OUR CONCEPT

Oxford Station Area Design Competition

Key principles of the concept with diagram(s) as appropriate

A new Oxford Station.

Oxford is changing and much of this new focus hinges around the new station and its associated benefits. Stations are important civic buildings and should be destinations in their own right and in-turn successful pieces of a city. The Oxford station area has significant potential for a much improved interchange and a wider improvements to an attractive, green and historically significant part of the city.

Our proposal creates a sensitive yet impactful mixed use development around a new station and new city square. The station creates a new destination at the head of the Frideswides Square whilst also establishing routes west and north. Spaces and streets are defined by new place-making buildings including the station entrances, a new hotel and 13 other new buildings.

The new south-facing public space has a tapering form, orientated to the south and leading to routes to the north. The station entrance located at the southern tip, denoted by a clocktower, and combines a new civic building with active ground floor uses such as cafes and restaurants.

In tandem with framing a new square, the existing connection to the Botley Road underpass has been widened to achieve a pleasant, active and safe environment under the railway bridge(s) and connecting the west of the city to the centre.

To the south a new and enlivened Becket Street will provide the vehicular component of the interchange and is further enriched with commercial and small retail & commercial units. The buildings provide an improved setting for St. Thomas the Martyr. Beyond Becket Street extends and connects to the Thames, Osney and south Oxford reinforcing a complete ‘green’ route through this edge of Oxford.

Views in this part of Oxford are important and the proposals are carefully configured to be invisible from Boars Hill and Port meadow whilst being mindful of closer views including the Thames bridge on Botley Road.

A new city square for Oxford.

Our proposals aim to create the station and its surrounds as a destination and new amenity for Oxford. The new square, an extension of St. Frideswides Square, is defined by a new station clocktower and entrance; a new cloister, a station hotel and a new frontage and better connection to the Said Business School. The buildings that define the new space are generous, active and offer a variety of uses. The buildings are low & medium scale to avoid impact on the skyline whilst simultaneously providing high-level roof terraces and views across the skyline of Oxford.

As a large and flexible south-facing open space the square will be suitable for a variety of events and uses. The space will be softened with a water feature and planting extending the wider landscape into the space. From the square a new route is promoted north to a new ‘crescent’; the Sheepwash channel and to Port Meadow and the Thames beyond.

The increased Botley Road underpass gives priority to pedestrians and cyclists and has a generous connection to the new square further extending the high quality public realm.
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Centred on a new station.

Our proposals aim to create the station as a new urban centre for Oxford and an important gateway into and out of the centre. A truly mixed use square of station entrance, shops, cafes, hotels, connecting to office, employment and new homes. It is a great tradition in Oxford buildings to define open spaces and landscapes and an important here where new buildings should create high quality public realm as well as vastly improve the entrance for rail visitors to the city.

The approach is holistic and aims to join up development for an overall improvement to this area of Oxford. New vistas, squares and enlivened streets are central to our proposals. Spaces and entrances are defined by new landmarks, clocktowers and taller elements to define routes and frame spaces.

Taken together the developments and variety of routes will extend the city centre west – focussed around the square and the station gateway.

Regeneration of area - Mixed use across site proposed
MATERIALS
Oxford Station Area Design Competition

b. Discussion of materials and colour palette

All our projects are carefully designed with hard wearing materials in mind, allowing easy maintenance and / or efficient replacement and repair. If due care is taken getting the design and configuration of the spaces right, both inside and outside, there is little need for elaborate and complicated details. Which are heavy on maintenance, and low on lifespan. We apply this approach in all our work, by prioritising and carefully vetting specifications, our buildings are both durable and value for money.

Working in Oxford, we have been set briefs for and delivered buildings with 800 year design lives. An informed and practical approach to long term maintenance and life cycle costs is inherent in our work. Our architecture makes strong connections with inside and outside. By using orientation and articulation intelligently, it allows the interior and exterior finishes to be enduring, simply constructed and designed. If the balance of solid and void is carefully managed, great effect and value for money can be achieved by the careful orientation of spaces to exploit light and views. Similarly by developing a language from a “kit of parts” the maximum flexibility and variety can be achieved by careful and considered design.

The material treatment of the proposals will balance the aspirations for a civic quality to the public realm and engineering and “kit of parts” driven solutions for the station infrastructure. By juxtaposing these elements, a rich and complementary materials palette would be developed.

Typically, public realm facing buildings and frontages would be of more solid masonry type finishes, matching the colour tones of the city, in stone, brick or coloured precast concrete. These would be designed to complement and merge with the language of the transfer deck and station canopies and furniture. The transfer deck could be expressed in flush finished steel work giving a sleek and elegant appearance and the station canopies and infrastructure could consist of a palette, mixing precast concrete steel and glazed elements. The palette would be developed such that the materials were true to the elements they express while at the same time working together as a coherent whole.
PROTECTED VIEWS
Oxford Station Area Design Competition

c. How the ideas can enhance the skyline and respect the protected view cones.

The three relevant protected Oxford viewpoints have been tested for the outline masterplan which we have followed. Our building height is in line with the masterplan and below the +18m datum with a single exception. Our clocktower is higher by 2m although is narrow, in profile and outside of the key views.

With this in mind we have selected closer views where the new station is visible. For this we have selected the Thames Bridge on Botley Road, Port Meadow and Castle Mound all of which indicate invisibility (Port Meadow) or minor and incidental impact. Three further closer views have been tested and included in the presentation.
The redevelopment of Oxford Station will present logistical issues associated with constructing new structures in a live rail environment and keeping the station operational. The proposed new passenger routes are in different locations to those in the existing station. Minimising disruption to operations and customer experience can be achieved by reducing the construction programme through designing with prefabricated modular units, which are manufactured and finished prior to assembly onsite.

A key challenge is the construction of the Cross-Track Building. YHA is due to be demolished in Phase 2 (April – December 2018), the cycle parking in Phase 6 (January 2020 – December 2021). These activities will unlock the crane access required to construct the Cross-Track Building.

The proposed Cross-Track Building is predominantly a single storey structure (there is an additional floor which forms part of the new station building) which reduces the complexity of the works. The complete installation of the main deck effectively provides a crash deck and working platform from which the remainder of the construction can be performed safely above the railway tracks.

Primary steelwork structure would be required to facilitate the long spans and cantilevering elements, using support on the platforms, integrated within the stairs and lift structures, where possible. The deck could be installed in sections which span between these primary steelwork elements, which may require temporary propping during installation. These supports would require piling to provide the load bearing capacity. The maximum span between platforms is approximately 20m. These deck sections could be fully pre-assembled and finished, transported to site, lifted in by crane and fixed into place. This approach is similar to traditional bridge construction. Installation is envisaged during night time closures of the station in Phase 6.

The Cross-Track Building would comprise of deck, glass walls, internal columns, and a lightweight roof. The deck would be a stiff steel grillage capable of spanning 16m. The overall finished depth would be approximately 1m. The glass walls are fixed into pockets set along the edges of the deck, with internal columns located within the main space. The lightweight roof spans between the glass walls and internal columns and provides lateral restraint through diaphragm action.

Phasing
The current masterplan shows an 8 phase sequence to achieve the full transformation from the existing station. Our proposals align with this phasing sequence and are deliverable in the same manner. The existing station is not demolished until phase 7 and as per the current masterplan, the proposed station is sited to the south of the existing station in order that it can be constructed adjacent and be operational prior to the demolition of the current station.

**Station Structural Arrangement Diagram**

1. Main deck in modular sections.
2. Primary steelwork truss spanning across all platforms.
3. Primary steelwork spanning between supports on platforms.
4. Supports on platforms integrated into vertical circulation.
5. Lightweight roof in modular sections.
6. Temporary support from platforms during construction.

**Phasing Diagram showing boundaries of new and existing stations**