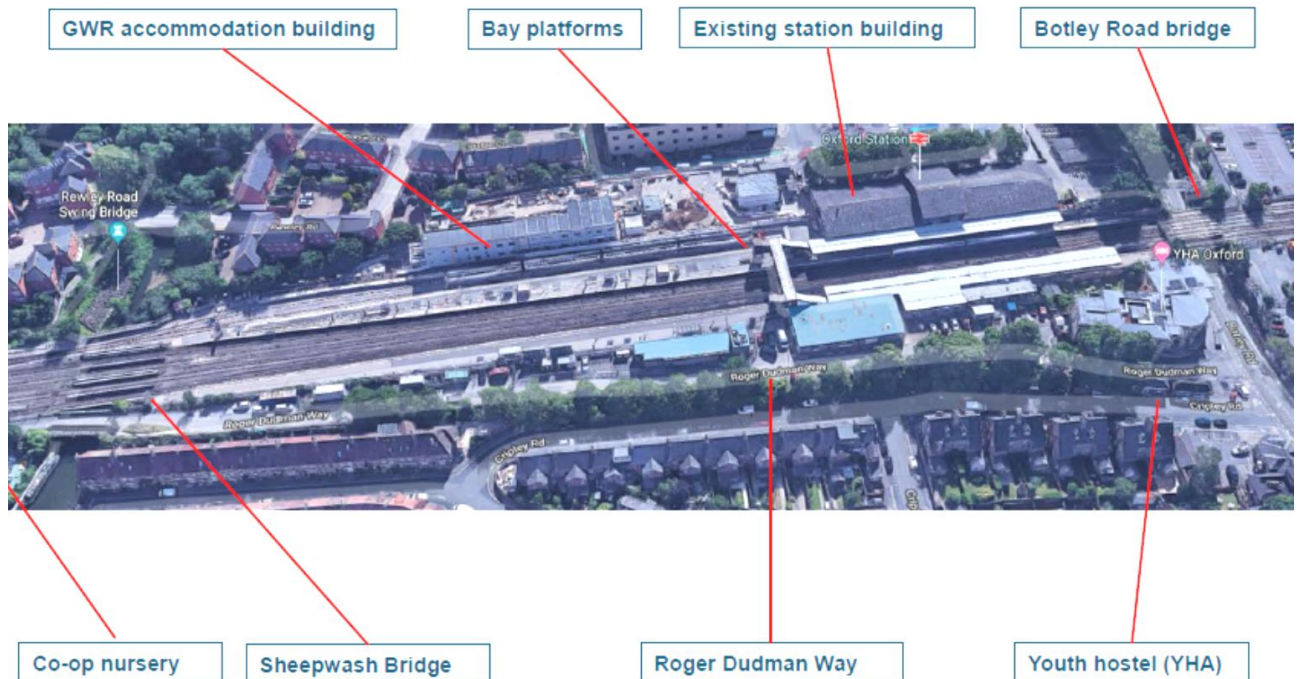
Site Description

- 3.1 The application site comprises Oxford Railway Station which is a mainline railway station serving the city of Oxford. It is approximately half a mile west of the city centre, northwest of Frideswide Square and the eastern end of Botley Road. It is on the line for trains between London Paddington and Hereford via Worcester Shrub Hill. It is a starting point for fast and local trains to London Paddington and for local trains to Reading, Worcester and Bicester Town. It is also on the CrossCountry Route linking Reading to Manchester Piccadilly and/or Newcastle Central via Birmingham New Street. The station is operated by Great Western railway (GWR), and is also served by CrossCountry and Chiltern Railways trains. Immediately to the north is Sheepwash Channel Railway Bridge over the Sheepwash Channel.
- 3.2 The station area comprises a mix of operational railway land, public highway, the YHA, an office and cafe on Cripsey Road, a Nursery and the Beckett Street operational railway car park.
- 3.3 The railway station currently comprises a main station building, north and south bound platforms, associated buildings and structures, and a station forecourt which provides a taxi rank and bus interchange. To the north of the station building is a staff and short stay car park, recently extended and redeveloped bay platforms including new canopies and new operational building accommodating GWR staff and other station functions such as catering support and storage (Oxford Phase 1 works). The west side of the station has various operational buildings; an occasionally used west entrance and a busy road crossing the site with Roger Dudman Way leading towards the student accommodation, off site to the north.
- 3.4 Over the last eight years other rail infrastructure improvement works have been carried out near the station. Network Rail has undertaken track and signal improvements. The first stage to improve the efficiency and the day to day operation of the station, through railway lines and sidings. The two largest investments have been in the Bicester journey time improvements (as well as Oxford Goods Loop Capacity work to improve conflict between freight and passenger services. Both have made improvements to capacity and efficiency of railway services at and passing through Oxford Station.
- 3.5 Other improvement works already carried out at Oxford Station described above in the background section include demolition of old station buildings/ loading bays, and redevelopment of two terminating bay platforms with new canopies, a new accommodation building, improvements to staff and short term parking area.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 3.6 The EIA Regulations do not necessarily align with the requirements of prior approval under Part 18 of the GPDO, which only requires the local authority to consider siting and amenity in their decision making process. However, Network Rail has taken a more cautious approach and concluded that the Council would consider the works to be EIA development and at pre-application stage outlined what topics would be considered in the Environmental Statement (ES). Further analysis and of the findings of the EIA are contained later in this statement.

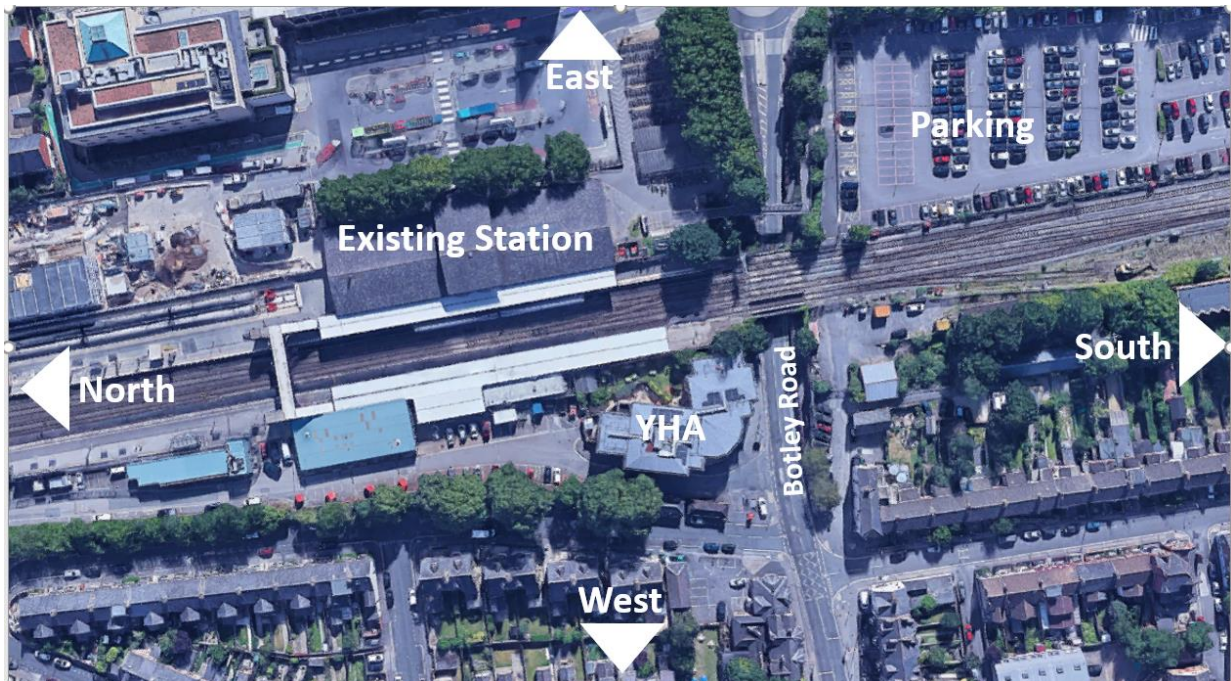
3.7 Overhead photo of the existing layout of the station and buildings below;



3.8 View of the Western Entrance Site showing bottom of Cripsey Road and Roger Dudman Way at their junction onto Botley Road.



3.9 Annotated photo showing the main features of the western side of the station.



3.10 Main station entrance building which remains unchanged as part of this project. This will form part of a later Phase 3 of station redevelopment (subject to funding) which this current project provides passive provision for.



4 Proposed Development

4.1 This application seeks Prior Approval for the Oxford Station Phase 2 enhancement works (west side entrance and associated works).

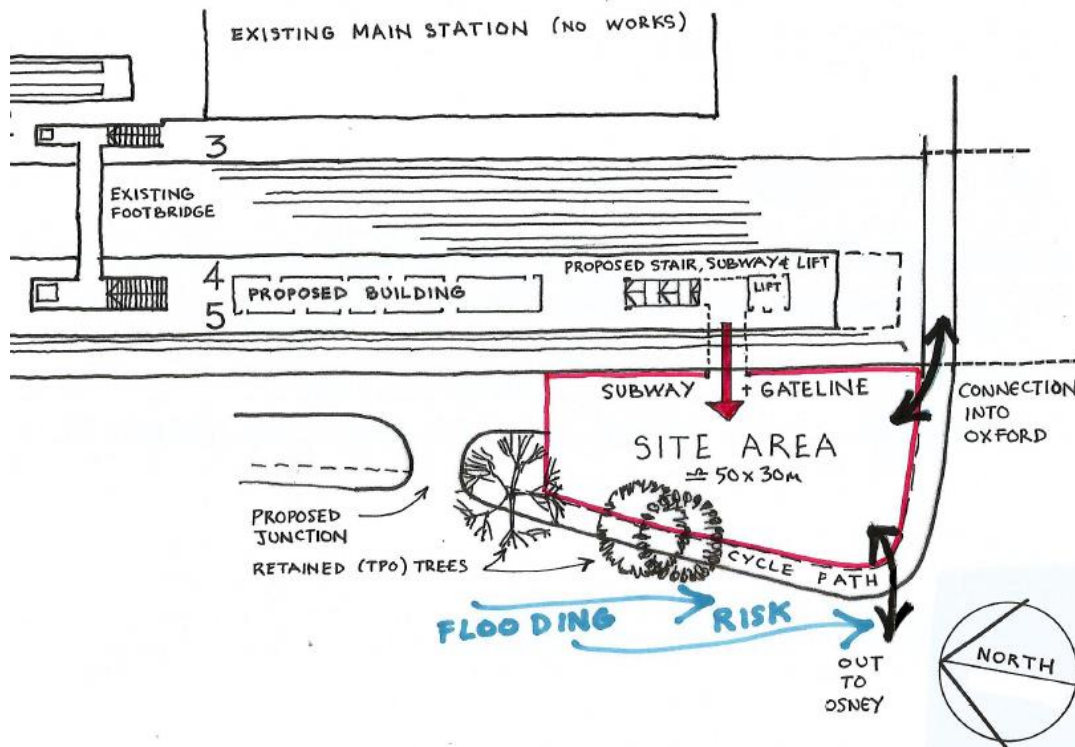
4.2 This Prior Approval as described in the covering letter:

3.11 “Oxford railway station proposed west side engineering works to construct an additional platform 5 railway line with associated platform canopy cover and platform enclosures providing passenger facilities; along with a stair and lift access to a subway connection to a proposed secondary station entrance incorporating retail, public toilets, an open concourse, staff accommodation and a relocated station refuse area. Proposed replacement rail and pedestrian bridges over Botley Road along with alterations to the road to provide grade separated pavements each side. Reconfiguration of Roger Dudman Way to connect onto Cripsey Road and replacement of Sheepwash bridge. Proposed demolition of the single storey railway buildings at the rear of platform 4, along with the Youth Hostel and removal of two small single storey commercial units between Cripsey Road and Roger Dudman Way. Formation of public realm to the west side of the proposed station building along with cycle parking facilities”.

4.3 The application proposes the following works;

- Demolition of YHA and two single storey commercial businesses;
- Demolition of existing railway buildings and structures;
- New secondary entrance building to the station with gateline, ticket machines, retail unit, station staff facilities, back of house waste facility, subway with stairs and accessible lifts to the platforms;
- Replacement of Botley Road Railway Bridge which incorporates a deeper wider carriageway (which will allow standard double decker busses to pass under the railway bridge) and two new 4m wide grade separated pedestrian and cycle routes;
- New railway line to provide through running trains;
- New public realm at the station entrance incorporating hard and soft landscaping (including the planting of 7 new trees);
- New platform 5 and platform buildings including waiting room, toilets, retail and extended canopy (to match the design of the canopy on the newly constructed phase 1 bay platforms) along the majority of the platform;
- A western retaining wall, abutting the new western entrance and supporting the new railway track;
- Alterations to Roger Dudman Way including the removal of the junction with Botley Road, and a new junction on to Cripsey Road to include the removal of one mature tree;
- Construction of 2.2m high environmental barrier (noise fence) parallel to new railway line between Botley Road and Sheepwash Bridge;
- Sheepwash Bridge replacement (to accommodate a railway and road over the watercourse);
- Replacement footbridge over Botley Road to link station car park to main station building (as an interim basis this will be provided on an adapted bridge deck which will accommodate a future railway line for a third future phase of station redevelopment– a new pedestrian only footbridge will be constructed as part of the future phase 3 of station works when the railway track is installed on the proposed bridge); and
- Cycle parking area to the western side of the station.

4.4 The proposed secondary station entrance site is shown on the below sketch.



3.12 This project has designed to future proof the station for further development and capacity to the main station building and additional future rail capacity on the eastern side of the station (which would include the extension of one of the two existing terminating bay platforms to become a through platform and redevelopment of the main station building). The implementation of this current project (phase 2) future proofs further station redevelopment (eastern side of the mainline -phase 3) and delivers the essential infrastructure (both road and rail) to ensure these other aspirations of the station masterplan and rail growth in Oxfordshire and beyond are realised. This current phase of delivery is essential to ensure future expansion and capacity is delivered for the City and this project should be considered as an essential enabler to realise the future opportunity at the station.

5 Planning Policy Framework

- 5.1 This section provides a summary of the relevant national planning guidance and local planning policy relevant to the proposed development. The proposal is submitted under Schedule 2, Part 18, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (GPDO) (as amended) as permitted development and therefore deemed to not require full planning permission. Notwithstanding this, Network Rail would like to take this opportunity to indicate how this proposal would be in accordance with planning policy.
- 5.2 The application site falls within the administrative area of Oxford City Council. The 'Development Plan' currently comprises the Oxford Local Plan 2036.
- 5.3 Other relevant policy documents include:
- General Permitted Development Order;
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
 - National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPS NN);
 - Oxford Economic Growth Strategy; and
 - Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan.

General Permitted Development Order

- 5.4 This proposal is submitted under Schedule 2, Part 18, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (GPDO) (as amended) as permitted development. It does not require planning permission but the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must give its approval prior to implementation of the scheme.
- 5.5 Part 18 of the GPDO is applicable to development which were initially authorised by an Act of Parliament which designates specifically the nature of development authorised and the land upon which it may be carried out.
- 5.6 The station and existing associated railway land around it were constructed under various authorising Acts of Parliament, set out below:
- Oxford and Rugby Railway Act 1845 – authorising act for the line between Oxford and Rugby – now known as the DCL;
 - Great Western (Additional Powers) Act 1865 – authorised the purchase of lands in the Parish of St Thomas, Oxford near Oxford Station;
 - Great Western Railway (Further Powers) Act 1866 – authorised the purchase of lands between River Sheepwash Bridge and Castle Mill Stream Bridges and the stopping up and

construction of Osney Lane Footbridge; and

- Great Western Railway (Additional Powers) Act 1936 – authorised the purchase of lands to allow the widening of River Sheepwash Bridge.

5.7 Each of these Acts of Parliament give provisions to; and bestows upon the railway company and its successors (Network Rail) the power to make developments necessary to the running and management of the railway; including those works outlined in this supporting statement.

5.8 Paragraph A.2 (of Part 18, GPDO) outlines the process by which the LPA can give their Prior Approval and comment on the proposals. It states:

The prior approval referred to in paragraph A.1 is not to be refused by the appropriate authority nor are conditions to be imposed unless they are satisfied that –

(a) the development (other than the provision of or works carried out to a dam) ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land; or

(b) the design or external appearance of any building, bridge, aqueduct, pier or dam would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification to avoid such injury

5.9 The LPA may consider only the design, materials, or siting of the works to ensure that the development proposed '*would not injure the amenity of the neighbourhood*' and be satisfied that it could not be '*reasonably carried out elsewhere*' so the siting and appearance of the project would be the main considerations of the Local Planning Authority.

National Planning Policy Framework

5.10 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019 and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The relevant paragraphs within the NPPF are set out below.

5.11 Paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 provides three overarching objectives which should be pursued in mutually supportive ways which are an economic objective, social objective and environmental objective.

Achieving well-designed places

5.12 The NPPF at Section 12 sets out the importance attached to the good design of the built environment. Paragraph 124 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

5.13 It advises at Paragraph 127 that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments meet a number of design characteristics and ensure developments:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term

but over the lifetime of the development;

- Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities); and
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

- 5.14 Paragraph 102 states that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals so that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued.
- 5.15 Paragraph 103 sets out that significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.
- 5.16 Paragraph 110 states that applications for development should give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, facilitating access to high quality public transport.

National Policy Statement for National Networks

- 5.17 Transport policy contained within the NPPF, is largely focused on the impact of, and location of, new development, in relation to existing transport infrastructure, and provides limited guidance on proposals for new transport infrastructure. There are more detailed policy considerations which apply to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects ('NSIPs') and which, for transport projects, are set out in the National Policy Statement for National Networks ('NPS'), December 2014.
- 5.18 While this Scheme is not an NSIP, because it falls below the threshold defined in The Highway and Railway (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project) Order 2013, it does involve proposals for new rail infrastructure, so the NPS provides useful guidance.

Oxford Economic Growth Strategy

- 5.19 Oxford Strategic Partnership's Economic Growth strategy sets out the policy framework for economic development in the city. It sets out the ambition of all partners to deliver employment growth within the city centre. Within the immediate environs of the railway station there are major regeneration schemes planned or being implemented in the West End of Oxford City, including the area around the station, Westgate (50,000m² retail / leisure / residential), the Oxpens site (73,000m² residential/research/hotel), and Osney Mead (137,000m² research / commercial / residential).
- 5.20 In addition, there are proposals for comprehensive redevelopment of sites in the ownership of Nuffield college (Park End Street and Island sites). A replacement Botley Road Bridge would also support the proposed opening of the Cowley branch line to passenger services serving the growing southern employment area (Oxford Business Park/Magdalen Science Park/BMW) with potential to support 4,000 new homes around the Kassam Stadium and Grenoble Road. The branch line is

currently restricted to freight and serves the BMW Mini plant (three trains per day to Southampton).

- 5.21 The Botley Road Bridge occupies a strategic position in the Oxford rail corridor and is a major constraint on rail and road movements, capacity and growth. The bridge currently carries four tracks and the proposed replacement ballasted deck (to enable higher line speeds) as well as a new rail span to the west would allow the height restriction of road users to be addressed. In parallel, the Local Transport Plan for Oxfordshire requires a widened highway to address the bottleneck on the A420 Botley Road which is the sole western access to the city.

Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan

- 5.22 Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan, Volume 3: Rail Strategy (2015 – 2031) sets out their strategic rail policies which are set out below.

- 5.23 Chapter 4 sets out that the rail has the potential to play a much bigger part in meeting the Oxfordshire growth agenda, particularly as an alternative to the A34 for connecting three main growth areas; Didcot, Oxford and Bicester. The strategic rail priorities include:

- Supporting the development and delivery of East West Rail Phase 2 and progressing future phases working with Network Rail and the East West Rail Consortium;
- Increased passenger and freight capacity between Didcot and Oxford, including opportunities for an expansion of Culham station;
- Promotion of a major upgrade to Oxford station, including additional platforms, through lines and a new station building and transport interchange;
- Development of the next stage of upgrades to Didcot Parkway, including new multi-storey car park, northern entrance and new station building;
- Reopening the Cowley Line to passenger services, with new stations to serve the Oxford Science Park and Oxford Business Park;
- Promotion and support for direct rail services from Oxford and Didcot Parkway to Heathrow Airport;
- Supporting further capacity and service enhancements on the North Cotswold Line;
- Better integration of rail and strategic bus networks as part of Science Transit;
- Enhancing access to local rail stations by supporting appropriate expansion in car parking and the provision of secure and accessible cycle parking;
- Development of a business case for a proposed new station in the Grove/Wantage area.

- 5.24 The strategy states that Oxford Station has been recognised as being a major constraint within the Didcot-Oxford corridor, and its limitations affect the reliability of trains on the strategic national rail network. It is a major obstacle to dealing with the suppressed demand for rail travel and without expansion it will hinder economic growth in Oxfordshire.

- 5.25 The strategy continues to state that the existing single-storey station building has limited passenger

circulating and waiting space, basic facilities and a poor retail offering. It gives a negative first-impression for visitors to a world-class city. At the busiest times of the day it is difficult to move freely around the station, with crowding around the footbridge and ticket barriers. This may worsen with the introduction of new services to London Marylebone in 2016 and to Milton Keynes a few years later. The operational bottlenecks are the track layout on the approaches to the station, which restricts flexibility of operation by requiring trains to cross the path of other trains north and south of the station to optimise use of the existing platforms, and the lack of through platforms. It is common for trains to be delayed waiting for a platform to become available due to the headway of trains in the timetable and terminating trains that can take several minutes to vacate a platform once passengers have alighted.

5.26 The County Council, Oxford City Council and Network Rail have worked together on a long-term vision for major improvement to the station and the public space around the station. The Masterplan was launched in July 2014, and its main features include:

- A new multi-level station building built over the railway on the north side of Botley Road;
- Two additional through platforms by creating two island platforms connected to the station building by lifts and escalators;
- A transport interchange for buses, taxis and cyclists;
- A multi-storey car park;
- Improvements to Botley Road bridge to allow widening of the carriageway and provision of new footpaths and cycle ways. It will also carry the extra tracks needed to serve the new platforms;
- Commercial development, with opportunities for food and beverage establishments, fitness and office accommodation; and
- Higher quality public space, in and around the station.

Local Planning Policy

Development Plan

5.27 As set out above, the ‘Development Plan’ comprises the Oxford Local Plan 2036, adopted in June 2020. The policies contained within the local planning policy documents of relevance to this planning application are set out below.

5.28 Policy S1 sets out that the council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

5.29 Policy RE1 relates to sustainable design and construction, that planning permission will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that sustainable design and construction principles have been incorporated.

5.30 Policy M1 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.

5.31 Policy AOC1 refers to West End and Osney Mead, this is inclusive of Oxford Station. The policy states that planning permission will be granted for new development within the area of change where it would take opportunities to deliver the following, where relevant:

- Create high-density urban living that makes efficient use of land
- Maintain a vibrant mix of uses
- Has regard to the framework set out in the West End Design Code
- Maximise the area's contribution to Oxford's knowledge economy
- Enhance public realm along the waterways
- Enhance connectivity throughout the area, including along and across waterways
- Enhance the pedestrian and cycling experience
- Ensure that the heritage of the area informs and guides new development proposals
- Create easy and attractive transport interchange
- Reduce car parking

5.32 Policy SP1 states that planning permission will be granted for a number of mixed-use developments across the West End. That planning permission will only be granted for redevelopment of the station and Becket Street Car Park if it improves the station for passengers and creates a strong sense of arrival to Oxford, and is in accordance with the Oxford Station SPD.

Other Material Considerations

Oxford Station Supplementary Planning Document

5.33 The Oxford Station Area Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), adopted in November 2017, provides Oxford City Council's guide to development proposals as part of an overarching vision to create a new transport interchange and a distinctive gateway to Oxford and should be seen as the key guide to development proposals concerning Oxford Railway Station.

5.34 Chapter 4 outlines the key design principles covering proposals for the station, covering the following matters:

- Design principles;
- Land use mix;
- Public realm and amenity space;
- Local context and character;
- Access and movement;
- Pedestrian and cycling movement;

- Bus movement and interchange;
- Car movement;
- Taxi movement; and
- Sustainability.

5.35 Chapter 5 outlines individual key components of the station, which includes the ‘Western Station Entrance and Station Square West’.

5.36 Chapter 5 notes that a new station entrance on the western side of the development will create a new gateway to Oxford that relates positively to the surrounding context and provides better access to a transport interchange with connections within and beyond the City. The document sets out its 10 design principles for the Western Station Entrance.

West End Area Action Plan

5.37 There had previously been a West End Area Action Plan but this has expired and no longer forms part of the current development plan.

5.38 The new West End SPD will replace the documents and provide guidance to support the over-arching policies in the adopted Local Plan.

6 Planning Assessment

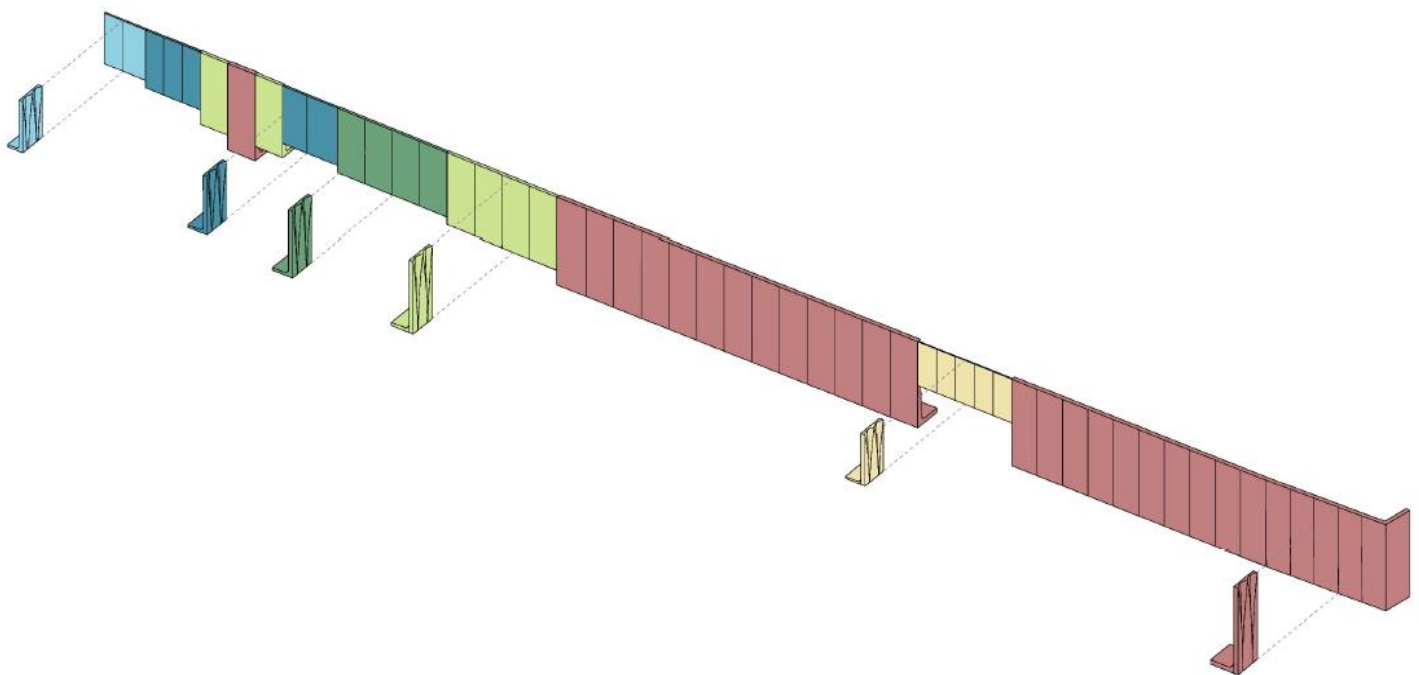
- 6.1 The following section considers how the proposal is acceptable in terms of siting and appearance, the planning policy framework and other relevant matters.
- 6.2 The principle development is essentially approved by the original authorising Acts and therefore the usual assessment required when applying for planning permission as to the “principle” of development is not relevant to this project, however notwithstanding this, the prior approval of the Local Authority is required to consider the siting and amenity.
- 6.3 Whilst the issues of siting and design/ amenity are the only issues for the LPA to consider under a prior approval, to accompany this application we have submitted an Environmental Statement (which considers the potential impacts of the overall project works and proposes mitigations to address those potential concerns) under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations. Also contained within the ES there is further local policy consideration and evaluation and demonstrates how the scheme is in full accordance with policy.

Design Considerations

- 6.4 As described above, this application proposes the redevelopment and enhancement of the western side of the station as well as the improvement of the highway network. To facilitate this scheme a number of buildings will need to be demolished which include several operational railway buildings, a youth hostel and two single storey business premises. None of these buildings could be considered as having any real architectural interest or character and their loss would not affect the amenities of the neighbourhood. None of the buildings are statutorily listed or locally listed nor in a conservation area and therefore no other or further applications for their demolition would be required over and above this prior approval application.
- 6.5 The existing footbridge and railway bridge over Botley Road will be removed and replaced with modern concrete structures incorporating metal detailing such as the perforated metal parapet. The existing road bridge accommodating Roger Dudman Way will be replaced with a wider span to accommodate both a road and railway to be constructed primarily in concrete with steel elements.
- 6.6 Through the recent evolution of the design/ footprint of the station building we are confident that only one tree needs to be removed (to provide the new vehicular access/ junction between Roger Dudman Way and Cripsey Road) which is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order as the footprint of the building is now much further from the existing trees than earlier designs. The project proposes seven new trees at the boundary with Cripsey Road planted in raised planters which can also be dual purpose as additional seating.
- 6.7 The main design considerations in relation to the building itself, the improved public realm, enhanced landscaping and tree planting as well as suggested improvements to the finishes of the new station platform retaining wall, the Botley Road bridge decks and abutments are discussed in more detail in the Design and Access Statement.
- 6.8 The design of the new platform buildings looks to replace and enhance the existing back of platform operational buildings to provide better waiting facilities for passengers as well as the

operational requirements for rail staff working on the platform. The design, colour and materials proposed of the new platform canopy will match those recently constructed on the extended bay platforms delivered in phase 1 of the station works. The new canopies will also be much longer than the existing and will provide a covered waiting area for passengers along the majority of the length of the platform.

- 6.9 The platform buildings and canopies have been designed for the future electrification of the railway and have considered the siting and design of the overhead line equipment so there will be passive provision for this infrastructure to be delivered should funding come forward.
- 6.10 In order to construct the new platform and railway track at a higher level from that at Cripsey Road a retaining wall needs to be constructed to support the new infrastructure. The slope of the land and differing levels from the bottom of Roger Dudman Way to the Sheepwash also means that the retaining wall isn't a consistent height. The original design would have provided a smooth concrete wall built in 1m wide sections with the requirement of a 2.2m noise barrier installed on top (identified as part of the EIA process). With the shortest of the retaining panels 1.5m in height to 4m. The retaining wall needs to be in situ before the new station entrance building can be constructed.
- 6.11 The enhanced design brought forward by our architects following Design Advisory Panel review now proposes panels 2m wide reducing the number of panels needed to be moved into situ and simplify construction and also rather than constructing a separate noise barrier, the panels themselves extending by 2m in height to incorporate the noise barrier into the retaining wall. In addition, an imprint will be provided in the concrete panels with more detail in the design and access statement with a gothic themed shape. More detail on this will be explored at construction design stage and we will be expecting a planning condition to agree this exact profile and finish.



- 6.12 The imprint to be incorporated onto the retaining wall will now also be incorporated into the

concrete span of the Botley Road bridge and the abutments going under the bridge and on the retaining elements at the side of the road. This can be seen on the below image.



View 1 - Botley Road Platform 5 bridge with Western Entrance building on the left

- 6.13 The same design concept is taken through the underside of the bridge and onto the span of the interim pedestrian bridge. In addition a bespoke railings to be provided at the edge of the cycle path and road which again we would expect a planning condition to agree the exact design and finish of these railings.



View 1 - Botley Road pedestrian bridge

Use

- 6.14 The works proposed as part of this application seek to improve and enhance public infrastructure in the city centre namely the highway network including road, users of the footpath and cycle way. By delivering the new Botley Road railway bridge this road alignment will now be able to be used by standard size double decker buses as currently Oxford buses need to be a non standard height to fit under the railway bridge.
- 6.15 The new station building, platform and back of house facilities will be used by the railway passengers and rail workers and are designed to meet the requirements of the Equalities Act.
- 6.16 The new public realm to be provided at the new station entrance will be available for use by the public and local community alike introducing a new publicly accessible place. The new public realm will provide new and improved hard and soft landscaping and has been designed to improve both biodiversity and amenity for users of the space.

Siting and layout

- 6.17 Botley Road itself will not move in its siting as there is little scope to move the route of this main highway artery into the city, however whilst the road will stay in a similar location the width of the railway span over the road has been widened to facilitate the new grade separated cycle and pedestrian paths. In addition the railway span (going over the road) is being proposed in two separate spans to allow a gap in between the existing railway alignment and the new railway alignment so natural light will come through and will make passing under the railway less constrained and less like a short tunnel.
- 6.18 The siting of an additional through platform at Oxford station is somewhat limited as it needs to be located next to and incorporated into the existing railway station. The ability to move its proposed siting would be difficult and it could quickly be concluded that it could not be, *“reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land”* as there quite simply would be no where else to provide a an additional through platform.
- 6.19 The siting of the Sheepwash Bridge has stayed as similar to the existing as it needs to continue to provide vehicular traffic to residential and student accommodation on the previous railway sidings land albeit the bridge needs to be wider than the existing to essentially accommodate a newly installed railway track as well as a replacement road bridge. Short term during construction this will require the adjacent Nursery to be relocated.
- 6.20 The siting of the proposed pedestrian bridge over Botley Road has been sited in the location of the future railway span bridge on an adapted bridge. The reasoning for the use of the future rail span has been discussed earlier in this statement at 2.32.

Materials Proposed

- 6.21 The submitted design and access statement and submitted plans provides details of the proposed palette of materials. The materials need to be high quality and robust due to the high number of users of the site.
- 6.22 Before the start of construction we anticipate further submission of technical specification and samples of materials to be discharged by planning condition.

Soft Landscaping

- 6.23 A landscaping scheme has been submitted with this application which proposes 7 new trees adjacent to Cripsey Road. The new tree planting will be in raised planting beds which will incorporate other planting as well as having a dual function of additional seating. Around the retained trees below the new junction onto Cripsey Road we will construct planters around them.

Access and Transport

- 6.24 The Western station entrance building is designed as the secondary station entrance with the eastern side of the station remaining the main station entrance. It is expected that the western entrance will be used by approximately 20 % of passengers using the station.
- 6.25 This new entrance has been designed to be accessed primarily by pedestrians and cyclists with the eastern entrance building remaining as the main station drop off, short term parking, long

term parking (Becket Street), bus stops and taxi. There will be no public parking provision as part of the project proposals.

- 6.26 A full Transport Assessment (TA) is included at appendix 13.1 in Volume 4 of the submitted Environmental Statement.
- 6.27 The TA concludes that the Scheme would likely be beneficial in terms of sustainable travel for the area and neutral in terms of vehicular travel. This is due to no additional parking provision and the improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure. This would provide a beneficial impact on the transport network as a whole once fully operational in 2025. In conclusion; overall, there are no transport related reasons why prior approval for this Scheme should not be granted.
- 6.28 Network Rail has submitted a Form 006 (technical approval) highway design solution for Botley Road (A420) with associated tie in works to the adjoining side roads as part of the rail works to Botley Road Bridge on 1 March 2021. This submission to the County has included a suite of over 40 technical drawings and reports. This technical approval process has been continuing and online meetings have taken place with additional information being supplied to respond to technical questions. Discussion also continues about the transition between the new cycle/ pedestrian route under the railway and how it merges back out onto the existing road albeit this in itself wouldn't require prior approval and will be dealt with through the highway technical approval process.
- 6.29 We hope that this technical approval in relation to highway safety and technical standards will be approved in the very near future. In a similar way to a planning approval has pre-commencement planning conditions a Form 006 approval could include additional conditions to be supplied once the project entered detailed design and have a construction contractor onboard (which we expect in the autumn of 2021).
- 6.30 The existing western side of the station has no cycle parking provision. The designs submitted as part of this application proposes 54 cycle parking spaces close to the station entrance and are shown as simple Sheffield hoops in stainless steel between the new building and Cripsey Road. However, as the project progresses into detailed design (should prior approval be allowed) there is an opportunity to increase cycle parking provision along the side of Roger Dudman Way and we will continue to progress this opportunity.

Environmental Statement

- 6.31 The EIA Regulations do not necessarily align with the requirements of prior approval under Part 18 of the GPDO, which only requires the local authority to consider siting and amenity. However, Network Rail has assessed the project under the EIA Regulations which provides a robust environmental assessment of the works during and post construction. The Environmental Statement (ES) presents the information required to consider the potential likely significant environmental effects of a project. The scope of the ES was agreed by the Council in letter dated 5 January 2021.
- 6.32 The Environmental Statement submitted with this application is presented in four volumes:
- Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary.

- Volume 2: Main Report.
- Volume 3: Book of Figures.
- Volume 4: Supporting Technical Appendices.

- 6.33 Volume 1 consists of a Non-Technical Summary which provides a concise description of the Scheme, development alternatives, environmental impacts, mitigation measures and residual effects. The Non-Technical Summary is designed to give information on the Scheme to a wide and non-technical audience and to assist interested parties with their familiarisation of the project.
- 6.34 Volume 2: The Main Report, and comprises: Introductory chapters (Chapters 1 to 4) which: introduce the Scheme; provide a description of the study area; outline the history of the Scheme and main alternatives considered; give a description of the Scheme; and detail the approach to the environmental assessment. Chapter 5 describes the legislative and planning framework. Technical assessment chapters (Chapters 6 to 15) that detail the results of assessment; impacts arising; and proposed mitigation measures. The topics covered are: air quality and odour; geology and soils; historic environment; landscape and visual; noise and vibration; population; human health; traffic and transport, water resources and flood risk and cumulative effects. Concluding chapter (Chapter 16) provides a summary of the residual effects identified in Chapters 6 to 14, together with a summary of the mitigation measures identified.
- 6.35 Volume 3: comprises supporting figures.
- 6.36 Volume 4 provides a set of technical appendices including technical reports, surveys and data which have informed the EIA and preparation of the Environmental Statement. This information is supplied as a separate volume to prevent the main body of the Environmental Statement becoming excessively long and cumbersome.
- 6.37 The conclusions of the ES hi-lights that there are two adverse effects which are found to be significant, which relate to operational railway noise and flooding (as a result of climate change). However, by introducing an environmental barrier (noise fence at the rear of the new track running parallel with Roger Dudman Way between Botley Road and Sheepwash Bridge) this risk can be mitigated and is now incorporated into the design. Also, the perception of noise decreases over time reducing its significance. The absolute noise levels would not be significant and would not require the provision of noise insulation.
- 6.38 The Scheme is liable to flood in the future; both the Botley Road and the western entrance (whereas without the delivery of the project it would still flood). This is due to the proximity of the River Thames and projected increases in flooding due to climate change. Measures have been proposed to alleviate the effects of flooding. It should be noted that in the event that the western entrance floods, the majority of the surrounding area would also be flooded.
- 6.39 The Environmental Statement concludes that Network Rail is committed to providing a world class, sustainable railway station. The Scheme would produce several significant beneficial effects including to the general amenity of the area and to views from Botley Road towards the western entrance. Although not significant in their loss the ES has assumed the loss of the trees

on Cripsey Road, however as the design has been updated further from that in the ES we believe the new station entrance building design (linear and closer to the proposed retaining wall) will now allow for the retention of existing trees where practicable. There is also an intention to provide for bicycle parking provision where currently none exists on the western side of the station. To further the sustainable aims of the project, a green roof and other vegetation/tree planting have been provided.

Summary

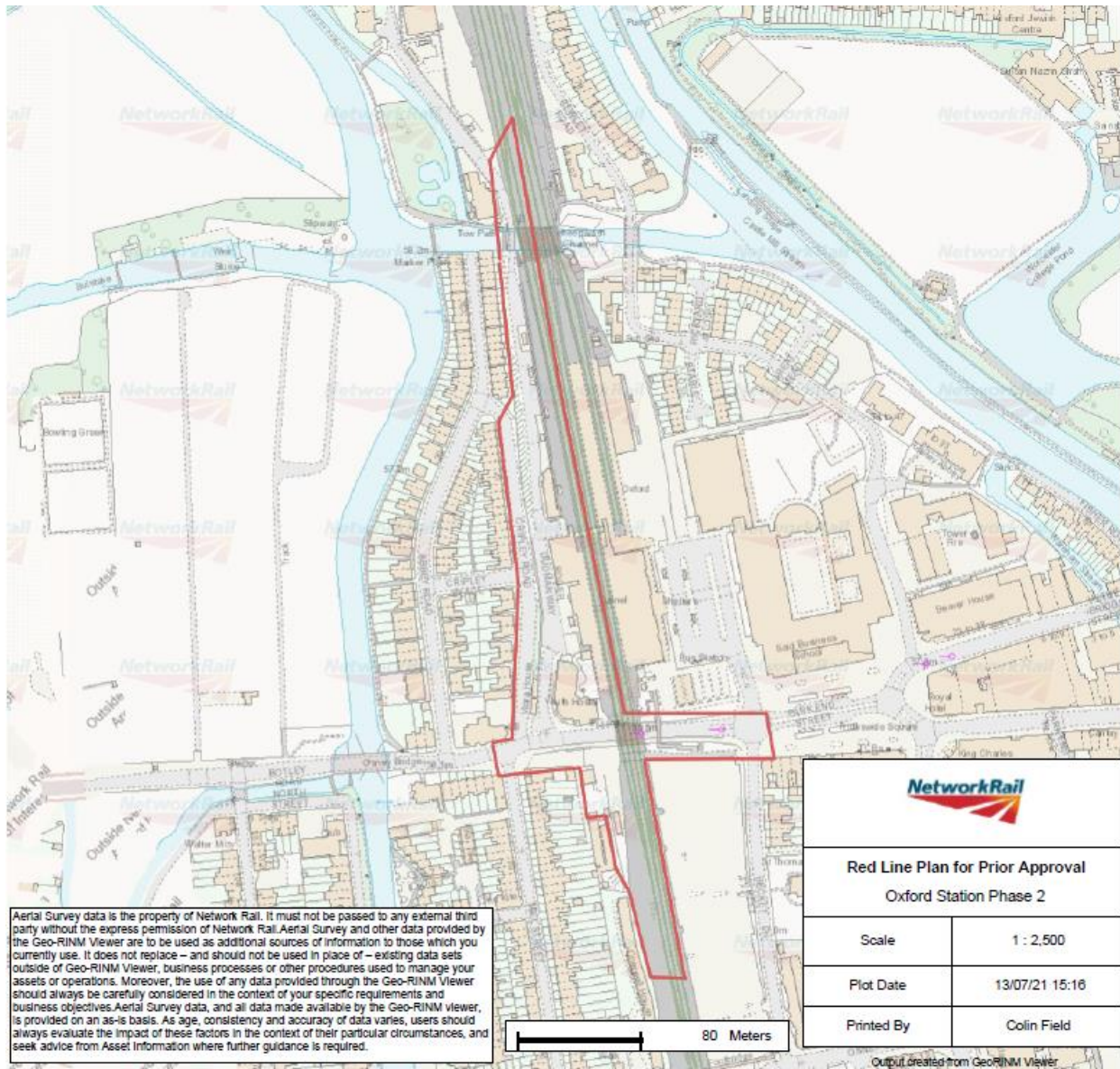
- 6.40 The above assessment focuses on the main two issues relevant to the determination of a prior approval application which relate to siting and amenity. The siting of a station extension is somewhat limited and could not be reasonably be carried out elsewhere.
- 6.41 Through the evolution of the station design and the significant improvements made from the designs presented in November 2018 we have demonstrated that the submitted project will not adversely affect the amenities of the neighbourhood and will in fact deliver a significant improvement to the station and the immediate local environment.
- 6.42 The planning policy section above outlines all the local and national policy that if planning permission was required that the proposed works would need to be assessed against. The proposed scheme is in accordance with this outlined policy and had full planning permission be required this scheme is supported by planning policy.
- 6.43 A full Environmental Statement is submitted and demonstrates that the project has introduced mitigation such as the environmental barrier (noise fence) to off set any impact from the additional railway infrastructure.
- 6.44 It is considered that the works proposed are in accordance with the relevant local and national policies. We therefore trust that the enclosed information is sufficient to issue the relevant approval.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Network Rail has a project to provide an additional through platform and new secondary entrance building to Oxford Station on the western side of the mainline to improve the operational efficiency of the station. The project is the enabler to future rail and station capacity to deliver aspirations of future railway infrastructure projects such as the Cowley Branch Line, East West Rail and station masterplan.
- 7.2 As part of the project to deliver rail efficiency at the station, other big improvements to the adjoining land will be significantly enhanced by providing a completely new secondary entrance building designed for pedestrian and cyclist use (as the eastern side will remain the main station drop off, short term/ disabled parking and main ticket office) as well a completely new area of high quality public realm not only for station users but also for the city visitors and residents alike.
- 7.3 In providing a new railway bridge over Botley Road it gives the opportunity of the project delivering significant benefits to the highway network including a better/ safer road layout with more height for standard size double decker buses and new grade separated 4m wide cycle and pedestrian routes on either side. In addition, a new better and more efficient water pump will be provided to deal with flooding in the road under the bridge as the current pumping system is no longer efficient enough in flood events.
- 7.4 The application has been accompanied by an Environmental Statement as required by the EIA Regulations which has resulted in the introduction of an environmental barrier (noise fence) along side the new railway track as it runs parallel to Roger Dudman Way.
- 7.5 The application outlines we have gone through a detailed process of option development and selection and proposed a scheme which is adaptable and buildable. The project will deliver significant improvements to the station and the land that adjoins it.
- 7.6 The station entrance building and public realm design has been presented to the Oxford Design Advisory Panel co-ordinated through the Design Council. The feedback from this exercise has resulted in the appointment of an internationally recognised architecture practice who have updated and improved earlier proposals for the building design, new station subway and public realm to address that feedback.
- 7.7 The proposal subject to this application does not require full planning permission as it has deemed consent through Part 18 to Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. However, the LPA's prior approval of the scheme is required before works can commence. When undertaking prior approval the LPA must be satisfied that the scheme will not 'injure the amenities of the neighbourhood' or could not be implemented somewhere else on the land – as set out in paragraph A.2 of Part 18. It is our view that this application with supporting reports and designs meet the requirements of the legislation.
- 7.8 There are no statutory designations directly affected by these proposed works, the station is not listed nor is it within a conservation area and there are no insurmountable ecology/ environmental challenges that can't be dealt with through the usual planning condition discharge processes.

- 7.9 Separately to this submission to the Council and before the start of construction works other consents will be sought from the Environment Agency for the replacement of the Sheepwash bridge as the works are above a water course. A separate technical approval of the revised and improved highway layout including pavement and cycle path has been submitted to the County Council in their role as the Highway Authority which we expect an imminent decision.
- 7.10 The proposal does not require full planning permission as it has deemed consent through Schedule 2, Part 18, Class A of the GPDO 2015, as amended. However, the LPA's prior approval of the scheme is required before works can commence. When undertaking prior approval considerations, the LPA must be satisfied that the scheme will not 'injure the amenities of the neighbourhood' or could not be implemented somewhere else on the land – as set out in paragraph A.2 of Part 18.
- 7.11 Network Rail therefore looks forward to receiving written confirmation that Oxford City Council is satisfied with the proposed works, and that prior approval has been granted.

Appendix A – Site Location Plan



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Network Rail
Templepoint
Redcliffe Way
Bristol
BS1 6NL

www.networkrail.co.uk