



OXFORD STATION MASTER PLAN

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION - JANUARY 2010

This response answers specific questions posed in the consultation documents, as well as discussing broader issues for people accessing Oxford station on foot.

IF PASSENGER COMFORT AND SAFETY ISSUES CANNOT BE RESOLVED, THE PRESENT MASTER PLAN SHOULD NOT PROCEED

Journeys within the station should be made as convenient and comfortable as possible. The most congested part of Oxford station is Platform 1, the London platform. With proposals for new services northwards via Bicester, and for the new southern platform, interchanging passengers may well be faced with long walks between the northern and southern extremes of the station, or between the proposed southern platform and northbound Platform 2.

There is a possibility that the proposed southern entrance/exit (also a possible western entrance/exit) may prove to be more popular than anticipated. This could lead to unacceptable congestion within the station, for example by increasing activity on Platform 1.

With considerable patronage growth forecast, the Master Plan proposal may, while resolving some issues related to the capacity to deal with trains, considerably worsen the capacity of Oxford station to safely and comfortably accommodate more passengers.

RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. THE MASTER PLAN

Question. What do you perceive as existing problems with the station as it is now, which you would like the Master Plan to seek to solve?

Answers.

People arriving at Oxford station are met with little guidance on how to find their destinations on foot

Whether looking for a bus or a local street or prominent address, those arriving at the station find little to guide them. This key aspect of a train journey needs to be addressed, with readable local maps and directions, as well as conventional signage. Multi-lingual guidance may be helpful to the many visitors from overseas who visit Oxford by train.

Street access on foot to/from Oxford station is unquestionably poor and needs to be improved. Improvements to the walking environment outside the station need to be developed alongside a Station Master Plan, not treated as an afterthought.

From whatever direction, the pedestrian environment near the station is hostile and unbefitting a city whose ability to function depends greatly on maximising the numbers of people choosing to make parts of their journeys on foot.

Key developments in the walking networks, to accompany and help encourage growth in patronage at Oxford station, and to help the station contribute to the Access to Oxford project, are:

Hythe Bridge Street – widening footways and removal of traffic dominance and air pollution. A study is suggested, of the complementary roles in the motor traffic network of Hythe Bridge Street and Park End Street, as part of endeavours to increase the utility of Hythe Bridge Street as a pedestrian thoroughfare, and possibly to enable more bus services to access the station from the north Oxford area.

Botley Road – eliminating the hostile and dangerous experience caused by the extremely narrow north side footway beneath Botley Road rail bridge, by providing alternative routes to the proposed south side access, and to a west side access if provided.

Roger Dudman Way – environmental enhancement and management of car parking to enable the street to function properly as a thoroughfare, not only to/from the station but to the car-free housing at Venneits Close.

Rewley Road and crossings of the Castle Mill Stream and canal – creating a pedestrian route which can be safely and comfortably shared with cyclists 24 hours a day in all weathers, enabling convenient access to/from Jericho and north Oxford.

Becket Street – improvements to accompany the Master Plan, including enabling cyclists to safely use the carriageway in two directions and removing the shared use of the footway as presently arranged.

Frideswide Square – removing obstacles and delays to entering the main station forecourt on foot at street level, including journeys passing across the forecourt between Becket Street and Stable Close/ Rewley Road

Question. What would you prefer Oxford station to be like in the future?

Answer. The national station travel plans initiative launched in June 2009, and the independent report of "Station Champions" Chris Green and Prof. Sir Peter Hall, set out comprehensive requirements for minimum standards for

stations. The Station Champions' report says, "Stations cannot be seen in isolation – they are part of the total journey experience. Stations are deeply entwined with their local community and effectively act as the gateway to both town and railway. They leave passengers with their lasting impressions of both – a dilapidated station is bad business for both town and railway." Transport Secretary Lord Adonis has added to this, saying "I want every station to be a good station - a hub of local community life and somewhere that you wouldn't mind spending time, with adequate facilities."

These principles must be applied to Oxford station and the neighbourhood that surrounds it. At present Oxford station is deficient in a number of aspects of passenger convenience – congested waiting areas, little seating on Platform 1, no luggage trolleys, no left luggage facility despite numerous visitors from far away, poor guidance on how to access destinations beyond the station. These and other deficiencies need to be remedied.

Question. What are OxPA's views on a western entrance to the station?

Answer. A west side access would enable many people for whom the Botley Road rail bridge creates a formidable obstacle on the route to/from the station, to eliminate that experience from their journeys. It would require improvements to the environment in Roger Dudman Way, and these improvements should be made regardless of whether a station access is located there. Its success would depend partly on the lockable path northwards to Walton Well Road being kept open at all times.

2. THE NEW PLATFORM

Question. Would you like a retail unit on the platform?

Question. Would you prefer to purchase a ticket from the new platform or the main station building?

Answers. To both the above questions, the southbound passenger journey via the new platform should be as convenient and comfortable as at present via Platform 1.

Passengers arriving by train at the new platform should be presented with clear and helpful information about how to continue their journeys.

Question. Rank the items below in order of importance from 1 (low) to 5 (high)

Answer.	Parking at the station	1
	Drop-off in Becket Street	1
	<i>Routes between cars, taxis and the station need to be comfortable and convenient</i>	
	Info screens in Frideswide Sq.	3
	Large waiting room	5
	Platform shelters	5

3. STATION FORECOURT

Option C (central island for buses) is preferred. The objectives should be to maximise the number of bus stops on the central island, to provide integrated bus/rail information and local street maps.

The design of the pedestrian route(s) between the transfer deck and the central island, and between the main station entrance/exit and the central island, should reflect people's 'desire lines'. Not to do so will lead to people making their own, potentially risky, choices about how to access buses.

Displaced cycle parking should be re-located, and more cycle parking should be provided in anticipation of growth in cyclist numbers using the station. Without sufficient cycle parking, there will be a danger of pedestrian routes being obstructed by poorly parked bicycles.

The existing drop-off and short-stay parking area should be retained as a convenient access point for disabled travellers.

The character of the forecourt should be functional and unconfusing, yet attractive. Streetscape enhancements should not reduce functionality nor create confusion. Clutter should be absent from the forecourt. Litter bins should be provided. (There are none at present).

4. THE TRANSFER DECK

A new bridge is preferred to the existing bridge, whose width will be inadequate. The bridge width must be adequate for comfortable and safe mingling of people with luggage, bicycles, etc., and should be enclosed so as to provide passengers with protection from the weather while within the station.