
OXFORDSHIRE
CONNECT

Oxfordshire Connect
Frequently asked questions – January 2025
For external publication

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Planning, preparation and project scope

Q1.1 Why has this project impacted Botley Road so much?

- Deliver a bigger, better railway for Oxford required more space than existed within the current limits of the railway station. This meant that the railway bridge over Botley Road needed to be replaced so that the station's platforms could be expanded to accommodate more trains in future, including East West rail services.
- As part of the consultation and planning process for this railway expansion, it was agreed, following discussion with the councils, to incorporate the highways and active travel routes as it made sense to build those at the same time as the bridge was being replaced. The proposed structure is 46 % wider than the existing bridge (currently 12.6m between abutments and will be 18.4m abutment to abutment.
- This added to the impact of the project on Botley Road as it mandated extra construction work due to the need to build new pathways either side of the road as well as replacing the new railway bridge itself.

More detail:

- We identified that platforms would need to be extended to deliver the benefits, they could only be extended south towards Botley Road due to space constraints (Sheepwash canal) to the north.
- The bigger platforms required the rail bridge over Botley Road to be demolished and rebuilt with new structures either side, this required land not owned by Network Rail.
- The requirement for third party land meant we needed to secure a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) for the scheme.
- As part of the TWAO planning process we were required to engage with the councils, as part of this engagement they highlighted they would like improvements to the highway for active travel and buying standard buses in the future.
- We agreed to include these additional works (widening and lowering of the road) to help avoid any objections to the TWAO planning process.
- This is not a planning condition but a clear obligation we agreed with the councils.
- We received a fixed sum contribution of £10m from OXLEP towards the delivery of the works.
- By way of background, the original remit in 2012 identified the opportunity for associated highway improvements (widening etc). See Q1.6 for more detail.

Q1.2. Did you do all the right checks before you started work?

We have followed the correct planning procedures throughout.

- Prior to the submission of the Transport and Works Act Order, Network Rail carried out a range of surveys and investigations which were based around the outline design and carried out in Botley Road itself.

Network Rail replaces many bridges each year (we are one of Britain's biggest bridge builders) and there was nothing to suggest when we started this work that it would be anything different or unusual. Standard processes and assumptions were followed but it is clear that some of these assumptions have contributed to prolonging the impact on Botley Road.

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- We carried out Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) surveys prior to the works but did not carry out specific ground investigations to the south where the bridge was to be widened to. We utilise GPR surveys on many of our schemes nationally and they are generally accurate and reduce the need for timely and costly intrusive surveys. One of our assumptions was that the water main and sewer were able to be diverted out of the highway and further to the south outside the Westgate Hotel. This was shown to be undeliverable alongside the operational and design challenges faced by Thames Water (see later).

- **Road closure / duration –** Assumption that one lane on the carriage way could be left open. The highway authority (Oxfordshire County Council) endorsed a full road closure as they had significant concerns over a single carriageway, signal controlled traffic management. There was a general assumption that the works could be delivered quicker with a full road closure.

- **Highways and active travel enhancements** – Assumption that the carriage widening and lowering would have a minimal impact on delivering the rail project output/ benefits.

- **Inverted Arch:** The extent of the inverted arch and its structural properties was greater than anticipated. Significant piling work was required to support the bridge structure prior to the arch being removed, which allowed the utilities to be diverted in the road. It took a number of months to design and install a significant number of piles in order to provide a watertight box to allow for diversion of the utilities.

- **Thames Water** – Assumption that the main water and sewer diversionary works could be completed in parallel, with most of the works being completed prior to the railway blockade, this was discussed and agreed with Thames Water and was included in the baseline in the initial 6-month road closure programme to divert utilities.

  Due to the changes in the connection pit location and poor condition of the Victorian sewer this work can no longer be completed in parallel and needs to be completed in sequence with the main water being diverted to make assets above the existing sewer redundant, prior to sewer diversion.

Q1.3. Why did you start the work when there were so many unknowns and assumptions?

- Oxford needs and deserves to have an upgrade to its transport system. This work is critical to that.
- Delivering a major project in the middle of a tightly constrained city centre location was always going to be complex and challenging. However, construction work of this type is something Network Rail is very accustomed to and generally, we manage it very well.
- A thorough plan was in place and there was nothing to suggest when we started this work that it would be anything different or unusual.
- However, this plan has changed owing to the need to deal with the brick arch and Thames Water's mains/sewer.
- It has become clear that intrusive ground investigation work was required prior to the road closure, as the plan was built on a range of surveys and non-intrusive (including Ground Penetrating Radar) investigations. We utilise GPR surveys on many of our schemes nationally and they are generally accurate and reduce the need for timely and costly intrusive surveys.
- We always have to weigh up the benefits of additional ground investigation work with the cost, disruption and delay it causes. In this case, based on the information we had at the time,

we didn't envisage additional complications which is why we didn't believe it was necessary to carry out additional investigation works before we started.

Q1.4. Why has it been so complicated to divert a few utility pipes and cables?

Running beneath the rail bridge are all the main utility pipes and cables for the west of the city, including water, sewer, and electricity. The first priority has been to ensure they all remain connected throughout the work, so this has had to be carefully managed.

The existing layout of pipes and cables are spread out below the road, with many of them in poor condition. Redundant assets have also just been left in place over the years. Before the bridge can be replaced and the road lowered, the layout needs to be substantially changed so that they are all contained in a 2.8m wide space within the road, keeping them safely away from where the piling needs to be done.

Q1.5. Why does additional work need to be carried out on the water main and sewer?

A key part of the utility work is the diversion of the Thames Water water main and sewer which runs below the rail bridge out to West Oxford and beyond, serving around 60,000 houses. This piece of work is complex, presenting a number of significant challenges relating to the connection area for the new water main and proximity to the Victorian age sewer on the western side of the bridge, which are only 600mm apart.

While two temporary work designs were produced and other options considered, they were not acceptable to Thames Water due to operational risk. Without that in place, the project could not proceed.

In order to find a solution, Thames Water needed to assess the viability of moving the water main connection point further west along Botley Road towards Osney bridge, where the assets are believed to be further apart.

Q1.6. Why didn't you know about this before?

We've been working with Thames Water since the start of this project to plan the diversion of their utility assets. Given the importance of these assets (serving around 60,000 houses) and the recent history of issues with the water main on Osney bridge, it's vital that Thames Water deem it operationally acceptable.

It took several months for Thames Water to produce a solution, and the solution they produced was unacceptable. Although a solution has now been found (Thames Water confirmed to NR in November 2024 that a new connection point further west outside of our worksite was suitable) and work is underway, the Thames Water diversions have resulted in a further 12 months delay to the completion of our works.

Q1.7. Why does the road need to be lowered?

- Prior to works starting on the project, the bridge had a clearance height of 4.2m. This meant standard height double decker buses could not fit under the railway bridge.

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- Installation of the new bridge deck will further reduce clearance height of this bridge so works to lower the road are required simply to maintain the existing clearance height of the bridge. To replace the bridge without lowering the road would have meant that even reduced height double decker buses would not be able to pass under the bridge.
- Therefore, as works to lower the road were required, discussions with the local authorities and DfT started in 2012 around what work would need to be done to provide a standard clearance height as well as widening to provide two new walkways under the bridge. Following a workshop on the 13 September 2012 the DfT instructed Network Rail to incorporate the Local Authorities' plans for the improvements to the highway and the Client Remit was updated in 2012 with this requirement.
- Funding was secured by the LEP which was passed to the County Council who entered into a 'Funding to NR' agreement for the detailed design and delivery of the works.

Problems during delivery

Q2.1. What has gone wrong?

- When we started this work, we discovered two things – the extent of the Victorian arch and the proximity of sewerage to clean water. Both needed to be resolved.

- We found the Victorian arch first (July 2023) and that caused us delay as it was three times larger in size than all the historical records and ground checks showed and was more critical to the structure of Botley Road and the flood defence system than expected.

- Then we needed to address the issue of the proximity of the sewerage. It took several months for Thames Water to produce a solution, and the initial solution they produced was unacceptable.

Q2.2. Why the delays – what's been the main causes?

- Delivering a major project in the middle of a tightly constrained city centre location was always going to be complex and challenging. However, construction work of this type is something Network Rail is very accustomed to and generally, we manage it very well.
    1. We have successfully delivered bigger, more complex schemes from major stations to tunnels and bridges regularly.
    2. It is our job to look after the 30,000 bridges, tunnels and viaducts on the railway network and ensure they are fit for the 21st century. We regularly replace bridges across the network.
    3. We divert 100's utilities each year 'off plan'.

- Oxford needs and deserves to have an upgrade to its transport system, and this project is critical to that. There was nothing to suggest when we started this work that it would be anything different or unusual.

- **Two main causes of delay:** When we started this work, we discovered two things – the extent and structural purpose of the Victorian arch and the proximity of sewerage to clean water. Both needed to be resolved.

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1) We found the Victorian arch first and that caused us delay as it was three times bigger than historical records showed and served two fundamental purposes (water management and structural). This impacted the whole bridge area, stretching from Frideswide Square to Mill Street. The extent of the brick arch brought the need to change the entire delivery approach for diverting the utilities. This drove a 6-month delay in the programme which is why we did not reopen the road for 6 months from Oct 23-April 24).

2) Then we needed to address the issue of the proximity of the sewerage. It took several months for Thames Water to produce a solution, and the solution they produced was unacceptable. Although a solution has now been found (Thames Water confirmed to NR in November 2024 that a new connection point further west outside of our worksite was suitable) and work is underway, the Thames Water diversions have resulted in a further 12 months delay to the completion of our works.

Q2.3. When was the most recent delay known and why has it taken so long to resolve?

- The most recent delay emerged in February 2024 when Thames Water confirmed that they could not approve the Kier temporary works design, due to risk around the potential collapse of the Victorian sewer (the main water is sitting on top of the egg-shaped sewer). Thames Water highlighted the risk of interrupting Oxford's main water supply, and sewerage provision was too high.

- With the railway blockade booked for July 2024, three further design and trial hole attempts were made at different locations within the road between February 2024 and July 2024. All three locations were deemed not viable due to the risk around collapse. The bridge replacement was therefore postponed.

- In August 2024 Thames Water and Kier confirmed to Network Rail that they had exhausted all options within the project worksite and locations further west on Botley Road would need to be assessed.

- Following additional access to Botley Road, between October and November Thames Water assessed the location and confirmed to NR that they deemed the location suitable to endorse for main works to be undertaken, as the risk of collapse was low enough.

- Once Network Rail had confirmation from Thames Water that the location was suitable, Thames Water were instructed to start works, which commenced in November 2024.

Q2.4. Why did you start work without a clear plan of what had to be done?

- There was a full delivery plan, but this plan has changed owing to the need to deal with the brick arch and Thames Water's mains/sewer. Additional ground investigation work would have been beneficial prior to the road closure - the plan was built on too many assumptions rather than actual site conditions. This only became clear when we were able to excavate the road and reveal the delivery conditions.

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Q2.5. When you found the brick arch, why didn't you just fill the hole in and stop the works?

- When we identified the brick arch, we initially believed that we could resolve the issue and put a solution in place to complete the diversions by October 2023 for the road to reopen and allow the 2024 blockade to be maintained.
- It wasn't until we broke into the arch that the full extent of the challenge was understood i.e., that the arch is both for water management and structurally integrated to the bridge abutments and retaining structures. This made it more complex to manage the diversions. At this point we had broken the arch and it couldn't be reinstated in the same form.
- The additional cost of dealing with the brick arch at this stage could be funded from existing funding provisions.

Q2.6. When you found the proximity of the sewer and mains water, why didn't you just fill the hole in and stop works?

- When Thames Water were unable to approve the diversion designs the issue between the proximity of the mains water and the condition of the Victorian sewer became better understood. We were unable stop work and put the road back at the point, due to the removal of parts of the inverted arch which had been modified to support wider utility diversions.
- There was no possible way to widen the road without the Thames Water pipes being moved, so we instructed Kier and Thames Water to work together to determine another location which Thames Water would approve.
- Three additional attempts were made within the project worksite on Botley Road (between Mar 24 and Jul 24).
- Kier and Thames Water confirmed in August 2024 that they could not agree a location within the worksite due to the proximate of the pipes and the temporary works required to protect the sewer.
- Two alternative sites were identified outside of the worksite toward Osney bridge. Kier and Thames Water only confirmed to Network Rail on 13 November 2024 that they had found an acceptable to solution to protect the water supply.

Q2.7. What's the point of doing this work and causing so much disruption?

- This £multi-million investment is a critical part of creating a sustainable transport network across Oxfordshire and surrounding region, increasing the number of train services for passengers, and boosting economic growth.
- When the project is complete, Oxford will have a bigger, better station with improved accessibility along with the capacity for more trains in future, including East West Rail services.
- The road network near the station will also be improved, making it safer for everyone and encouraging sustainable transport including cycling and walking.

Project review

Q3.1. When will the project be finished and what guarantees can you give?

- Botley Road will fully reopen in late August 2026 with the improved walkway opening this August. Over the last few months, we have scrutinised every aspect of the programme to work out how best to safely complete this project as quickly as possible. There's a lot of work still to

do but with the big unknowns that have caused all of the delays now solved/being solved (Thames Water's critical work is now underway), we have confidence that our revised plan is deliverable and that Botley Road will reopen in late August 2026.

- Although the full completion is not until August 2026 we are determined to ease the impact on local people much sooner. An improved walkway will open in August 2025 giving much more space for pedestrians and cyclists to get into and out of the city while we complete the rest of the project.

Q3.2. What aspects did your review consider?

- A detailed review of all aspects of the Oxford Phase 2 project was completed and considered impacts on benefits, engineering confidence, cost, programme, risk and stakeholder impacts. A separate commercial review was also undertaken.

Q3.3. Why has it taken so long to come up with a new plan to reopen the road?

- The Department for Transport had been requesting updates on revised programme since the issues were known in February 2024.

- Kier and Thames Water needed to confirm definitively that a solution to diverting Thames Water's assets was achievable and how long it would take to complete, Until this confirmation was received, Network Rail was unable to finalise options to present to DfT on choices with scope, programme and cost.

- As soon as Network Rail had confirmation from Kier and Thames Water on 13 November 2024, seven options were finalised with cost and programme information. It was important that the options were fully presented to DfT as all required a significant increase in additional funding from DfT.

- Network Rail presented the options to DfT in December 2024 and agreed to support the delivery of the all the active travel and rail benefits, and to prioritise the reopening of Botley road first.

Q3.4. How did you decide on the best option?

- While seven options were reviewed and assessed, only two deliver the required output (Platform 5) for East West Rail connection state 2 by 2030, this project was confirmed in the budget update in October 2024

- Of these two, the chosen option delivers the Thames Water utility diversions, Botley Road enhancements, Sheepwash bridge and new Platform 5 with a continued drive to identify cost efficiencies.

- This option prioritises the reopening of Botley road as quickly as possible and rephases the delivery of the wider works to later to better align to when the infrastructure is needed for East West Rail. This also allows the work to remain within the current Transport and Works Act Order timeframe. And minimise the additional funding required in years 2 and 3 of the control period.

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Q3.5. Why can't you abandon the project now and just reopen the road?

- Having removed the brick arch, which served two fundamental purposes (water management and structural), a great deal of work needs to be done to before the road can be reinstated. Having considered all of the options from many perspectives including the time the work will take to complete, cost and impact, the best option for Oxford is for us to complete the project in the selected way, This prioritises reopening the road at the earliest opportunity (Botley Road will fully reopen in late August 2026 with the improved walkway opening this August).

Finishing the job and reopening the road

Q4.1 When will Botley road be open and why will it take so long?

- Whilst a solution to diverting Thames Water assets has been found, there is still a significant amount of building work that needs to be completed to take into account the changes to Botley Road design associated with the Victorian brick arch and new locations for Thames Water assets. The key sequence of activity to deliver the reopening of the road are.

1. **Thames Water diversion of the main water connection** – This has to be completed before the sewer can be diverted due to the risk of contamination between clean water and sewage.
2. **Thames Water diversion of the main sewer** – when complete, Thames Water can hand the site over to Kier.
3. **Construction needed before the railway bridge is replaced:**
    - 42-metre-deep piles have to be installed. These will form the foundations for the new bridge deck and the new box culverts that create the 4m wide pedestrian/cycle ways, under the railway.
    - Construction of reinforced concrete northern box culvert in situ, that will enable the improved walkway to open in August 2025. Th southern box culvert will be moved in to place during railway blockade,
    - Construction of enhanced drainage solution for Botley Road, including attenuation tank and pumping station. Note: Northern abutment works will be commenced in parallel to the above Thames Water works.
4. **Lift in the new railway bridge** (three new spans over Botley road which will be done when the railway is closed for 9 days).
5. Only once the bridge is installed can we do the **highway works including construction of a new subterranean structure to replace the Victorian brick arch**
    - Construction of concrete slab below the new road levels to support control of ground water and drainage for Botley Road.
    - Construction of the new cycle and pedestrian routes including surfacing, signage, lighting and painting.
    - Rebuilding of the road and associated highways works including surfacing, signage, lighting, kerbs and lining.

- This programme of activity means that Botley Road will re-open in August 2026. Of course, if some aspects take less time than forecast, then there may be scope to accelerate.

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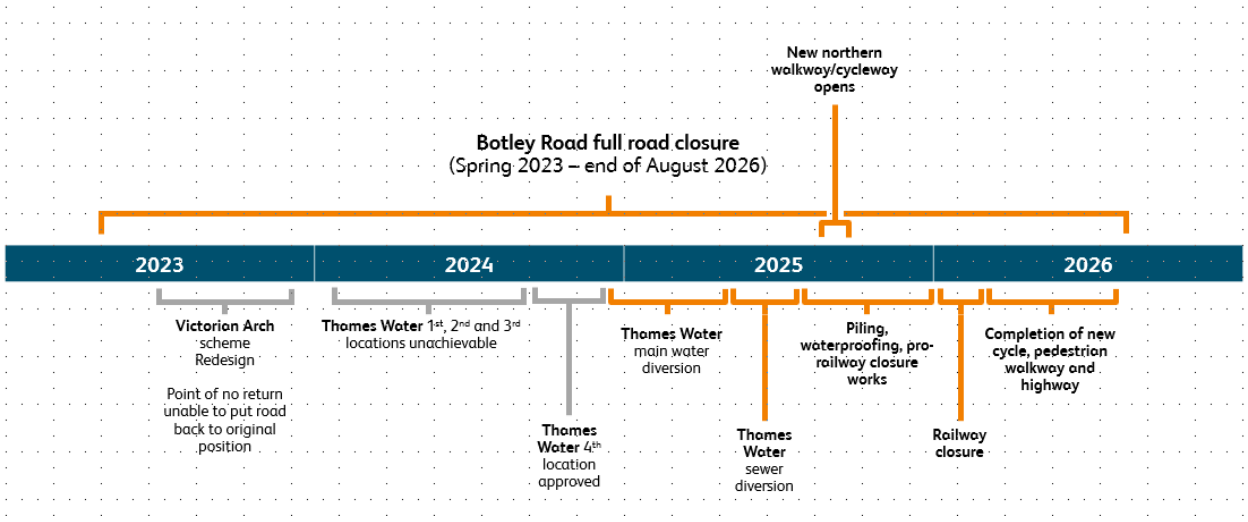


Q4.2. When will the bridge be replaced?

- We are reviewing railway access opportunities between December 2025 and February 2026.

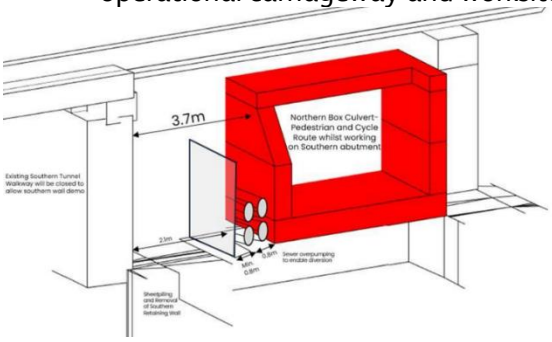
Q4.3. Will the full scope of rail and highway works be completed as part of the Botley Road bridge replacement?

Yes, we will still deliver the entire benefits of the original scheme, including;

- The enhanced bridges with the main 4-track middle section plus two new rail spans (one on the east and one on the west).
- The improved highway clearance and two 4-metre-wide pedestrian and cycleways on either side of Botley Road.
- A new through running platform to support East West Rail.
- A new entrance on the Western side of the station.

Q4.4. Can't you reopen one lane to traffic while you are working?

- Unfortunately not. The method for replacing the bridge requires installing it in sections called box culverts. Once one of them is in place (see diagram below) there is only 3.7m of space left for a carriageway to be in place. Then, when you add in space for scaffolding and a safe working area, there would be less than 2m of space available, which is too narrow for an operational carriageway and worksite.



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Q4.5. How do we know this time the programme will be met? What is being done differently?

- Over the last few months we have scrutinised every aspect of the programme to work out how best to safely complete this project as quickly as possible. There's a lot of work still to do and we cannot rule out every possible risk, but with the big unknowns that have caused all of the delays now solved/being solved (Thames Water's critical work now underway), we are confident that our revised plan is deliverable and that Botley Road will reopen in August 2026.

- Although the full completion is just over18months away we are determined to ease the impact on local people much sooner. An improved walkway will open in August 2025 giving much more space for pedestrians and cyclists to get into and out of the city while we complete the rest of the project.

Q4.6. What are the big risks to opening Botley Road?

- Completion of Thames Water's works to connect the water main and sewer is the most notable element of the programme that is out of Network Rail's direct control. All other utilities have now been diverted.

- Agreeing a suitable time to close the railway for long enough to install the new bridge is also outstanding but options are being explored with the train and freight operators.

- As with all major construction projects there is a risk of other unforeseen challenges, but our review has scrutinised every aspect of the programme so we are confident that the revised plan is deliverable.

Q4.7. What about the other elements of the scheme, new platform 5 and Western Entrance?

- We are focusing on reopening of Botley Road as the priority, as requested by DfT. Design and planning works will continue on Sheepwash bridge, the new platform 5 and Western entrance but most of the construction work for those elements will be rephased to start following the completion of Botley road.

Q4.8. Why have you not managed to meet any of your own deadlines for this project?

- We failed to meet our October 2024 deadline due to the unprecedented situation of the close proximity of Thames Waters' main water supply and sewer; and the constraints of the site. The mains water is sitting on top of the Victorian egg-shaped sewer. Thames Water highlighted the risk of interrupting Oxford's main water supply, and sewerage provision was too high. This added significant delay to the programme, as well as the Victorian arch being discovered in July 2023.

- We understand the level of frustration at the multiple delays to the project, and sincerely

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apologise for the impact the road closure is having on the people of Oxford. The benefits the project will deliver are vital to the future development of not just the city, but also wider area, so it's important we establish best way forward.

Q4.9. Will the new pedestrian walkway be fully finished when it opens in August 2025?

- Initially it will have a temporary finish so the improved, wider route can be opened as soon as possible for the public while our other construction work continues. This will be a tarmac finish which will be removed, and final finish (pavers and tarmac) applied at the end of the works before hand back. Inside the box will be plain concrete without the architectural finishes applied but will include lighting.

Q4.10. Now you've removed the brick arch, will you improve the water management to stop the road flooding as much in future?

- We are confident that the new infrastructure, which is approved to modern standards, will be an improvement. The new concrete slab will manage the ground water,. And the drainage of surface water has been designed for 1:100 flood but, with climate change, we cannot design for every eventuality.

Consequences and costs

Q5.1. Who's to blame for the delays?

- Delivering a major project in the middle of a tightly constrained city centre location was always going to be complex and challenging however this project has faced a number of significant and unforeseen challenges.
- Everyone involved in this project (NR, Kier and local authorities) is focussed on delivering these works so that Oxford gets the upgrade to its transport system that it needs and deserves.
- We absolutely understand and share the frustration that our project is taking much longer than we originally planned and our sole focus now is to complete the works as quickly as possible and take all possible measures to minimise the disruption.
- We sincerely apologise for the impact the road closure is having on the people of Oxford.

Q5.2. How much will the scheme cost now?

- In order to support the prioritisation of reopening Botley Road, the project is seeking a first phase of additional funding to support the delivery of the scheme.
- A second phase of additional funding will be sought in Summer 2025 for the remaining elements of scope, including Sheepwash bridge, Platform 5 and the Western entrance. Most of the construction works associated with these elements will start after the completion of Botley Road.

Q5.3. Have you got the extra money you need to complete these works?

- The original funding for the scheme is predominantly funded by UK Government via the Department for Transport with a £10.5m contribution from the Oxford Local Enterprise

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Partnership (OxLEP) which was provided to support the active travel and bus clearance enhancements to Botley Road.

- A request for a first phase of additional funding required to prioritise the re-opening Botley Road project has been approved.

- Funding associated with Sheepwash, Platform 5 and the western entrance will be sought following the completion of additional design and assurance reviews to ensure that these works are designed to deliver the best value for the taxpayer.

Q5.4. How important is this project on other potential future rail enhancements such as the introduction passenger services on Cowley branch line?

We know the work we're currently doing in Oxford is hugely disruptive, and we're sorry to everyone impacted by the project, but it is absolutely crucial that we complete this project in order to, in future:

- deliver the full capacity needed for East West Rail services,
- enable passenger services to run on the Cowley branch line,
- consider adding new stations to the network at Wantage/Grove or anywhere else,
- carry more freight on the railway and fewer lorries on the roads,
- allow new frequent direct train connections to places, like Bristol that GWR are trialling.

Q5.5. What happens if Thames Water goes bust?

- Millions of people rely on Thames Water so it would be a matter for Government to resolve should the company go bust.

Mitigations – helping Oxford keep moving throughout the works

Q6.1 What practical help have you given the people of Oxford who are disrupted by the project?

- From the outset, we have worked hard to keep the city moving and help commuters, visitors and residents continue to live their daily lives around our disruptive construction works.

- Through our regular engagement with residents, businesses, and stakeholders we have had many requests and have, as a result, implemented dozens of items that help to reduce the impact on people. Many more requests have been explored, and discounted, with the local authorities and other partners.

Examples of our initiatives include:

- The Botley Flyer bus service, which now operates five days a week, will continue to provide accessible free transport to the city centre.

- 24/7 security marshals are in place to patrol the pedestrian tunnel near to the closure, offering support to those who need it and to keep those using the tunnel safe.

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- CCTV, lighting, signage and surfacing in the tunnel have been improved. New lighting and CCTV have been provided for the temporary alleyway along Becket Street from Frideswide Square.

- Additional drop-off disabled bays have been provided on the western side of the station and a new travel assist point has been introduced for people with reduced mobility which will take them from the cabin to the station platform.

- A new audio guide map, developed with OxTalk and MyVision, has been introduced to help people navigate the road closure.

- Banners and posters at Oxford station and the surrounding area are displayed to remind people that local businesses remain open. Promotional videos for businesses in the area will be produced and shared on Network Rail and Oxfordshire Connect social media channels.

- A bi-monthly roundtable will continue to take place chaired by the Federation of Small Businesses to provide updates to businesses on the project, take feedback from affected businesses and identify ways to further mitigate the impact of the work.

- Changes to traffic management have been made to reduce the impact of congestion.

- Weekly updates on the work will continue to be provided via digital newsletter and Oxfordshire Connect Facebook page. In addition, regular public drop-in sessions take place at a local venue.

Q6.2. What about helping people with reduced mobility or accessibility needs?
Among our many accessibility improvements, which includes working with the council's accessibility group, we have:

- Provided a free, accessible bus service (Botley Flyer) which now runs 5 days per week from Botley Road to city centre stopping at Summertown, Jericho, Beaumont Street & Westgate Centre.
- Opened western entrance with support of GWR to allow passengers to access station from western side (started October 2024), provision of drop off spaces to support this.
- This means people with reduced mobility can now access station from western side and improves safety in the evenings as passengers can avoid using the tunnel and reduce walking distances for people from Botley Road. Worked with GWR to establish a Travel assist point for people with reduced mobility – which will take them from the cabin to the station platform.
- Provided new additional disabled drop-off bays on western side of the station.
- Regular updates given to the local accessibility group on the project in addition to rail industry accessibility panels.
- Developed audio guide map to help people navigate through the road closure, working with OxTalk and MyVision

Q6.3. Are we complying with the 2010 Equality Act?
- Yes. The Equality and Human Right Commission have been around the site (22 January

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2025), and we comply with all our requirements regarding accessibility.
- We take our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 very seriously.
- We carried out Diversity Impact Assessments prior to the works being undertaken and continually reviewed DIA plans as feedback has been received. Numerous mitigations have been put in place in and around the station including;
    - Introduction of the Botley Flyer
    - Replacement of cemetery footbridge along with lighting improvements.
    - Enhanced CCTV, security and lighting throughout the site.
    - The station has remained full accessible throughout the works and we recently hosted a site from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
    - We are interested in any further improvements that people can suggest.

Q6.4. How about safety for people who have to use the walkway?
From the outset we have had marshals stationed at the pedestrian tunnel and junction near the closure to help pedestrians cross safely and ensure safety of tunnel.
They are not police officers and have no powers to stop anti-social behaviour or law breaking but we have listened to concerns about safety so have recently introduced additional 24/7 security marshals (more trained than standard traffic marshals) that walk through the tunnel to be more visible.

We have also:
- Improved CCTV both ends of tunnel.
- Resurfaced pedestrian tunnel to maintain level surface.
- Added 24/7 lighting in the tunnel and put up cladding so tunnel is brighter and now lined so no longer wet.
- Lighting and CCTV for temporary alleyway along Becket Street from Frideswide Square
- Improvements to signage around this area to help direct people.

Q6.5. What support have you offered to businesses?
We have been supporting them in lots of ways to try and help them attract customers and relieve the impact of the closure on them. Examples include:

- Banners at station and posters around the site advertising local businesses reminding people businesses remain open and to shop locally.
- Production of promotional videos for local businesses which are then shared on NR social media via the Oxfordshire Connect Facebook page.
- Set up a bi-monthly roundtable chaired by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) to provide updated to business on the project, listen to concerns and identify ways to mitigate impacts.
- Made changes to traffic management to reduce impact of traffic congestion.
- Reduced signs & cones etc. to minimum required to improve the overall look of the area and 'declutter'.

Q6.6. How are you going to keep people updated on what's happening next?
- Weekly updates on the work will continue to be provided via digital newsletter and Oxfordshire Connect Facebook page.
- In addition, regular public sessions will take place at a local venue.

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- Businesses will also continue to be updated at the established bi-monthly meetings which are chaired by the Federation of small Businesses (next meeting scheduled in February).
- Stakeholders – our senior management are committed to providing monthly progress updates to stakeholders throughout the remainder of the project.