The station is one of an ensemble of new buildings and structures - shops, offices, hotels, housing, car park – which will together create an important new edge to the city centre.

Rather than unify them into a single architectural form – with all the associated problems of urban scale that this would entail – our proposal treats each of them as individual structures. In this way each building can assume its own identity and character while at the same time being part of a wider family.

Of the new buildings, the station, of course, has the most public significance, and is therefore the most singular, the most rhetorical in its architectural form. It is the building that stands out.

But the competition is not just about the station, it is about the city.

So each of the new structures has been designed to contribute to the working of the whole place, shaping how people move, protecting people from the weather, enhancing the setting of the existing buildings and the existing public realm. Making Becket Street a good street, protecting the environment of Roger Dudman Way, acknowledging the importance of St. Thomas the Martyr Churchyard, are as important as creating a great new station square.
2 DESIGN CONCEPT

2.1 MASTERPLAN

Becket Street and Botley Road junction area

The location of taxi parking and some short stay parking below a commercial building on the corner of Botley Road and Becket Street raises several issues that our proposals seek to address. Frontages to Botley Road and Becket Street at this corner site are highly visible from the pedestrian route between the transport interchange and multi-storey car park (MSCP), and the rail station, and to pedestrians and vehicles passing along Botley Road. We consider that the character of a covered or semi-covered taxi rank and pick up area, and short stay parking, below a commercial building, would not deliver the quality of streetscape and public realm necessary for such an important city centre site.

We therefore propose to consolidate all short stay parking adjacent to the west station entrance and to relocate all taxis to the station square and hotel square area, thereby freeing the site for a significantly larger commercial office building with active ground level retail frontages along Becket Street and Botley Road.

An arcaded pedestrian route to Becket Street provides a direct covered connection between the east station square and the transport interchange and MSCP, lined with animated retail frontages and office entrance lobby. Retail frontages to Botley Road provide an active frontage to the street and station square opposite. The arcade widens on the northward approach to the station, affording inviting framed views toward the new station square. The east and north frontages of the office building are stepped in section to respond to the scale and context of the buildings opposite on Becket Street, and to Botley Road.

Botley Road

Tree-lined landscaped areas to the north and south edges of Botley Road frame the pedestrian and cycle path entrances and exits below the new widened track bridge structure, and enhance the pedestrian realm and relationship with Frideswide Square.

Frideswide Square and the Saïd Business School area

The new station is aligned perpendicular to the tracks, and to the Saïd Business school. The new commercial developments along the eastern edge of the tracks also follow the same orthogonal alignment, setting up a clear linear route north-south between the MSCP at the south end of Becket Street and the most northerly commercial development plot, and form the western edge to new station and hotel squares. Ground level retail spaces and the hotel lobby will provide animated edges to these new connected landscaped squares.

The south frontage of the station concourse structure follows this same orthogonal alignment, rather than Botley Road, partly to facilitate a simple repetitive orthogonal station structure, better suited to modular construction, but primarily intended to create a wider space on the north side of Botley Road for the tree-lined landscaped space, which is mirrored on the south side. The alignment of the east station entrance frames the western edge of a new station square, as a distinct new public space in itself, albeit directly connected to Frideswide Square, and highly visible from Park End Street. The linear station concourse structure extends as a visual connection eastwards across the widened track bridge over Botley Road, reinforcing the enhanced connectivity between the city centre and the Osney and Botley residential districts beyond.

Controlled taxi-only access across the station square is off the new Botley Road roundabout, with 3 no. pick up spaces opposite the east station entrance, and 21 no. taxi rank spaces integrated within the landscaped hotel square. Whilst the intent expressed in the Masterplan to separate taxis from pedestrians is not opposed, the implications of locating taxis elsewhere is considered to be less successful, given the context of very modest numbers of taxi pick ups and departures recorded at peak times.

The pedestrian route from Frideswide Square along the west of the Saïd Business School is realigned to the significant axis set up by the formal entrance to the Thatcher Business Education Centre, thereby creating a stronger visual link and physical connection to this building.

The L-shaped plan of the hotel defines the northern edge of the station square, and incorporates retail frontages and colonnaded routes at ground floor to connect the adjoining station and hotel squares.

Becket Street area

A wide landscaped space and linear walls on Becket Street, located opposite the churchyard, defines and encloses the frontage of the transport interchange, and
provides an appropriate landscape setting to the listed church opposite.

9 no. coach stop bays are provided along the Becket Street frontage of the transport interchange with 3 no. additional coach bays along the eastern boundary. Trees and soft landscape to this boundary will screen views into the transport interchange from trains passing slowly as they approach the station. Bus stops for 4 - 5 no. buses are located in bays in front of the MSCP and office building. Coach tracking analysis suggests coaches will encounter difficulty turning the corner of Osney lane into Becket Street, and further analysis will be necessary.

An internal core on the north east corner of the MSCP connects directly to the covered pedestrian route leading directly to the Botley Road pedestrian surface crossing. The connection to Osney bridge is maintained and bisects the surface car park to the south of the MSCP, which could provide an additional commercial development plot.

Roger Dudman Way area
Retail service access and parking is located off Roger Dudman Way, affording access to the west station entrance ground floor retail, and via a dedicated lift and stair access to the concourse level retail. Out of hours retail service access to the east station area retail is via the taxi access route. Short stay parking is accessed by a separate entrance and exit on Roger Dudman Way. A two storey operational staff building is located above the surface short stay car park and connects directly to the first floor concourse level via a link bridge. The operational staff car park is adjacent to these offices.

Structures and objects
Whilst the existing and proposed pedestrian bridges provide a useful connection across the busy Botley Road, such a bridge may not be necessary given the proposed covered route along Becket Street from the MSCP directly to the surface pedestrian crossing on the corner of Botley Road and Becket Street. Should a pedestrian bridge be required, a bridge link to the first floor concourse level, where alighting passengers from the main platforms are taken, could possibly offer a more attractive direct route to the MSCP and transport interchange.

A new station clock tower at the east station entrance acts as a totem on the skyline as an appropriate visual marker for the new station.

The opportunity to relocate the existing Ox sculpture on the west side of the Saïd Business School to a more prominent location within the station square is proposed.

2.2 STATION
The new station retains the principle of a single gate line and ticket office at first floor concourse level, with first floor retail accessible to passengers and non passengers. The length of escalators, and necessary thresholds between entrances, ticketing, and gate lines suggests a ground floor gate line is not only difficult to accommodate spatially, but would duplicate gate line staff and manned ticket offices. The separate gate line to the bay platform is retained.

Ground floor retail space at the east and west entrances provide animated active frontages to Botley Road and the station square. First floor retail space above the east entrance, perhaps best suited to food and beverage operators, is highly visible from the station square and Frideswide Square.

Whilst several modern stations provide only lift and stair access between concourses and platforms, we have indicated one lift, a stair, and a reversible escalator to serve both main platforms, and the bay platform. The platform widths appear to prohibit the provision of a stair and both an up and down escalator. The design of the concourse deck should allow for retrofitting escalators if only stairs are provided initially, and to allow for any new escalator or stair connections on the south side of the concourse structure, should new platforms be extended southward in future.

The barrel vaulted roof forms are synonymous with historic rail station roof structures, and a subtle visual link to the barrel vaulted roof of the Saïd Business School.
2.3 MATERIALS AND COLOUR PALETTE

Whilst we envisage the office, hotel, and housing developments being of a masonry character, the station could adopt a more distinct material quality given its public significance, potentially comprising reconstituted stone to the station entrance piers and metal cladding over pre-cast reconstituted stone barrel vaults.

The historic centre of Oxford is characterised by University buildings constructed from locally sourced limestone. The use of reconstituted stone of similar colour, or light coloured brick similar to those of the Said Business School, would extend the character of the city centre to embrace the station area.

The multi storey car park at the southern end of Becket Street may adopt a distinct character and material quality appropriate to its use and context.

Buildings located on Becket Street, adjacent to the church, will require sensitive consideration given their relationship to a listed structure.

2.4 VIEW CONES AND SKYLINE

The proposals comprise a series of individual buildings of a scale in plan and height that respect and address the adjacent existing building context. Whilst further detailed analysis is necessary, the scale and massing of these various individual buildings when viewed from the various view cones, present a varied discontinuous profile on the skyline.

The barrel vaults of the station roof are purposefully aligned to present an articulated roof form to the skyline viewed from key view cones to the east and west.

A station clock tower ‘totem’ located at the east station entrance, facing Frideswide Square, is proposed and could extend above the 18.2m height limit, as an appropriate marker to an important public building and new civic space.
It is envisaged that construction of the new station would commence with early demolition of the YMCA building on Cripley Road / Roger Dudman Way and provision of a new access to the adjacent station services buildings, ideally at the location of the new proposed permanent location. Availability of the YMCA area would allow access for construction of the new concourse over the existing railway thus providing a secure platform from which to construct the east station entrance, the roof, and finally the west station entrance. It is anticipated this approach would minimise both construction traffic passing through the Botley Road underpass and disruption to the existing station.

Early liaison with Network Rail to establish site constraints will be essential to successful delivery and to minimise impact to the existing station function and customers during construction. To this end, in conjunction with the approach described above, concourse construction provides a clear span over the existing tracks and platforms, adopting traditional methods and materials. Additionally, modular off-site construction techniques will be fully explored to minimise the site construction period and reduce deliveries to site, especially of wet concrete, as outlined below:

- Anticipated ground conditions and elevated groundwater mean that piled foundations are anticipated. Displacement pile foundations would be explored to minimise spoil removal, noting the presence of nearby sensitive neighbours.
- Steel or concrete frames span parallel with existing track to support the concourse level (concrete preferred for self-finish benefits and longevity)
- First floor concourse level steel or precast concrete beams lifted into place over the track. Precast slabs span between beams; topping concrete acts compositely to provide permanent lateral stability. Benefits of long span precast planks with fewer beams versus shorter planks and more beams to be investigated.
- East entrance construction in traditional steel-framed construction progressed once concourse is complete. Alternatives for precast concrete to be investigated.
- Roof barrel-vaults prefabricated in concrete or steel, lifted onto supporting steel or concrete box-beams that span onto columns springing from platform level. Ties only provided at column positions. Options to pre-clad roof modules to be investigated, together with options for sliding into position in-lieu of lifting.
- West entrance construction adopting steel or precast concrete frame techniques.

Robust, low maintenance finishes, to an agreed design life, to the concourse structure and roof are imperative to minimise maintenance and extend the lifespan of components located above the tracks.

Cost-benefit analysis to assess the merits of a clear span roof over all tracks and platforms, or one with intermediate supports onto platforms can be evaluated to compare the benefits of a deeper clear span roof structure against a shallower roof structure with additional intermediate supports, considering the related substructure and impact upon future platform extensions, construction programme, maintenance, and flexibility for retail layouts at concourse level.