

Oxpens River Bridge

RIBA Stage 2 | Report

Knight Architects

April 2022

Introduction

The new Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge over the Thames in Oxford will sit at the heart of the surrounding developments and will play an important role to the identity and connectivity of the site, the river and the City itself.

The process of bridge design starts with developing a thorough understanding of the site's key considerations and clearly defining the aspirations of the scheme. This document intends to provide an overview of the main constraints of the site and the opportunities identified within the project scope, to inform the development of the concept design in the subsequent stage.

The **Initial Analysis** Section of this report aims to highlight the key destinations and assess the main constraints and opportunities of the setting.

It also aims to set up the main Bridge Aspirations for the project which relate to the placemaking, sustainability and connectivity objectives of the scheme.

In the **Alignment Development: Phase A** Section we explore four viable options based on our initial analysis, combined with the ongoing engagement with the Oxpens Masterplan team. The options outline bridge alignments, reserving the development of typology and bridge form for the next stage.

This engagement largely focused on establishing how pedestrians and cyclists would best move around the Oxpens Development. This 'movement strategy' sat alongside a series of Assessment Criteria, which allowed the relative merits and challenges of each option to be understood.

During a collaborative engagement process with OxWED, the 'movement strategy' for the Oxpens Development was refined to allow cyclists to move more freely through the scheme. In response to this, the design team progressed with further options, which are outlined in **Alignment Development: Phase B**.

The final part of the report concludes with the **Recommendations** of a 'preferred' and an 'alternative' bridge alignments to be taken forwards, before concluding with a brief view of the Next Steps to happen in the following RIBA Stage 3+ Stage.

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01 | Initial Analysis

The initial analysis aims to gather important information on the site, such as the key views, user groups, the primary destinations, and the desire lines towards those destinations. It establishes the main 'Bridge Aspirations' summarised as the 'placemaking', 'sustainability' and 'connectivity' Aims. It also assesses the following constraints:

1. Environmental Constraints: updated to suit the latest trees survey provided.

2. Geometric Constraints.

- Path Alignments at the South Bank, as per the development work carried out by Stantec on the Osney 'Path Works' project
- Railway bridge proximity; as previously defined.
- Longitudinal section developed for both alignments.

3. Initial Movement Strategy: as initially discussed with OxWED.

Site Analysis

1.1 The site

The future pedestrian and cyclist bridge will connect the new development planned at Osney Mead, the new development at Oxpens over the River Thames, to Oxford City Centre and the train station.



The following are the key elements of the site:

- Watercourse; River Thames and other streams
- Towpaths along River Thames at both banks
- Railway Line and Osney Rail Bridge
- Oxpens Road and Osney Lane; limits of the proposed Oxpens development
- Grandpont Nature Reserve at south of the river
- Oxpens Meadow; at north side of the river and the field in trust area, acting as a floodplain
- Existing built development
- Emerging proposals for new developments; Oxpens and Osney Mead



(a) Osney Rail Bridge



(b) Bulstake Stream Bridge

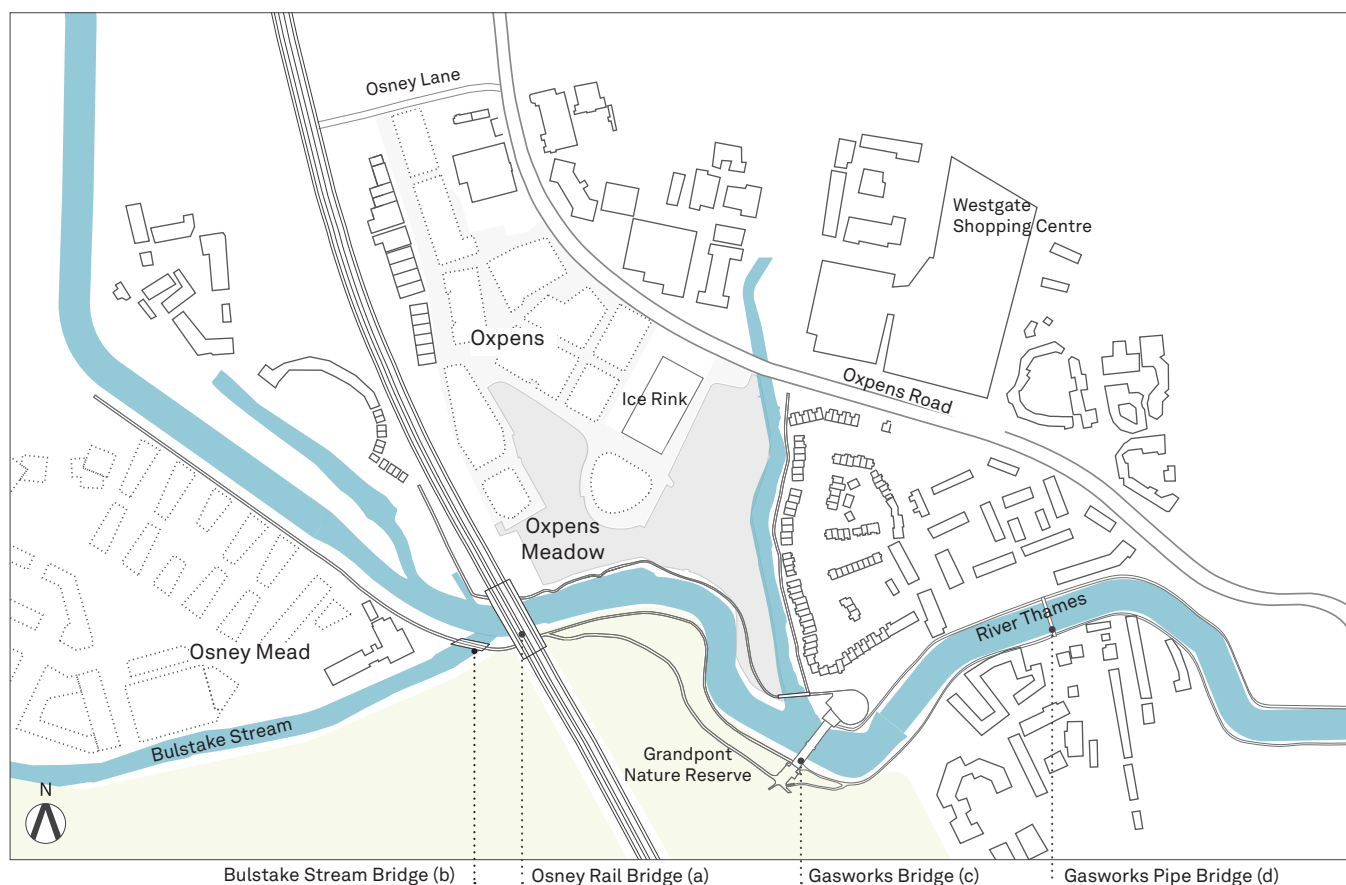
The neighbouring bridges of the future structure are Osney Rail Bridge to the west together with Gasworks Bridge and Gasworks Pipe Bridge to the east.



(c) Gasworks Bridge



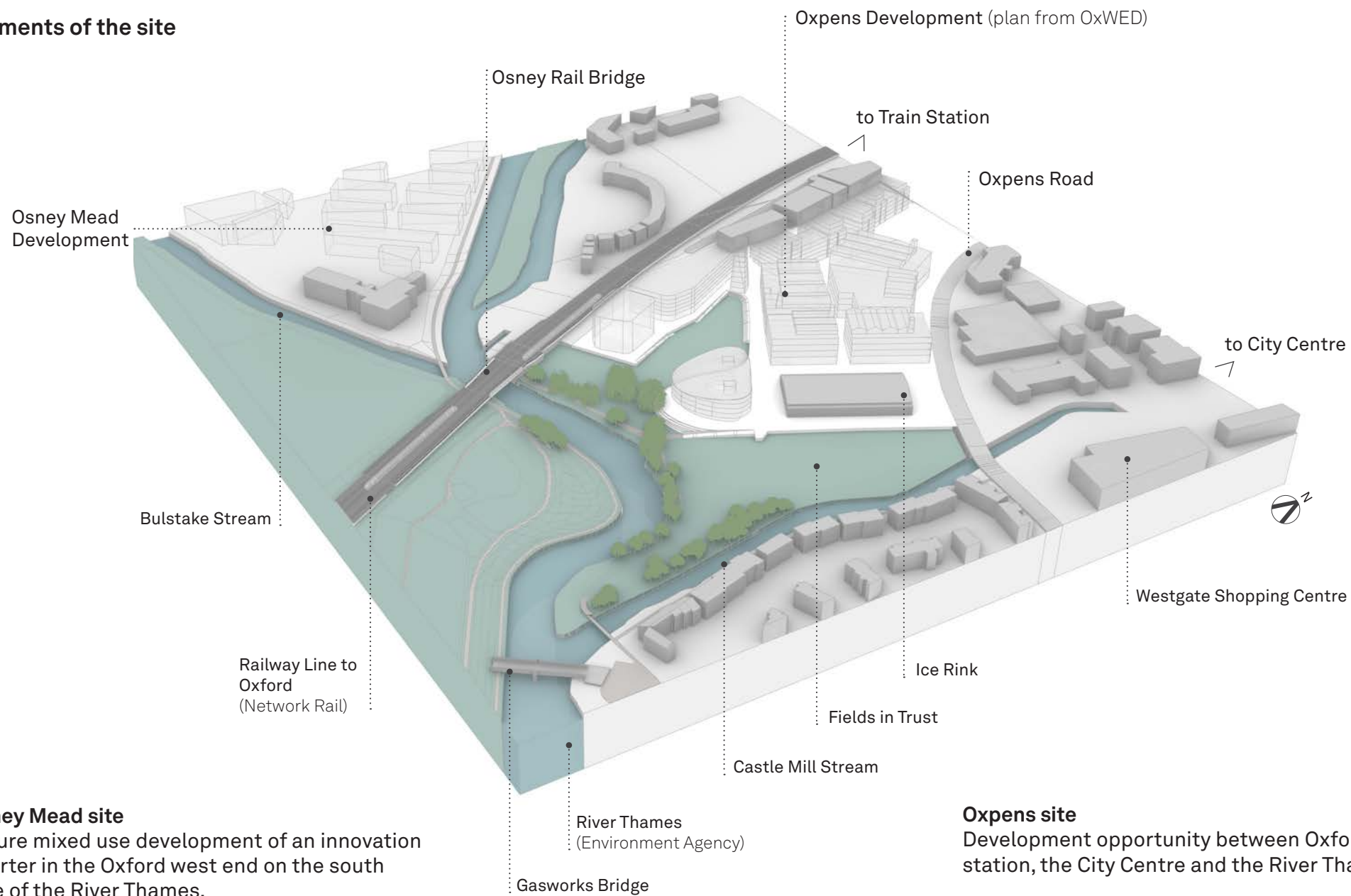
(d) Gasworks Pipe Bridge



Site Analysis

1.1 The site

Elements of the site

**Osney Mead site**

Future mixed use development of an innovation quarter in the Oxford west end on the south side of the River Thames.

Oxpens site

Development opportunity between Oxford station, the City Centre and the River Thames.

Site Analysis

1.2 Views

Walking along the river - most views are quite curtailed by the meandering nature of the river Thames.

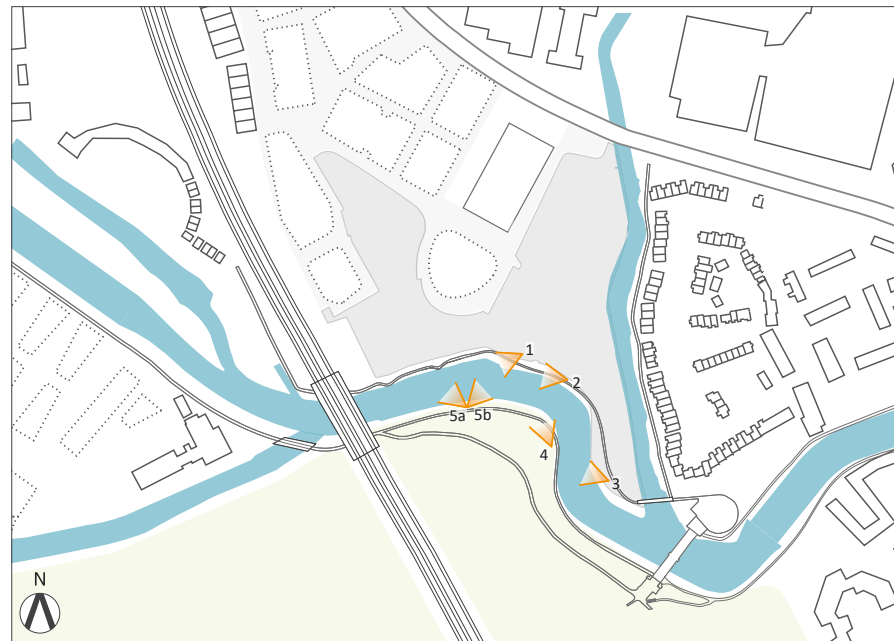
- the crossing will act as a key 'moment' on a journey along the river in the users movement along the river
- the new bridge will also aid wayfinding, helping users orientate themselves around the site.



5a. From South bank looking to West



5b. From South bank looking to East



4. From South bank



1. From North bank



2. From North bank

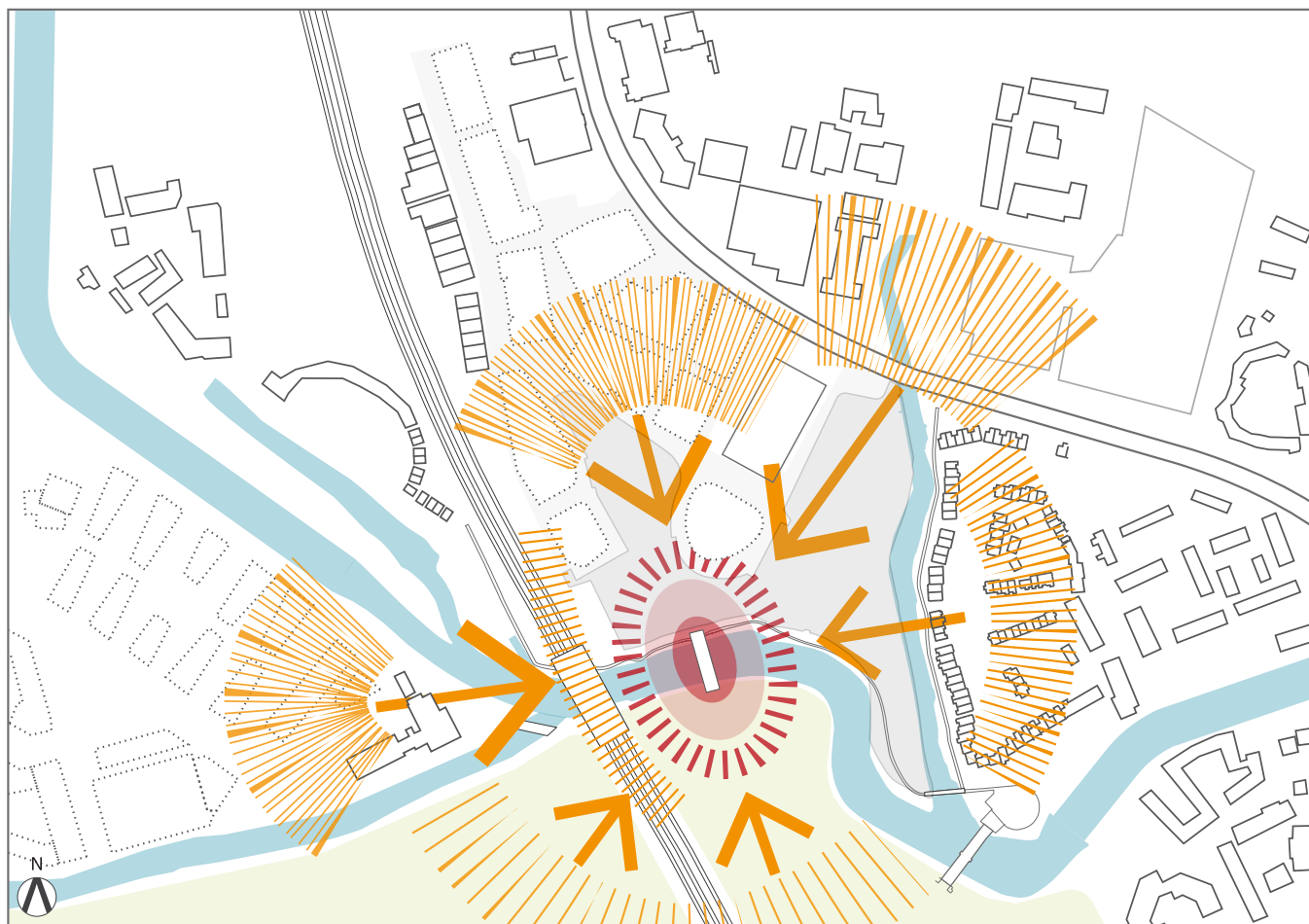


3. From North bank

1.3 Bridge Aspirations

Placemaking Aims:

- Bridge to respond to the unique characteristics of the site. Becoming a recognisable and appealing structure synonymous with the surrounding development and responding positively to the high architectural quality of Oxford city centre.
- Bridge will help to link the site together not only in terms of connectivity, but also visually; responding to the constraints and opportunities at both ends and the users' needs and aspirations for the new structure.
- The new structure will respond to the unique natural setting and its proximity to the railway.
- The new structure will provide clearly legible routes, so that the landing design is easy for all to navigate, whilst integrating well into the landscape.

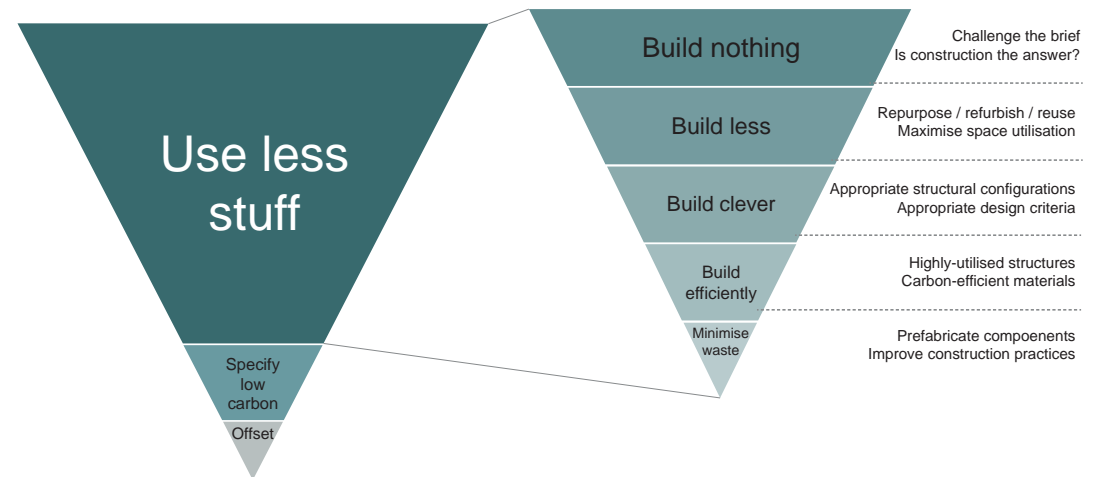


Placemaking diagram

1.3 Bridge Aspirations

Sustainability Aims:

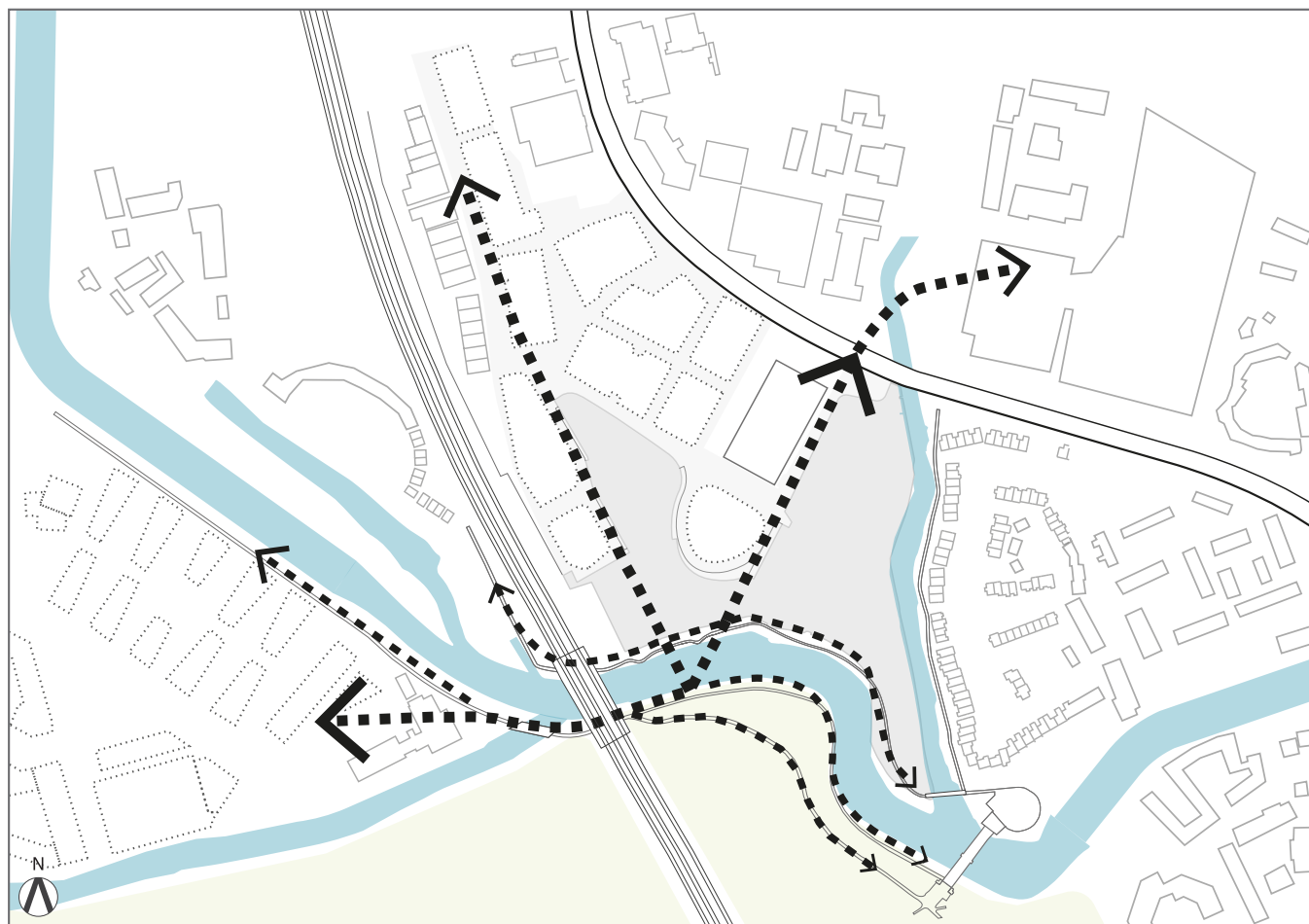
- We are committed to addressing the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency in everything we design.
- We are certain that the greatest opportunity to reduce carbon happens at the early stages of design, when the Build Less principle should be the focus of the conversation.
- It is essential we consider how the environmental performance of a project can be improved from the 'top down' of the triangles shown.
- The current stage is mainly focused on alignment, will broadly establish the amount of structure, and therefore the amount of carbon in the scheme.
- Optimisations achievable at a later stage will be of a smaller consequence to the alignment decisions taken during this stage.
- Ensuring the design provides a positive user experience will also contribute to the sustainability of the project and to the modal shift of cycling and walking.



1.3 Bridge Aspirations

Connectivity Aims:

- Connecting future Osney Mead and Oxpens developments to the wider walking and cycling network; improving accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists and reinforcing legibility.
- Ensuring routes along the river are maintained and enhanced.
- Contributing to the wider proposals to improve walking and cycling networks, through the proposed new crossing.
- Improving accessibility between south areas (including future developments) to the City Centre, the train station, shopping centre, providing an accessible route at times of flooding.
- Wayfinding, the new structure is able to guide people through the physical site to enhance their understanding and experience of the space.



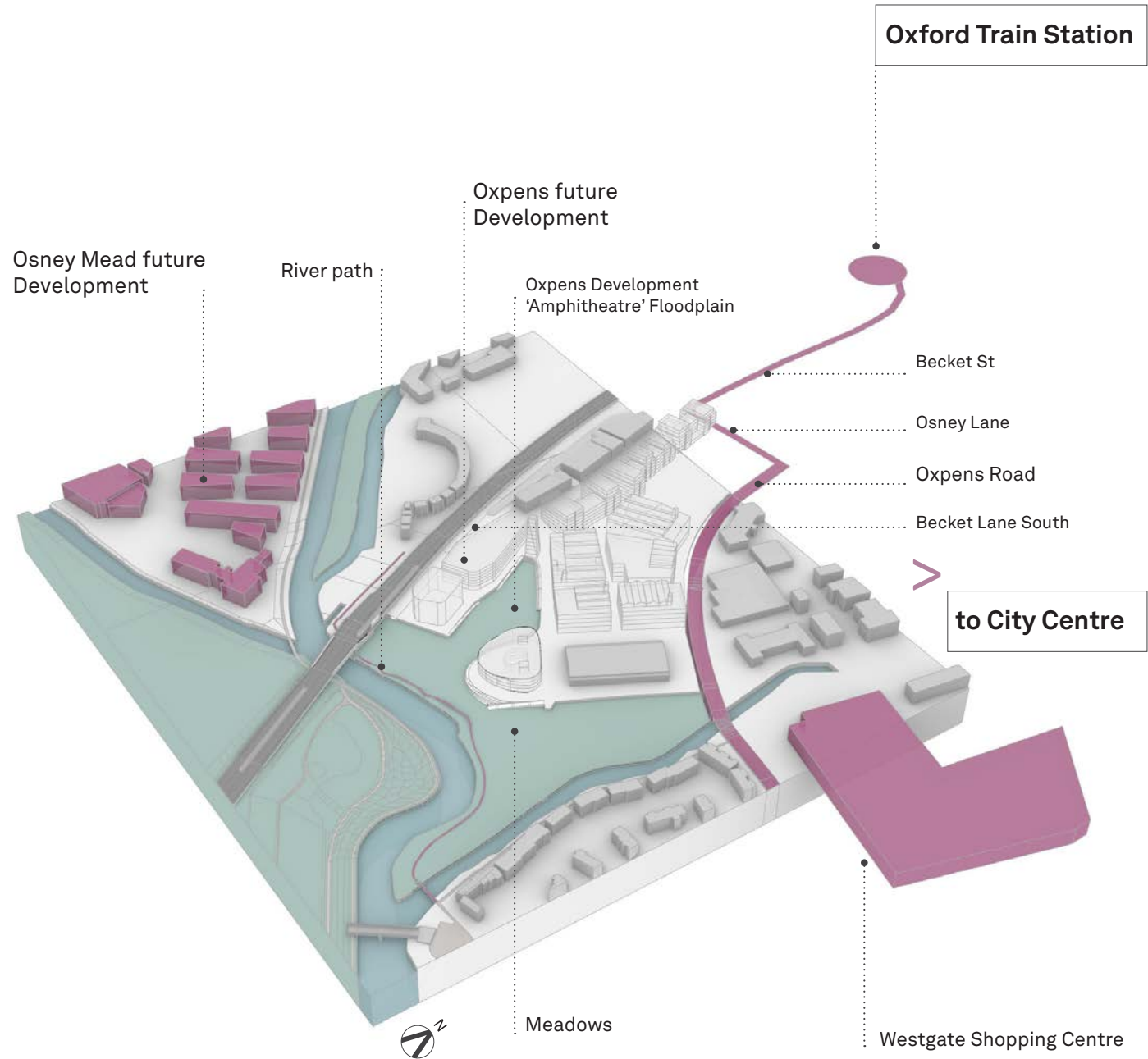
Connectivity and desire lines diagram

1.4 Destinations

Connectivity

The main destinations for the crossing will include;

- Oxford City Centre
- Oxpens Development
- Osney Mead Development
- Oxford Train Station
- Oxpens Road as a main road within central Oxford
- The towpath alongside the river is also a desired destination
- Access to the meadows itself and on the way towards Westgate area and the City Centre



Main destinations

Constraints and Opportunities

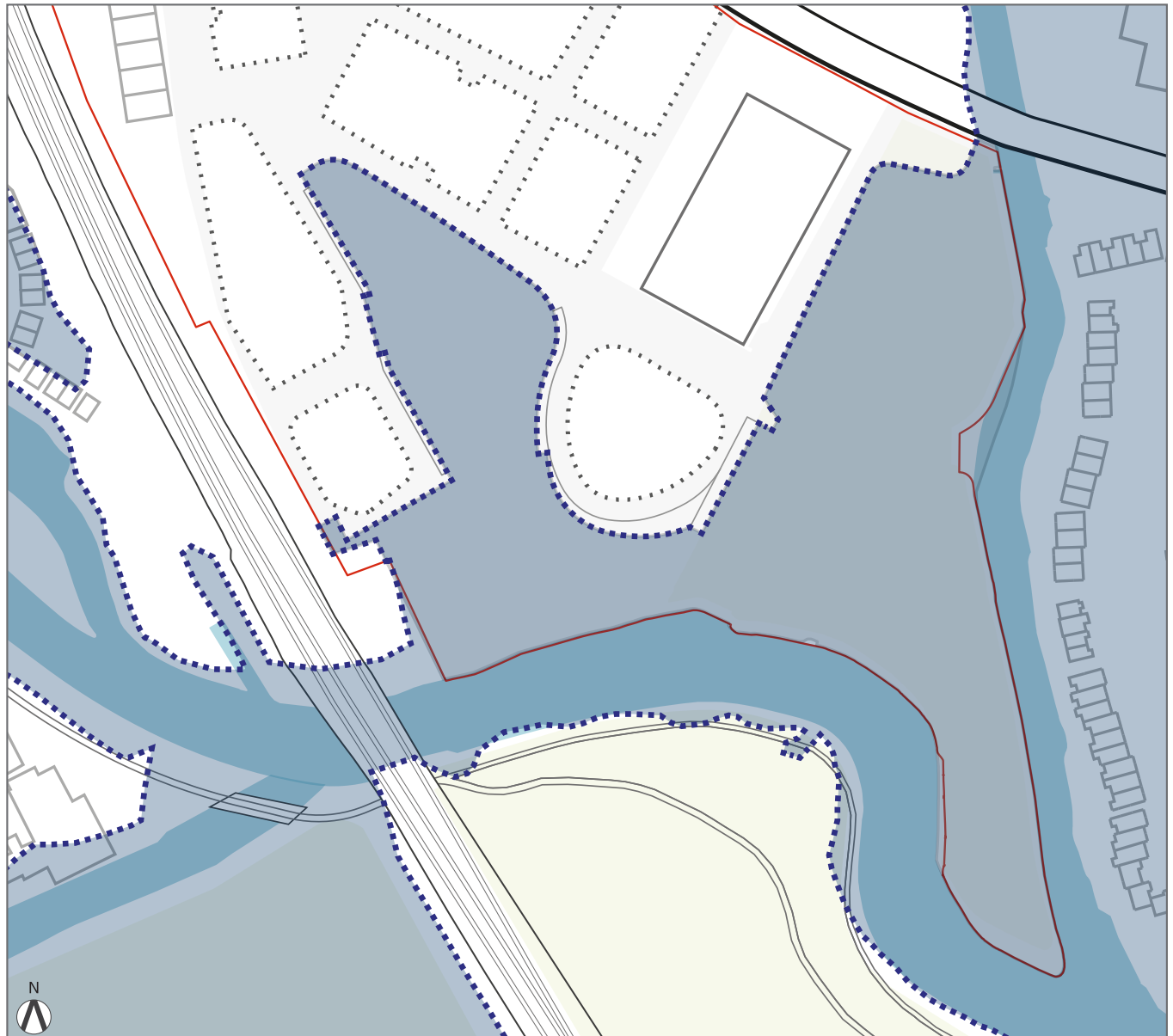
1.5 Environmental Constraints

Flooding

Flooding is a key consideration, especially to the northern approach, where (as with the whole development) the bridge structure will need to respond to flow and capacity considerations.

Maintaining sufficient flood capacity has been a the primary limitation on the extent of the OxWED raised platform level, and the new bridge must maintain that capacity.

The bridge needs to land at this raised platform level on the north bank in order to provide routes suitable for use even during some flood conditions, rather than simply ramp down to the existing level of the meadows.



Indicative Flood Map of the area

Constraints and Opportunities

1.5 Environmental Constraints

Impact on Trees

An updated tree survey, undertaken by Stantec, has been examined for this report.

Category A, high value species are highlighted in green infill in plan.

The root protection area has been added for the Category A trees.

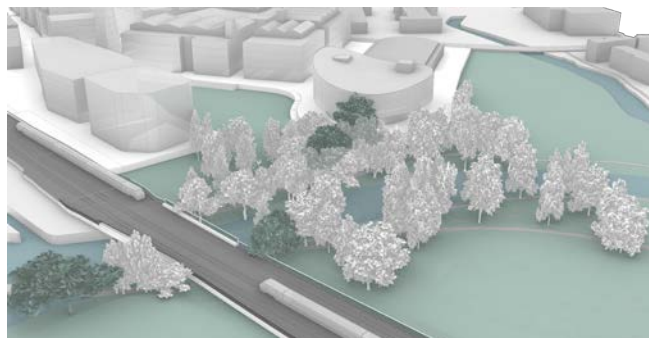
The diagram also shows Category B and C, and their RPA in dashed line.

Groups of trees are named as G and W.

Additionally, the preliminary tree proposal from landscape architects is represented at the north bank, with the initial Gi.

All trees were included to the 3D Model as for their footprint in plan and defined height reported.

The alignments of the bridge aim to reduce the environmental impact both sides of the river, by limiting the tree loss required for each option. The assessment on the quantity of trees lost are in relation to the existing trees on site.



3D Model



T43 on site



Crack Willow

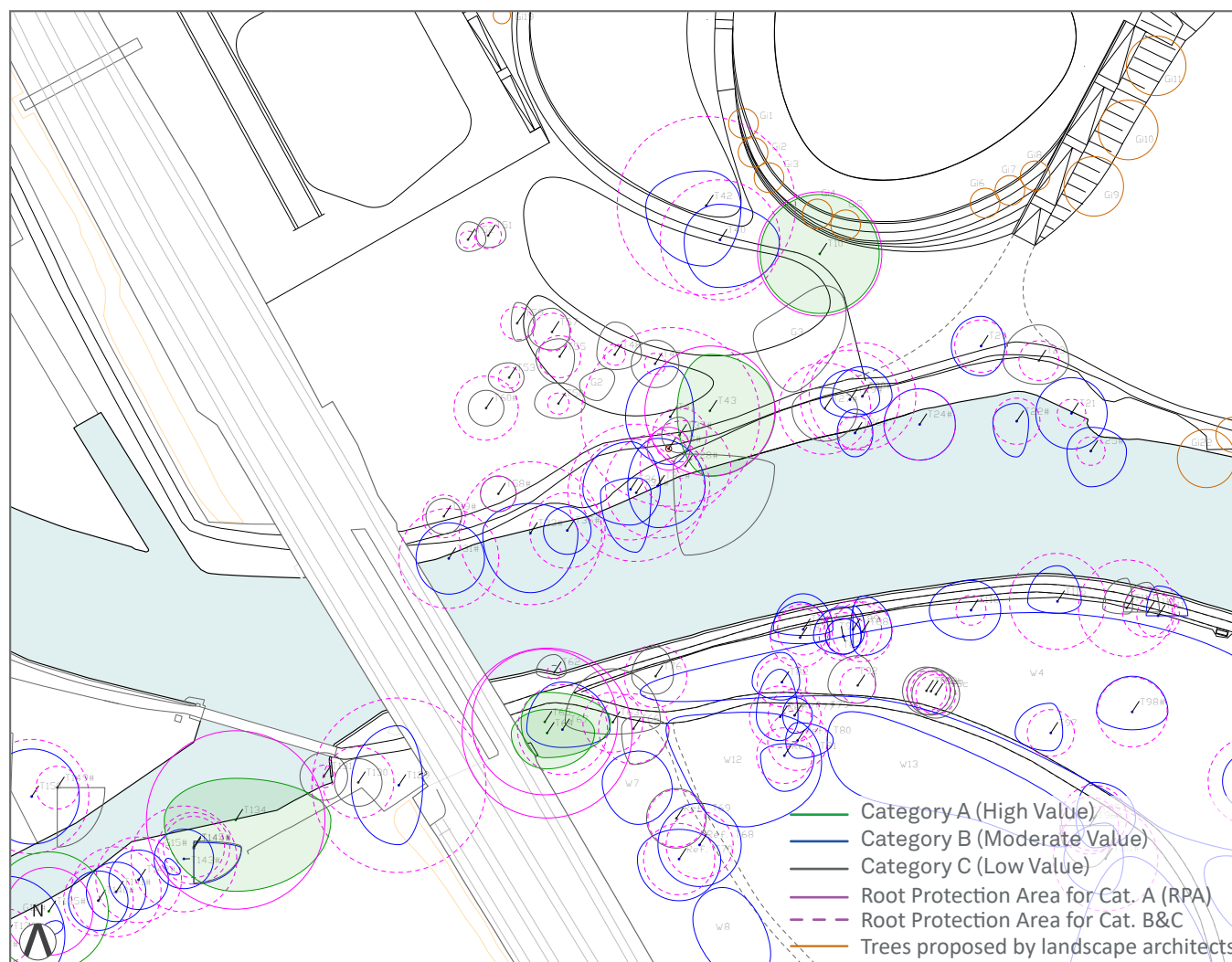
T43
T64
T65
T134



Ash

T10

Category A species on site



Combined plan from tree survey and proposed landscape

Constraints and Opportunities

1.6 Geometric Plan Constraints

Railway bridge proximity

An offset zone to the east of the railway line may restrict bridge alignments, particularly on the south bank.

Early discussions with Network Rail have indicated that if the new structure was to be built within 25m of the railway boundary (and ideally the proposed bridge foundations would be 30m offset from it) technical approval would be required from Network Rail.

Furthermore, Network Rail plans to add an additional track along this section of the railway at some point in the future. It is not known if this will be to the east or west of the existing three tracks.

A new Oxpens River Bridge may therefore end up being even closer to the railway and potentially become a constraint to the future railway widening construction works.

Moreover, the proximity to the railway bridge will need to be taken into account in developing a suitable solution for the bridge typology at this location. Views from the bridge to the west will be limited and the solution will need to take into account the users experience when crossing the river close to a railway line. Furthermore, the structure at the western location will be perceived against the backdrop of the railway bridge.



Network Rail Recommended Interface Zone

Constraints and Opportunities

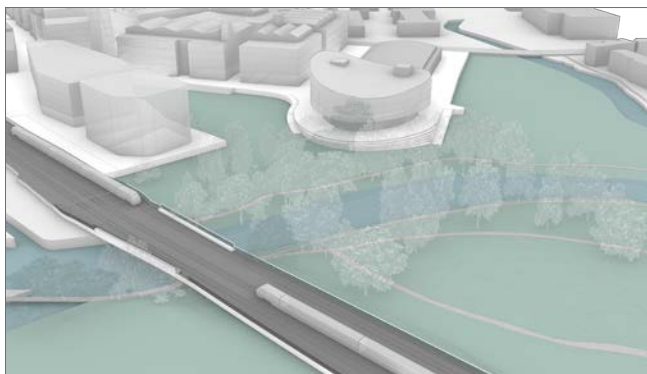
1.6 Geometric Plan Constraints

Maximum extent of the 'Path Works Scheme'

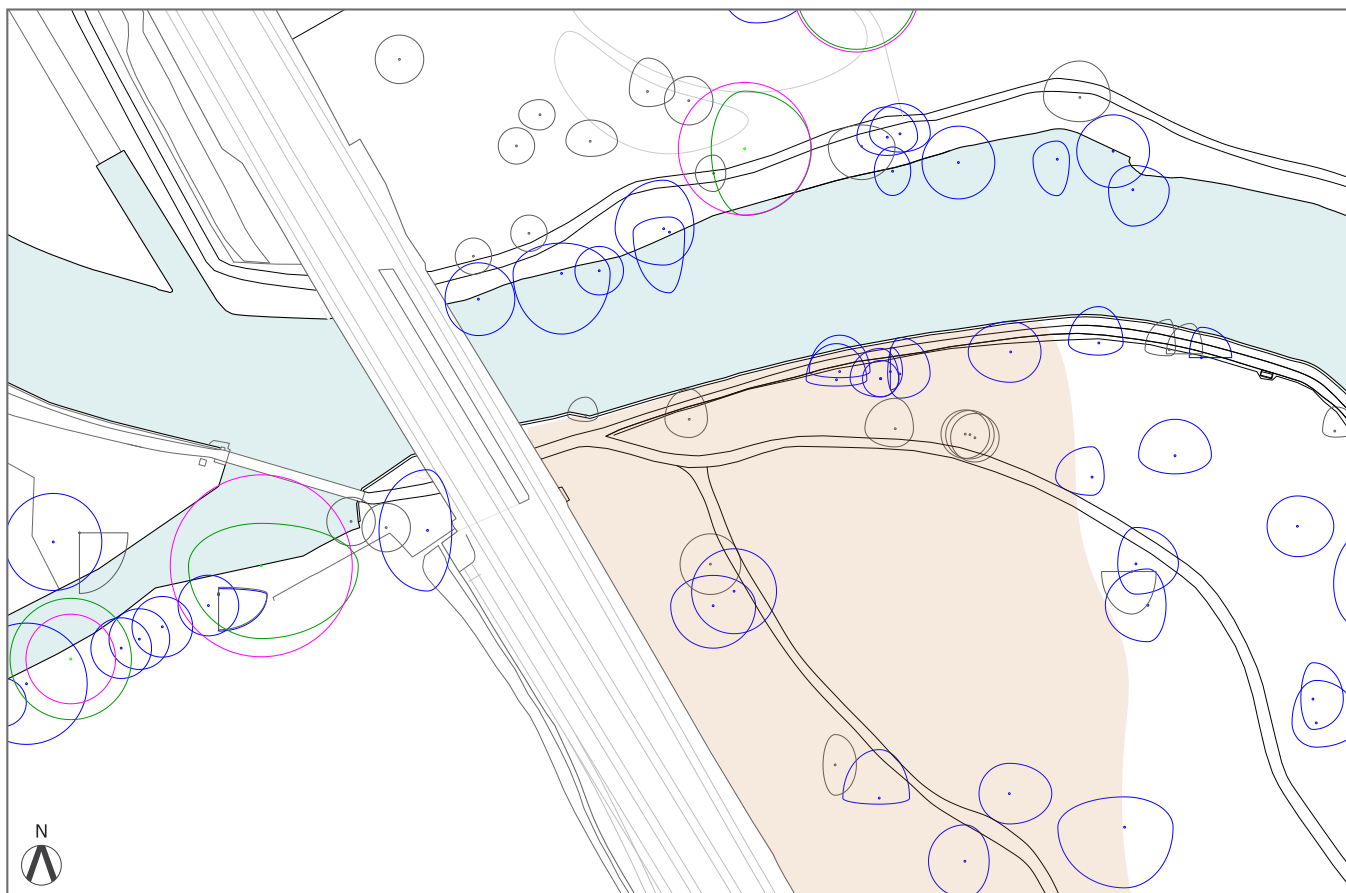
Whilst the path works to the south of the river are part of a separate Oxford City Council project ('Path Works Scheme'), it is essential that the geometry of both schemes interface carefully with each other.

The path works scheme aims to improve the future development of Osney Mead to the south bridge landing.

The orange area in the plan represents the available space to fit the path works alignments and connect to the south landing, for both the western and eastern alignments. The limited space will become an important constraint, as the path works alignment will need to contribute to the legibility of the whole crossing, supporting an user experience that is enjoyable and positive.



Existing Paths at south bank (view and plan)



Indicative Area for the path works alignment at the south bank

Constraints and Opportunities

1.7 Geometric Vertical Constraints

Vertical Clearance

The vertical alignment of the bridge aims to provide the sufficient clearance between tow path and the soffit of the bridge, defined to be 2.4m in this case to allow for cyclists. The bridge profile in elevation is kept as low as possible in order to limit the required length of approach ramp.

The navigation envelope over the river at this location remains to be confirmed by EA, but is proposed to be at least +58.20m AOD, higher than the adjacent Railway Bridge soffit which is +50.12m at its lowest point.

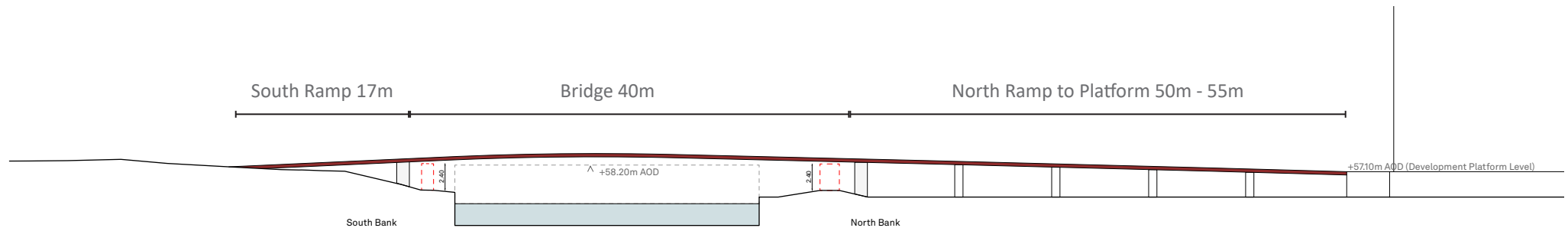
Alignments to the west of the site:

With a slightly shorter approach ramp at the south end and main span over the river, the western alignment(s) require almost 40% more length of approach ramp at the north landing to reach the development high-level platform at +57.10m AOD.

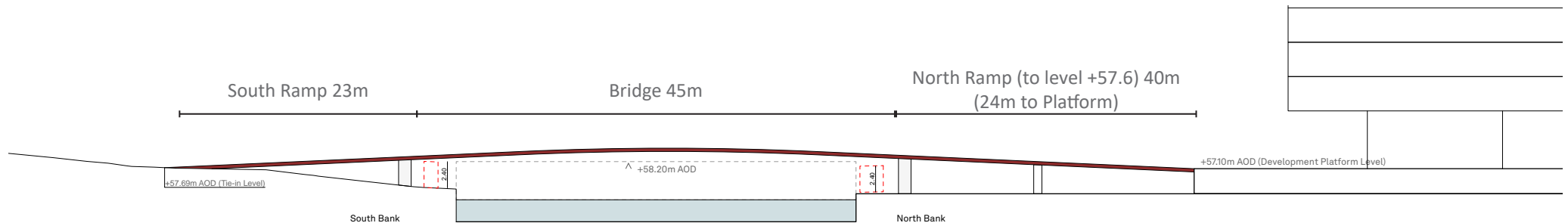
The approach ramp will need a series of supports to span over the Meadows.

Alignments to the East of the site:

The length of approach ramp needed at the north bank is much shorter for this alignment, with just 24m between the bridge abutment and the eastern platform required. It translates into a reduction in the number of supports needed over the meadows for the approach ramp, decreasing the footprint and impact on the meadows.



Options 1, 2 and 4 - West Alignment (up to platform) Indicative



Options 3 - East Alignment East Alignment

Constraints and Opportunities

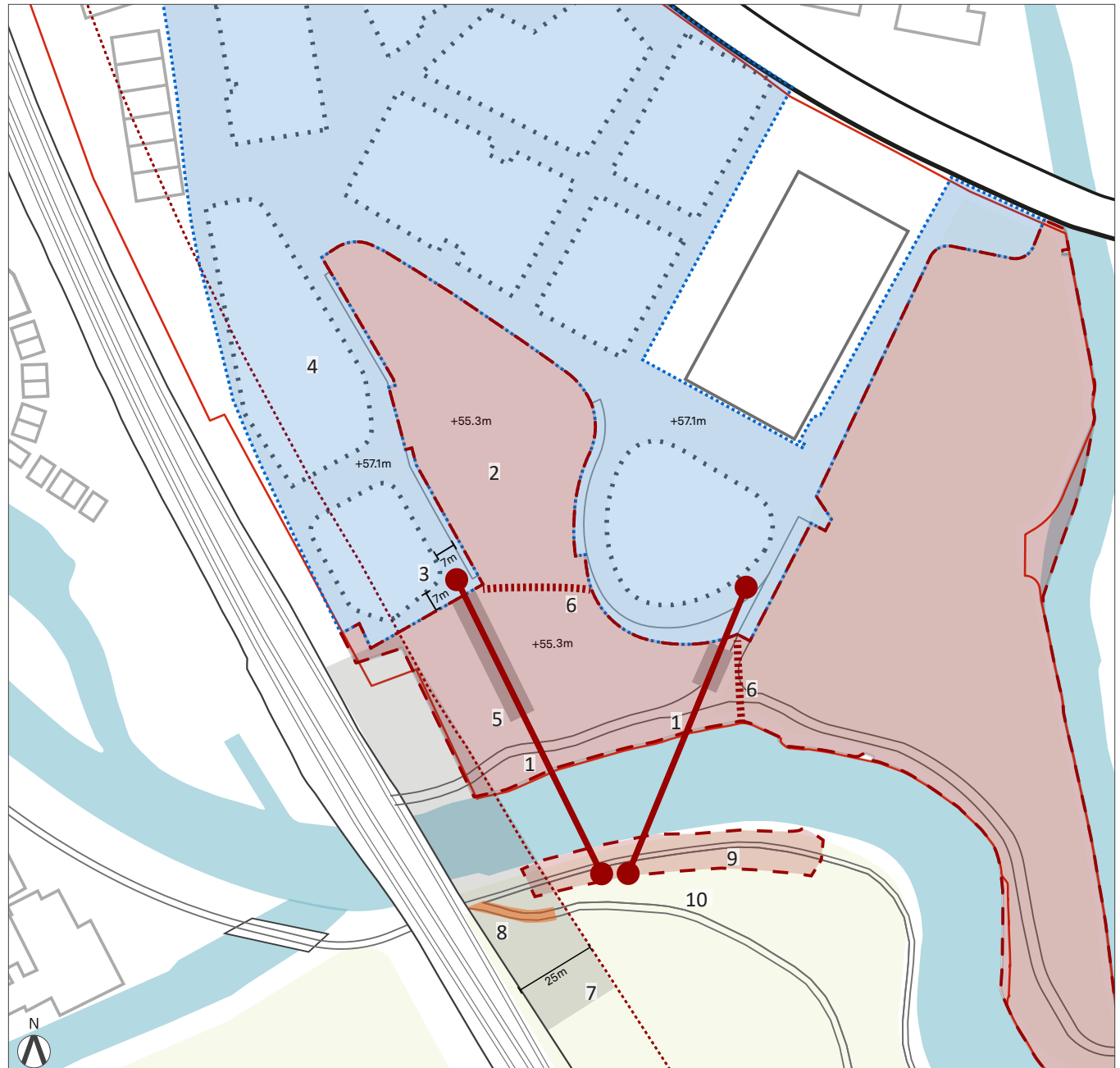
1.8 Constraints

North Landing Considerations

1. Provide an accessible route across the river and floodplain during times of flood.
2. Levels on the new development responding to the floodplain storage compensation requirements. Development red line.
3. Bridge landing on the Oxpens high level built-up platform requires careful integration with that structure.
4. Pedestrian public realm approach in Oxpens development.
5. Reduced volume available for the bridge embankment at north bank, as Oxpens development does not provide spare flood compensation capacity.
6. Avoid visual severance from low-level areas to the river front.
7. Network Rail “Recommended Interface Zone”.

South Landing Considerations

8. Network Rail “Recommended Interface Zone” and impact on approach ramp gradient.
8. Existing steep connection (not suitable for cyclist, wheelchair user).
9. Clearance over towpath, flood issues.
10. Lighting in an ecologically sensitive area.



Constraints and Opportunities

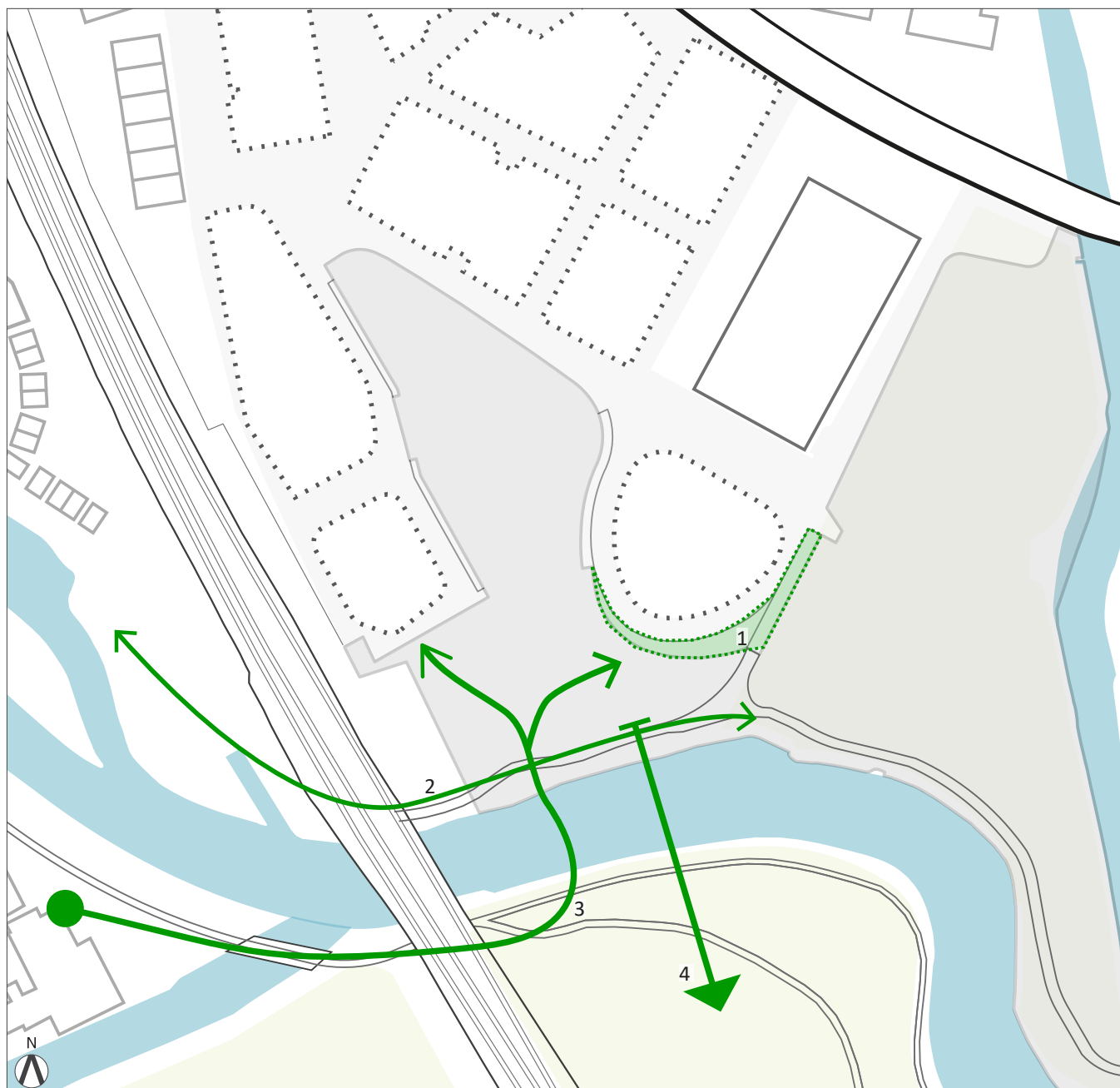
1.9 Opportunities

North Landing Considerations

1. Landing at the eastern high level raised platform, reducing the approaching ramp span and need of embankment.
2. Provide a pedestrian access to the path towards west to Gibbs Crescent and along the river towards the east.

South Landing Considerations

3. Improve the connectivity between the west end development of Osney Mead with the north bank destinations; city centre, train station, north tow path.
4. Improve the connectivity to Grandpont nature reserve.



Constraints and Opportunities

1.10 Initial Movement Strategy

The proposed bridge will be an integral part of people's journeys. It will be designed to respond to desire lines, onward connections and the axis of the wider Oxpens masterplan. It will provide enjoyable, intuitive and seamless connections for both users crossing the river and those walking or cycling along its banks.

→ Pedestrian Desire Lines

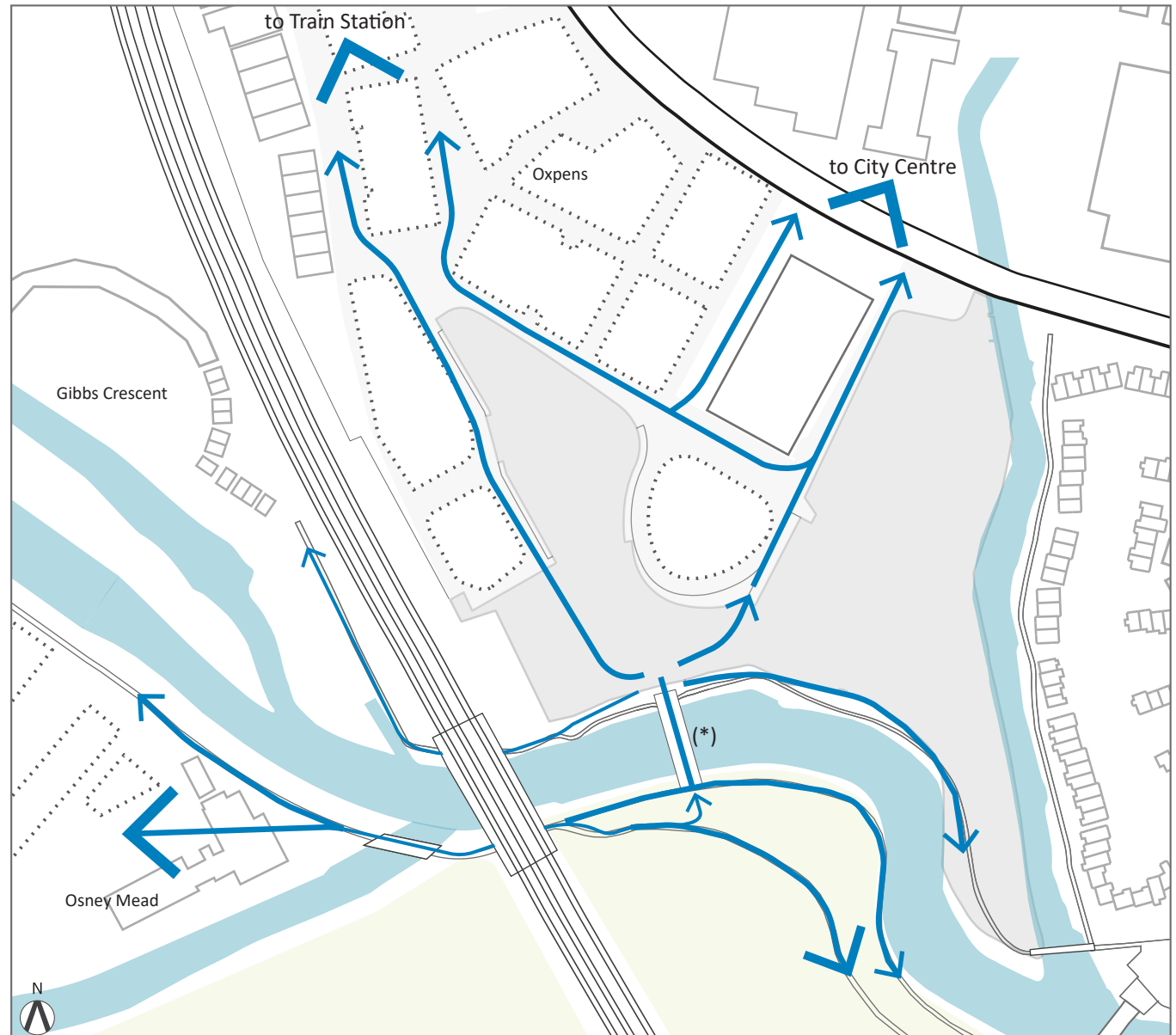
Pedestrian Flow

Primary pedestrian connectivity will be to the raised platform to North side of river, with people making their way through the new area or across the meadows heading to the City Centre or train station.

Pedestrians will also walk along the river at both banks and also into Osney Mead and Gibbs Crescent.

(*) Indicative location of proposed bridge

Initial Assumptions of Movement Strategy (for pedestrians around Oxpens development)



Constraints and Opportunities

1.10 Initial Movement Strategy

Initial Assumptions of Movement Strategy (for cyclists around Oxpens development)

Initial Assumption:
 Pedestrian only area, specified by
 OxWED at start of concept design development

➔ Cyclist Desire Lines

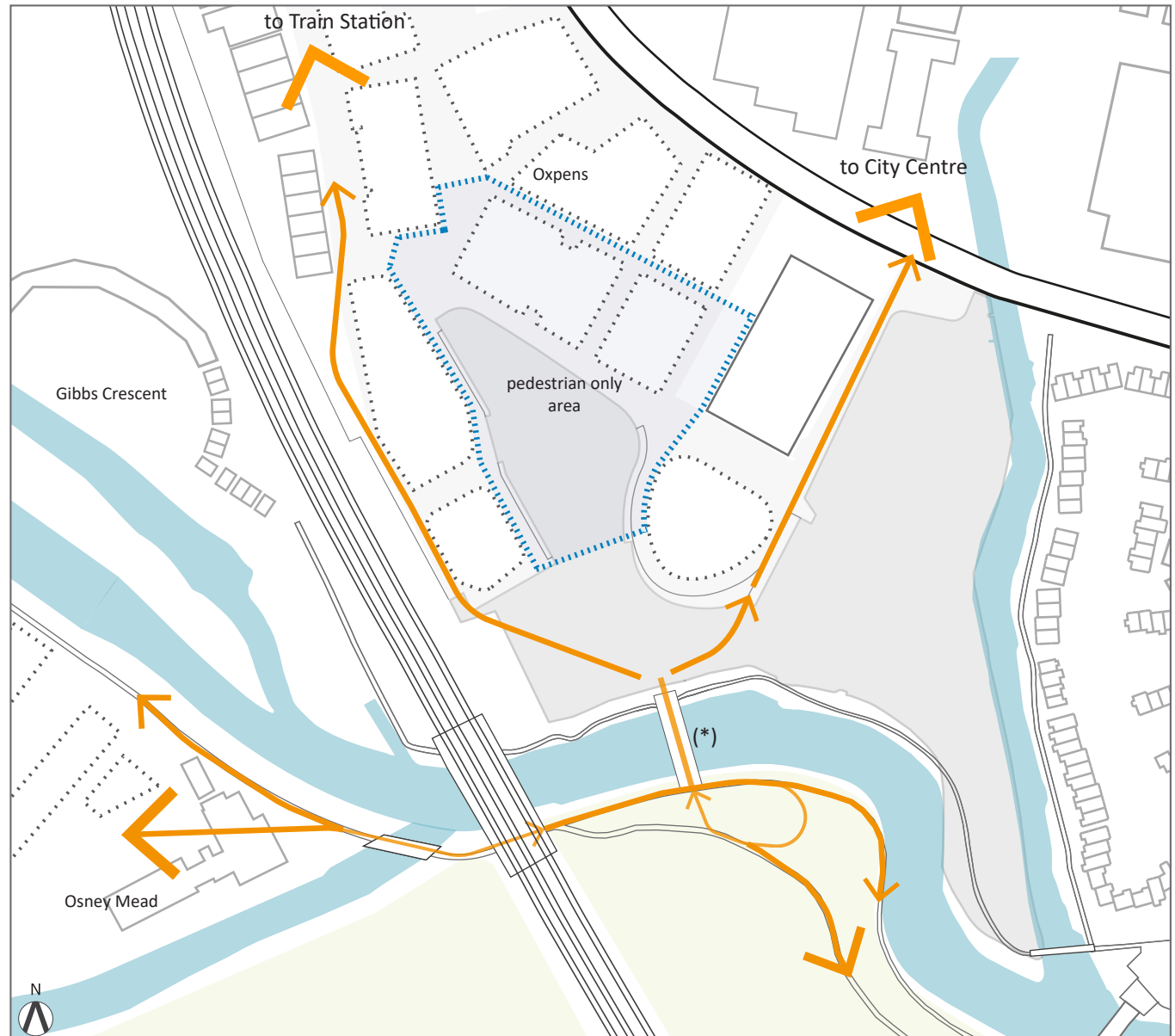
Cyclist Flow

Cyclists are more likely to prefer straightforward routes, that allow them to avoid conflicts with comparatively slower pedestrians.

The most appealing route for them to the City Centre would aim to connect quickly with Oxpens Road.

A route at the western edge of the development will allow for a quieter connection to the station.

Cyclists will also use the towpath along the southern river bank into Osney Mead and Grandpont.



1.10 Initial Movement Strategy

Pedestrian and Cyclists Connectivity

An extensive pedestrian only area was initially defined, with cycle flows through the Oxpens site directed around the periphery of the development.

Two main routes for cyclists were identified, at the west side of the western platform to head to the station and at the east edge of the eastern platform to link with the City Centre.

This initial assumption required cyclists landing on the western platform to be redirected to the ground level and cross the Meadows to link with the towpath and head towards the City Centre.

- Pedestrian only area, specified by OxWED at start of concept design
- Pedestrian Desire Lines
- Cyclist Desire Lines

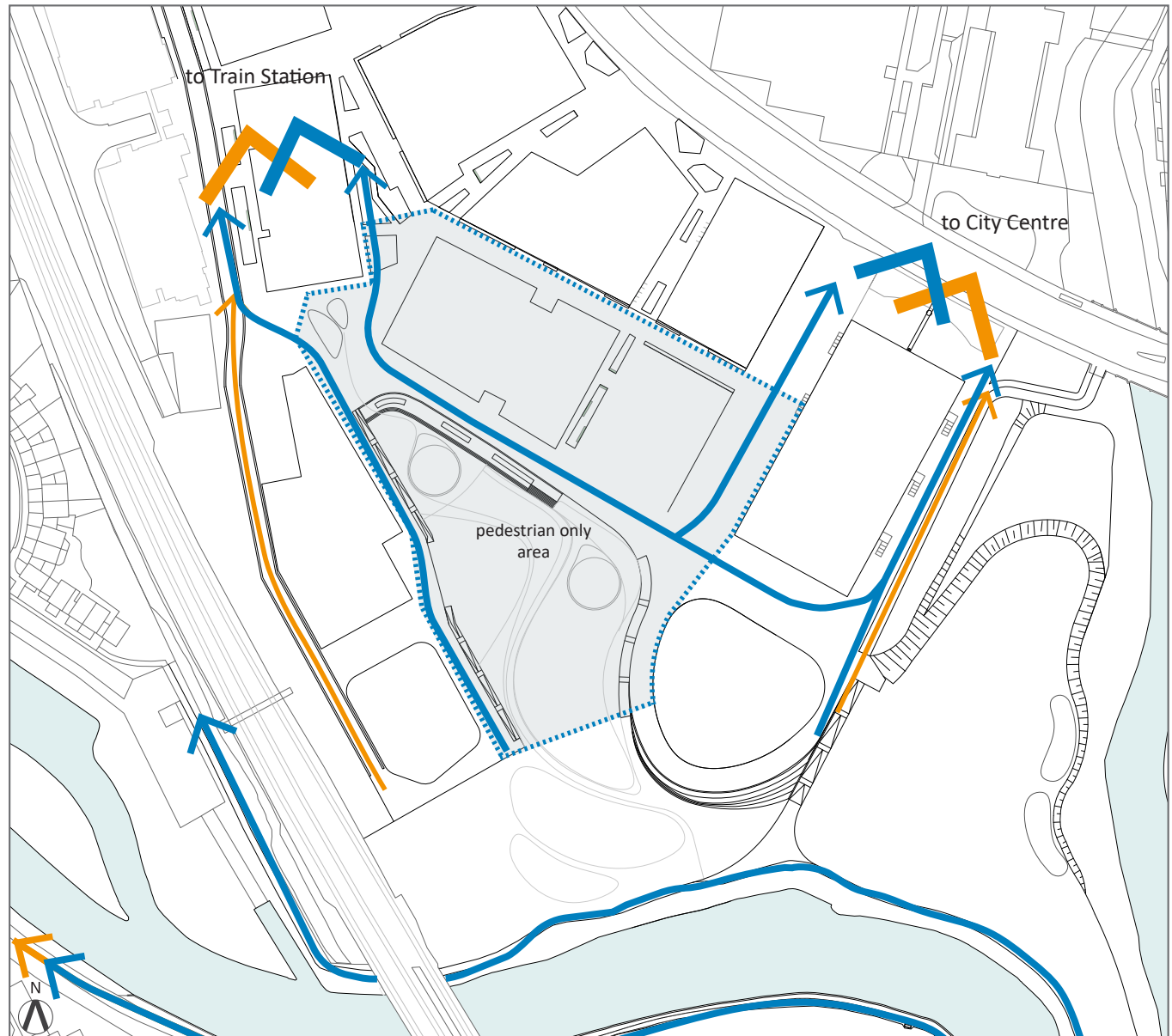


Diagram of Pedestrian and Cyclist Flows - Initial assumption

02 | Alignment Development Phase A

This section outlines the design-response to the initial analysis. It highlights the four options which were developed (1-4), explains the rationale behind the chosen **Assessment Criteria**, and then shows how successfully each option met those criteria.

Alignment Development Phase A

2.1 Bridge Alignment Options

Four options were developed based on the site analysis and the initial requirement of OxWED about maintaining a cycle-free zone in the centre of the development.

The options aim to land at the north bank to the proposed Oxpens development high-level platforms, either to the western side (West Alignments) or to the eastern side (East Alignment).

West Alignments:

Option 1 | Landing at the east side of the proposed building in the western platform, the approach ramp is placed to the west of the bridge axis.

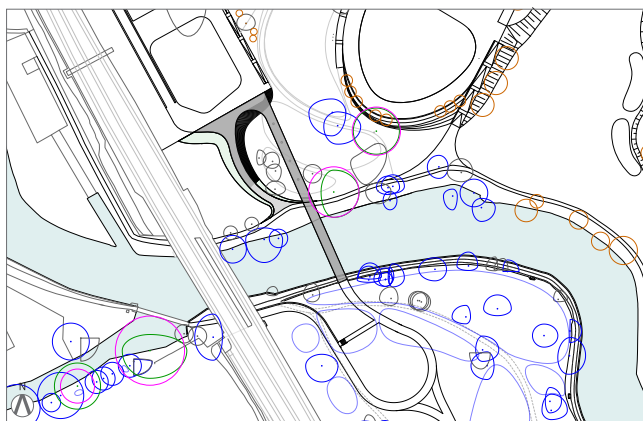
Option 2 | With a split approach ramp, one branch connects to the western platform and the other to the ground level to link with the towpath and to head to the City Centre.

Option 4 | Splitting the approach structure to connect with the upper level of the development on both the east and west sides of the development amphitheatre.

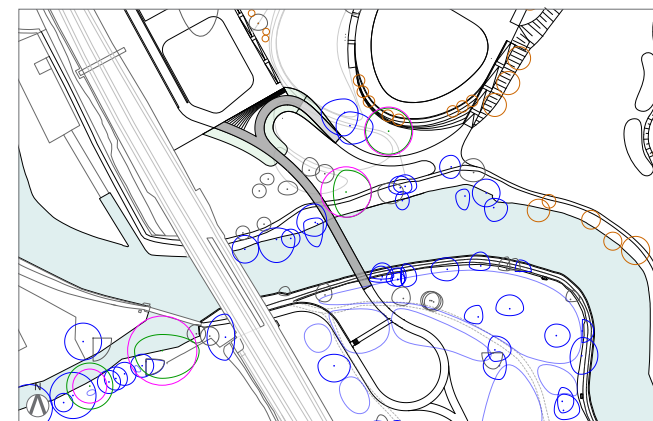
East Alignment:

Option 3 | Connecting with the east side of the eastern platform. The westerly approach ramp forms part of the masterplan platform down to ground level, and the other directs users towards the City Centre.

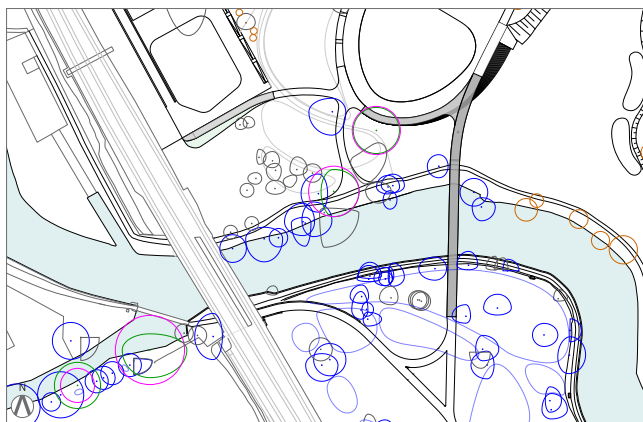
Option 1



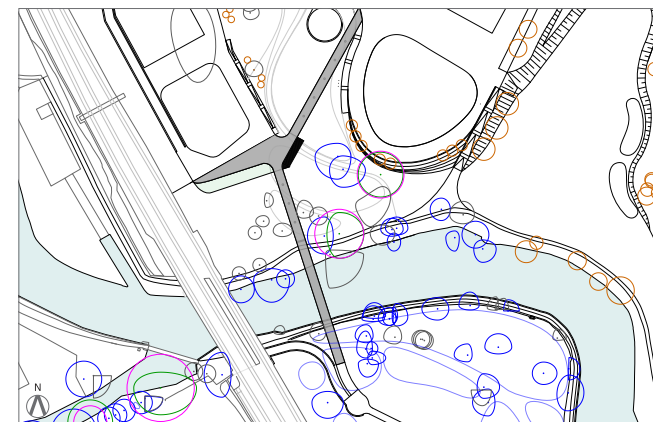
Option 2



Option 3



Option 4



Alignment Development Phase A

2.2 Assessment Criteria

The following assessment criteria have been established to analyse which design option best responds to the initial analysis shown the last section.

Legibility of the crossing ☐

Positive user experience ☐

Lessen the severance
of meadows ☐

Limit footprint on floodplain ☐

Provides a direct route to
the City Centre for all users ☐

Provides a direct route to
the train station for all users ☐

Indicative Structural Area ☐

Limit tree loss on both banks ☐

1. Providing an intuitive and enjoyable route.

To satisfy this key design principles the new structure will need to ensure;

*** Legibility of the crossing;**
providing intuitive routes that are clearly identified, and achieving a composition that is easy to be read as a coherent whole. Therefore, helping users to navigate the site.

*** Positive user experience;**
providing solutions that are welcoming, safe and accessible for every type of user. Naturally guiding them along their desire lines in a welcoming, enjoyable and attractive experience.

2. Contextual response

To be sensitively designed in order to successfully respond to the context and be sympathetic to the meadows. Also aiming for a respectful relationship with the river.

It will be assessed against the following criterions;

*** Lessen the severance of the meadows**

The alignment makes less of a physical and visual segmentation of the meadows.

*** Limit the footprint on the floodplain**

The alignment minimises the imprint on the meadows. This criteria is assessed against data of the footprint area of each alignment on the meadows.

3. Directness of the route

To provide a direct route either to the City Centre or train station.

*** Provides a direct route to the City centre for all users**

This criteria is assessed against the length of the connection between south bank and the City Centre.

*** Provides a direct route to the train station for all users**

This criteria is assessed against the length of the connection between south bank and the train station.

4. Reduce environmental impact

To aim for a solution that is respectful with the environment and puts sustainability at the heart of the design process.

*** Indicative Structural Area**

Whilst we are not yet able to assess the structural volume of each option, it is important to understand the scale at a high level to compare the alternatives. That will give us an indicative idea of carbon and cost difference between options.

This criterion is assessed against data of the total area of superstructure and approaches.

*** Limit tree loss on both bank**

This criterion is assessed against the total number of trees loss to accomodate each alignment.

2.2 Assessment Criteria

The objective of this assessment is to identify the alignment(s) that best address the ‘Bridge Aspirations’.

Three categories were used for the assessment of the options:

- Fulfils the key design principle ✓
- Partially fulfils the key design principle !
- Does not fulfil the key design principle ✗

For criteria where the assessment can be supported by data, the figure will be included next to the assessment mark.

For some of the principles assessed against a ‘Partially fulfils the key design principles’, the design team recognises that more work will need to be done to satisfy the principle in future stages.

Through consultation with the design team, an extensive analysis supports the assessment provided.

For reference, the following pages highlight an example of the assessment which was undertaken behind the final assessment category. It includes items such as (A) the ‘Path Works Scheme’ Alignments, (B) the views from key viewpoint to explore the legibility of the scheme, and (C) the Journey Length and Elevation changes for the options.

Alignment Development Phase A

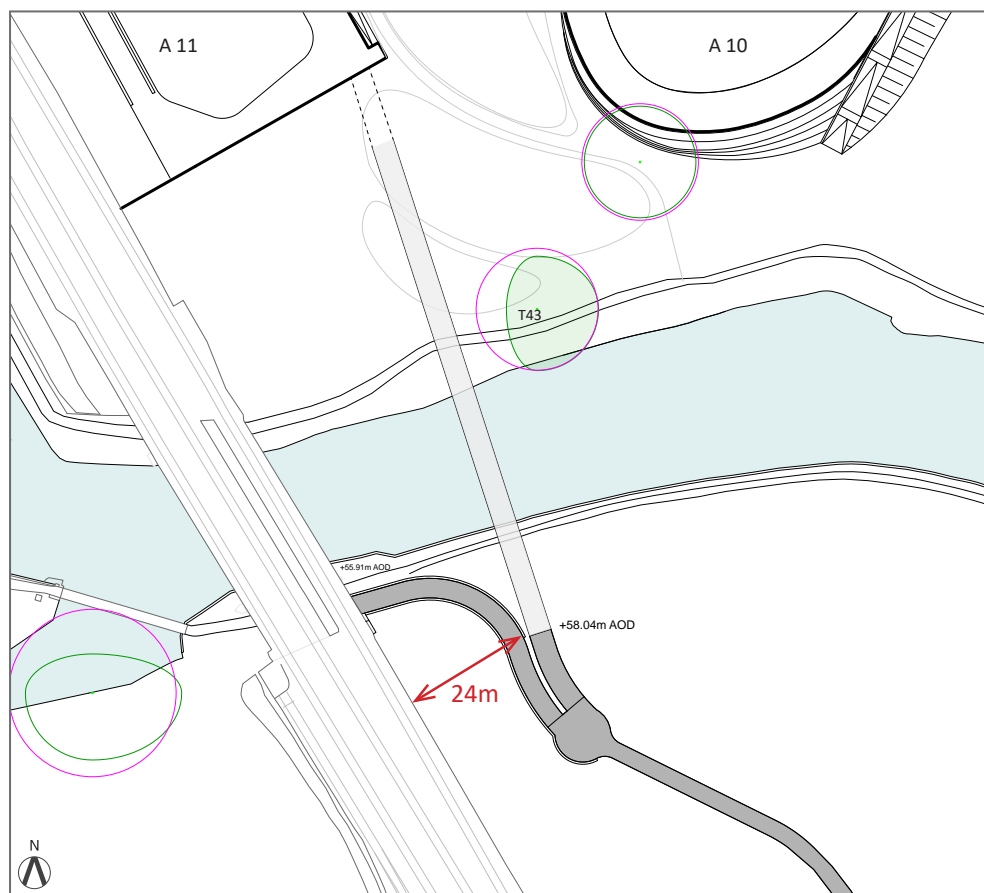
2.2 Assessment Criteria

A. 'Path Works Scheme' alignments and its influence on the legibility of the scheme

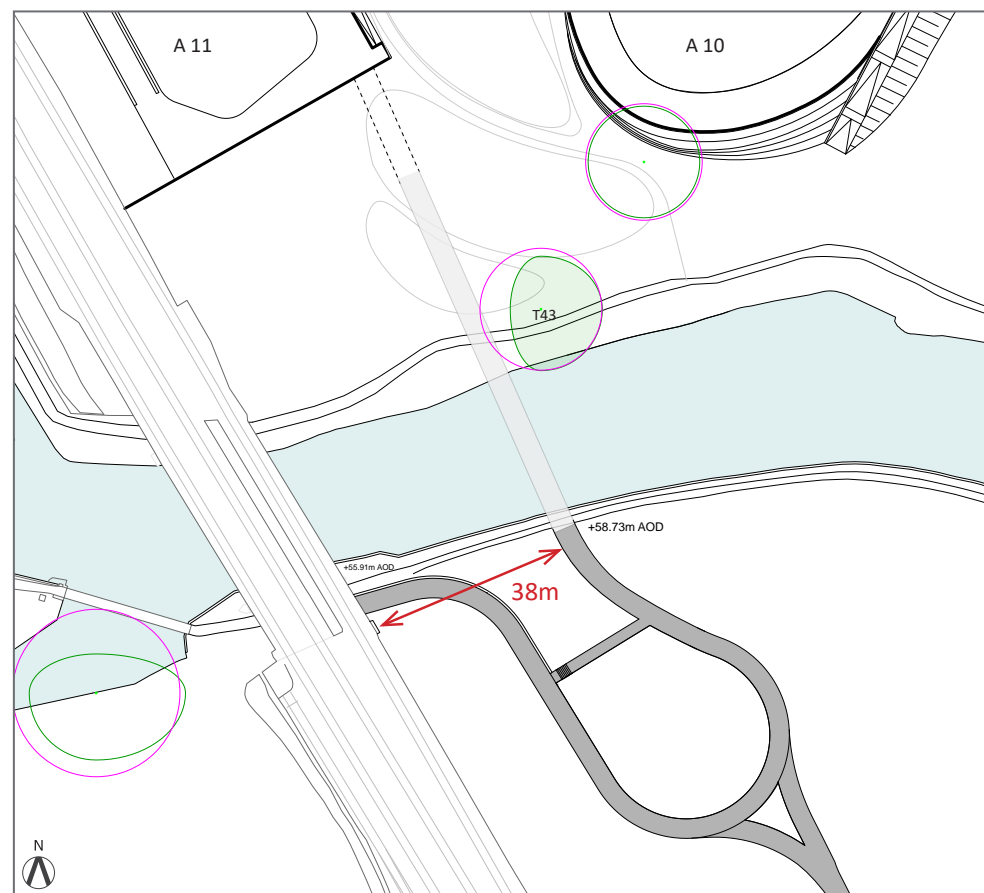
The bridge landing at the north bank needs to connect to the proposed Oxpens development platform (+57.1), either to the western (in front of building A11) or to the eastern side (in front of building A10).

The West Alignment aims to avoid the class A Crack Willow tree T43, and initially also its root protection area. However, for the West Alignment at the south bank, the available area to fit the bridge approach ramp and connect to the lower towpath is very limited, given the proximity to the existing railway bridge.

This results in an initial path approach that does not provide a smooth and intuitive bridge landing at the south end, compromising the legibility of the whole solution and diminishing the user experience. In order to improve the connection at the south bank, the western alignment was



West Alignment original with initial path alignment

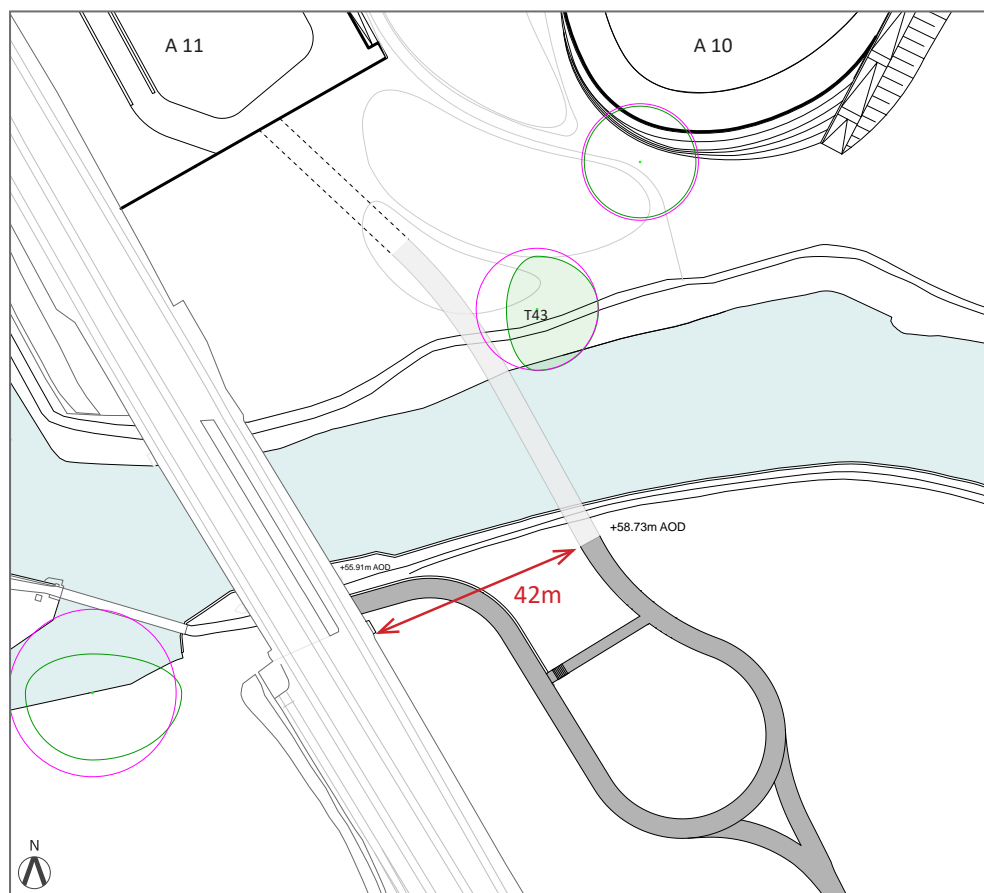


West Alignment for Option 1 (updated)

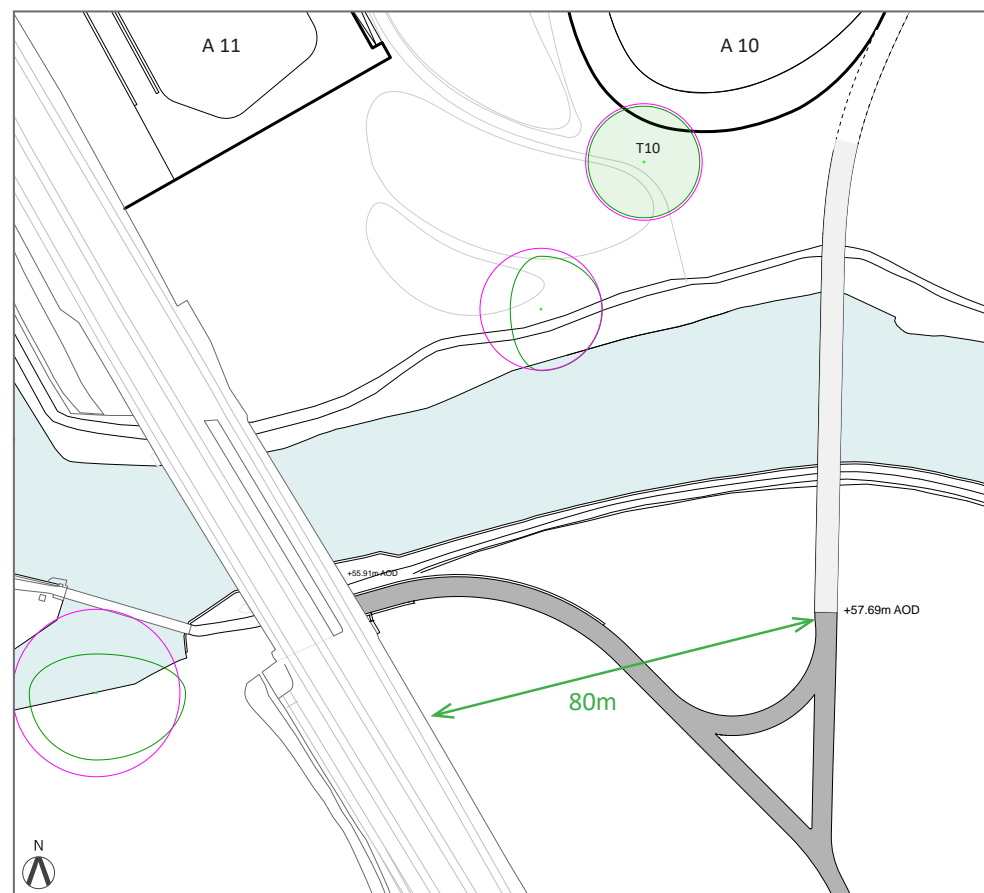
rotated, bridging over the root protection area of T43 and landing as east as possible at this location, distanced 38-42m to the railway bridge. Whilst still aiming to cross as perpendicular as possible to the river. The connection at the southern interface with the path works is still challenging and further

development would need to be explored in improving the western alignment. The East Alignment aims to avoid the class A Ash tree T10 in the meadows, and land to the east side of building A10 in the eastern platform of the Oxpens development.

The increased distance to the connection with the lower tow path, at this location in the south bank allows for a smoother approach to the landing point. It eases the connection at this bank, and therefore provides a more legible and intuitive connection for the bridge.



West Alignment for Option 2 (updated)



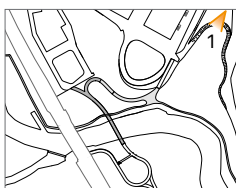
East Alignment for Option 3 with initial path alignment

2.2 Assessment Criteria

B. Legibility of the crossing at North bank

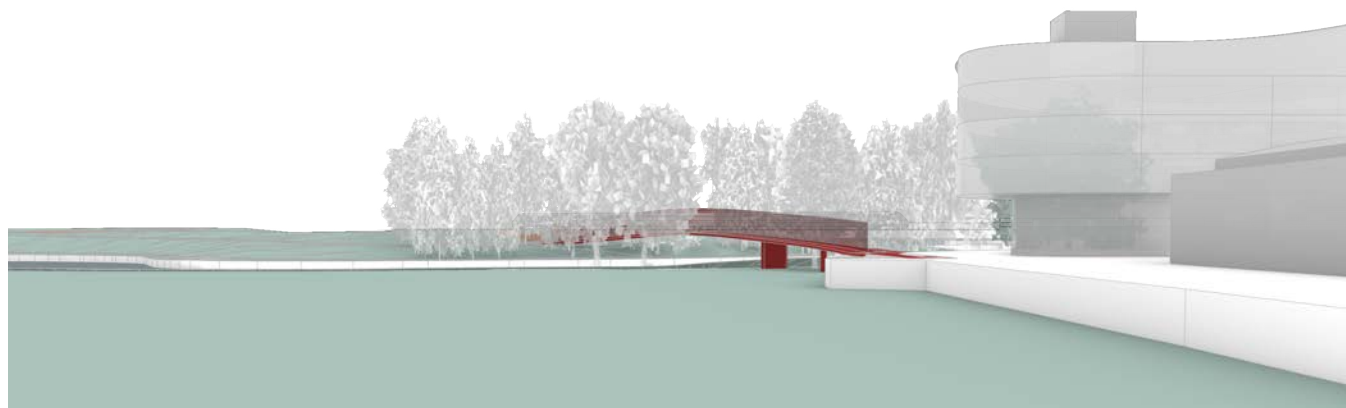
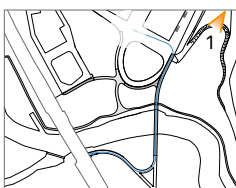
This section outlines how the position of each alignment helps users to navigate easily to access the bridge from key viewpoints at both ends. At the north bank this is the view from Oxpens Road toward the river.

The image shows how western alignments are almost not visible from this key viewpoint. This makes the structure less legible for these alignments, compromising the wayfinding purpose of it to guide users through the site.



Western Alignment (Option 2) - View 1

The image shows how by contrast, the eastern alignment is visible from the same key viewpoint. It contributes improving the legibility of the crossing.



Eastern Alignment (Option 3) - View 1



View 1. At north bank, from Oxpens Road towards the river

Alignment Development Phase A

2.2 Assessment Criteria

B. Legibility of the crossing at South bank

This section outlines how the position of each alignment helps users to navigate easily to access the bridge from key viewpoints at both ends. At the south bank this is the view from the existing towpath connecting to the future Osney Mead development, under the railway bridge.

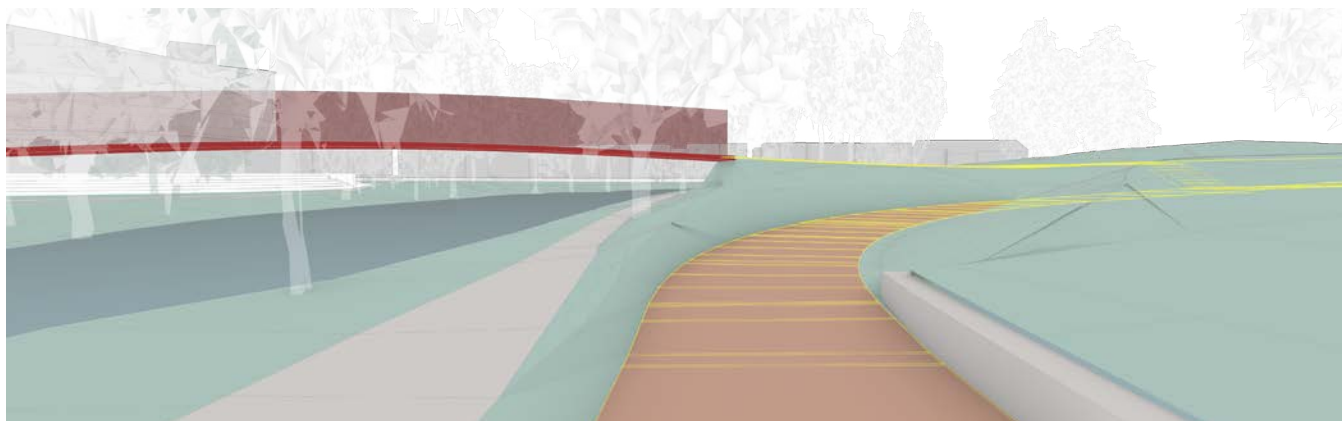
The image shows the lack of legibility at the south bank, as the tie-in loop cannot be read as a whole from the point where the user needs to access to it.



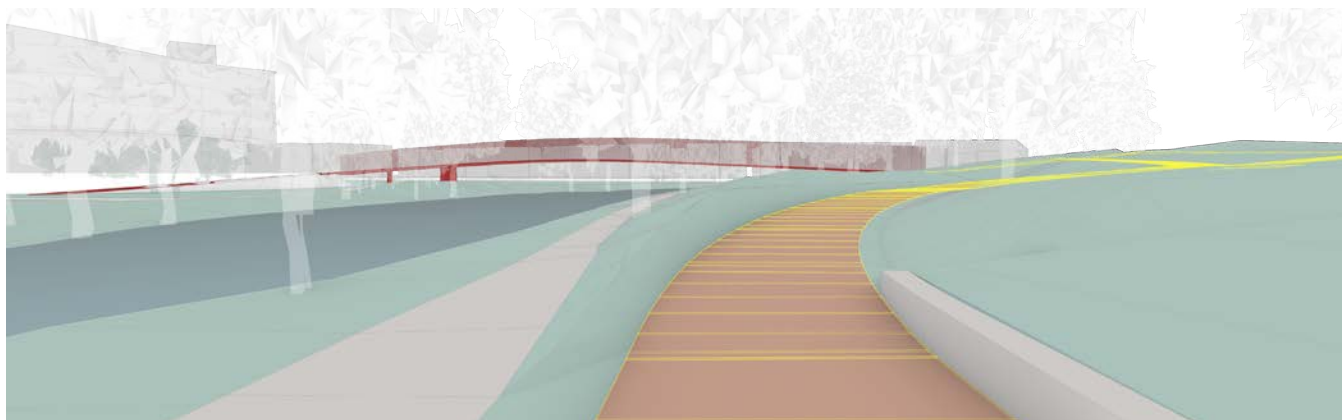
The image shows how the distance and a smoother path alignment to the bridge improves the legibility of the crossing, which will be more legible from the same point of view.



View 2. At south bank connecting to Osney Mead Development



Western Alignment (Option 2) - View 2



Eastern Alignment (Option 3) - View 2

Alignment Development Phase A

2.2 Assessment Criteria

C. Journey Length and Elevation changes

The length and elevation changes in a crossing is a key parameter in providing a crossing experience that is attractive and welcoming for all users.

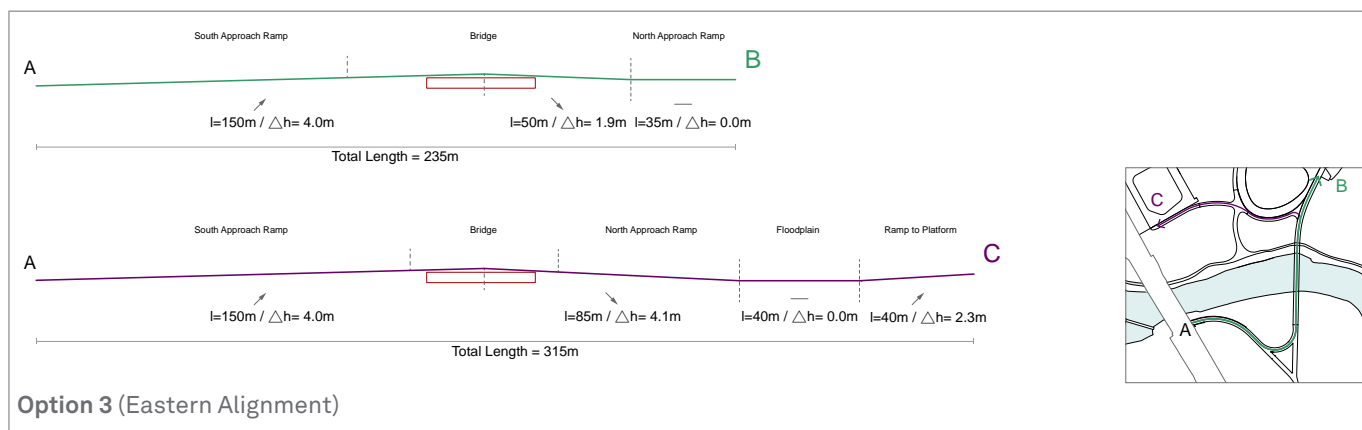
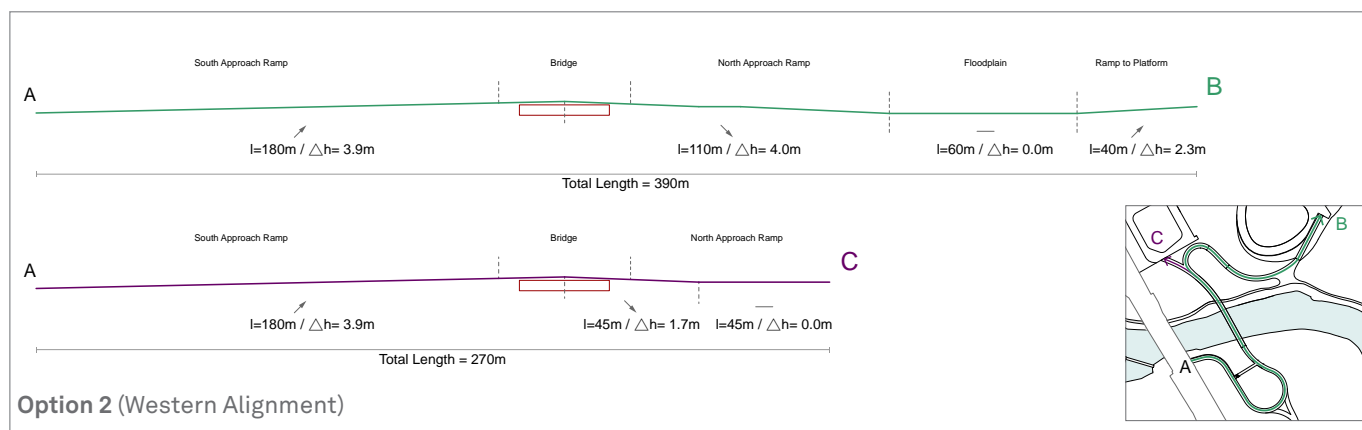
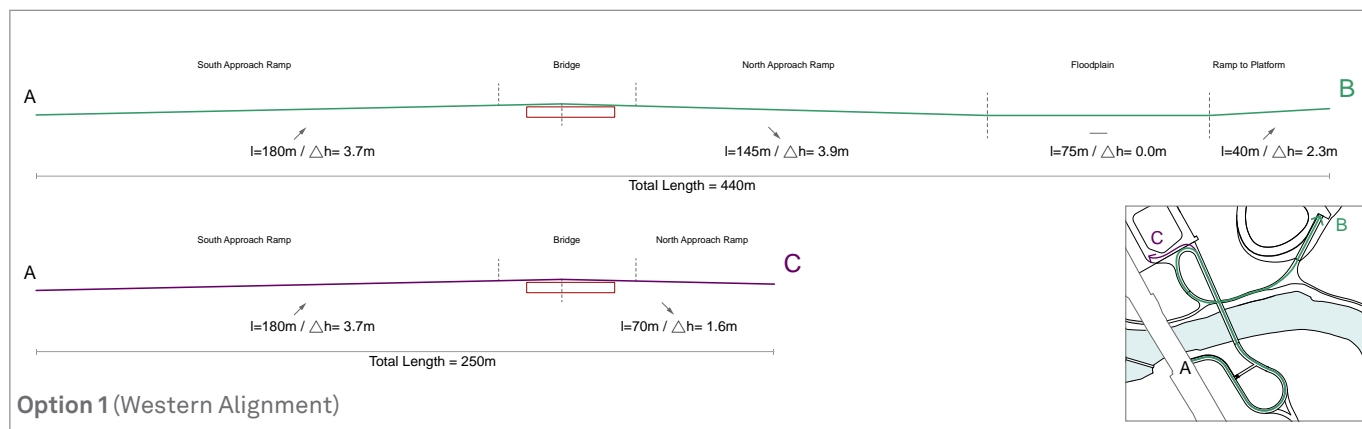
Overall elevation changes increase the energy expenditure of pedestrians and cyclists, therefore reducing the comfort of using the route.

These comparative diagrams between the different alignment options intend to analyse the difference in length and height for each alternative when connecting A to B (heading to the city centre), and also A to C (heading to train station).

For the western alignments, the significant elevational changes happen at meadow level, when connecting the north landing to the route to city centre. In this route (A to B) Option 3 (eastern alignment) becomes the shortest alternative, with a reduction of 47% length in comparison with the longest route (Option 1).

For the eastern alignment, the significant elevation changes happen when linking the landing to the route to train station. In this route (A to C) Option 1 becomes the shortest alternative, although the length reduction is limited to 20% in comparison with the longest route (Option 3), for this destination.

A to B (heading to the city centre) ———
A to C (heading to train station) ———



Alignment Assessment

Once we have defined the assessment criteria, the next section reflects the alignment assessment of each option against these principles.

An initial introduction aims to describe the layout of each option studied. Additionally, accompanying commentary for each proposal provides the logic behind their assessment against the key design principles.

The report includes further assessments of the options relating to their connectivity; a layout highlighting the connection that each option prioritises is included.

Each option comprises a plan and section of the alignment, and an overview image in order to reflect its integration with the setting, and the connection at both ends. The view from the bridge deck captures the perception of Oxpens development from the user's perspective when crossing the bridge.

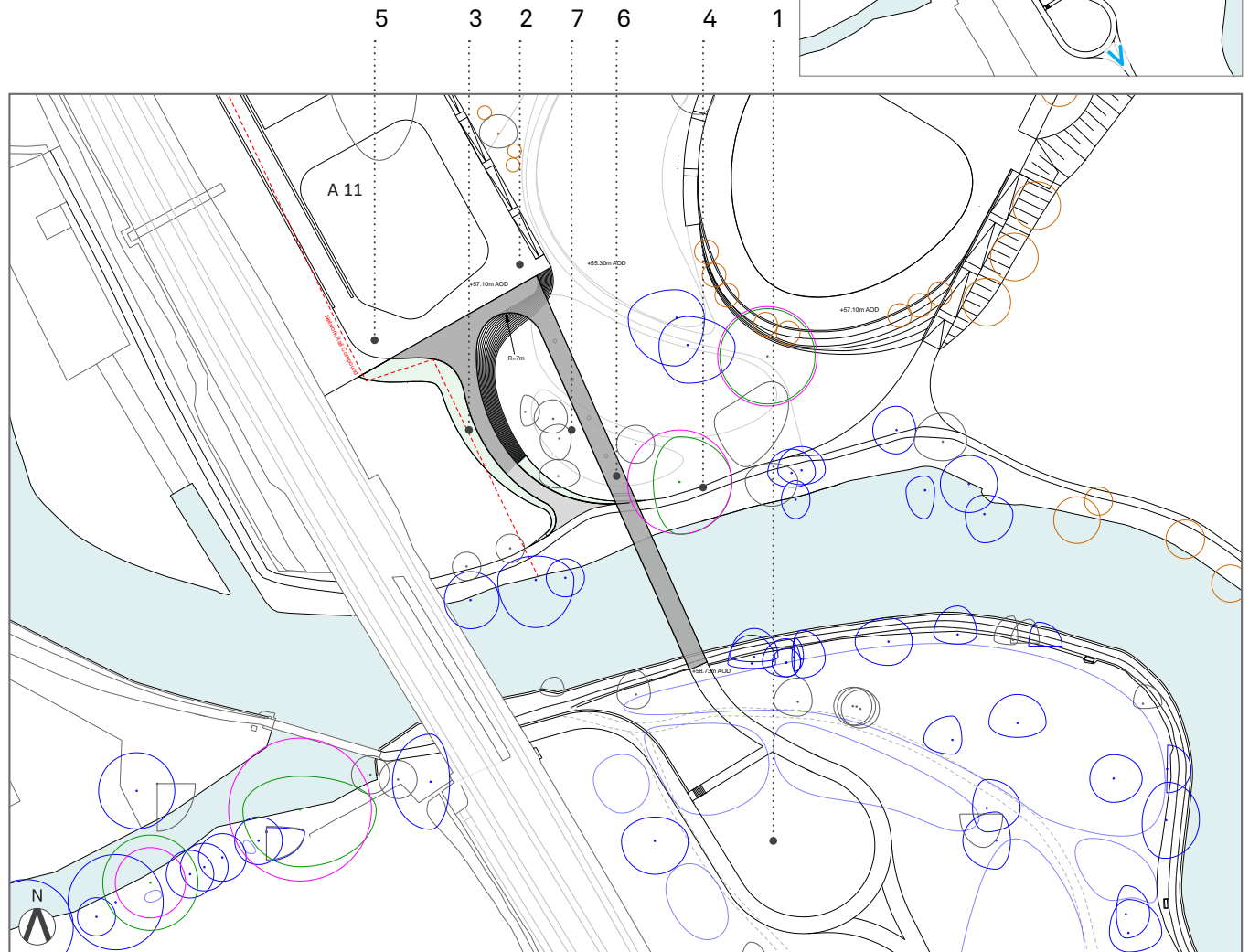
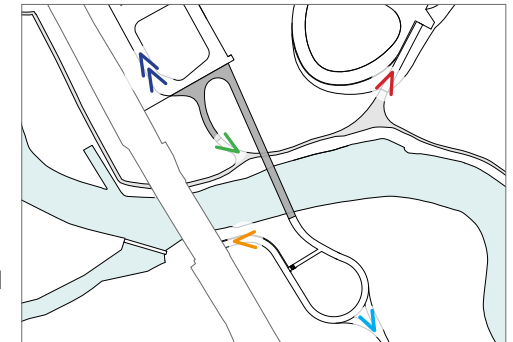
Alignment Development Phase A

2.3 Alignment Assessment | Option 1

Connecting the bridge to the western platform of Oxpens development. Landing at the east side of the proposed building A11, the approach ramp is placed to the west of the bridge axis.

1. There is a lack of legibility in the entire alignment, both at the south path tie-in loop and also in the approach ramp looping back on itself at the north bank. The layout forces users to detour at both landings along the crossing.
2. The user experience is diminished by the limited landing space at the north high level platform, as various directions of travel can be taken by all users at that point. The aspiration will be for cyclists to use a route to the west of building A11, Becket Lane South. The likelihood is that a proportion of cyclist will continue on the eastern side of the building, creating potential conflict with pedestrians.
3. A long approach ramp is necessary, which creates a physical and visual severance in the western meadows, resulting in a large footprint (total 702sqm).
4. The connection with the city centre is the longest (total 440m), forcing users to go down to go up again at the north bank.
5. The alignment provides a more direct route to the train station as it lands in the western platform.
6. The total area of superstructure and approaches for this option is 685sqm.
7. Loss of trees at the north bank is around 13 and at the south bank is 12.

- > Connection to city centre
- > Connection to train station
- > Connection to towpath
- > Connection to Osney Mead
- > Connection to Grandpont
- >> Prioritised connection



Plan View Option 1 with updated path alignment

Alignment Development Phase A

2.3 Alignment Assessment | Option 1

Assessment Criteria
Option 1

Legibility of the crossing !

Positive user experience !

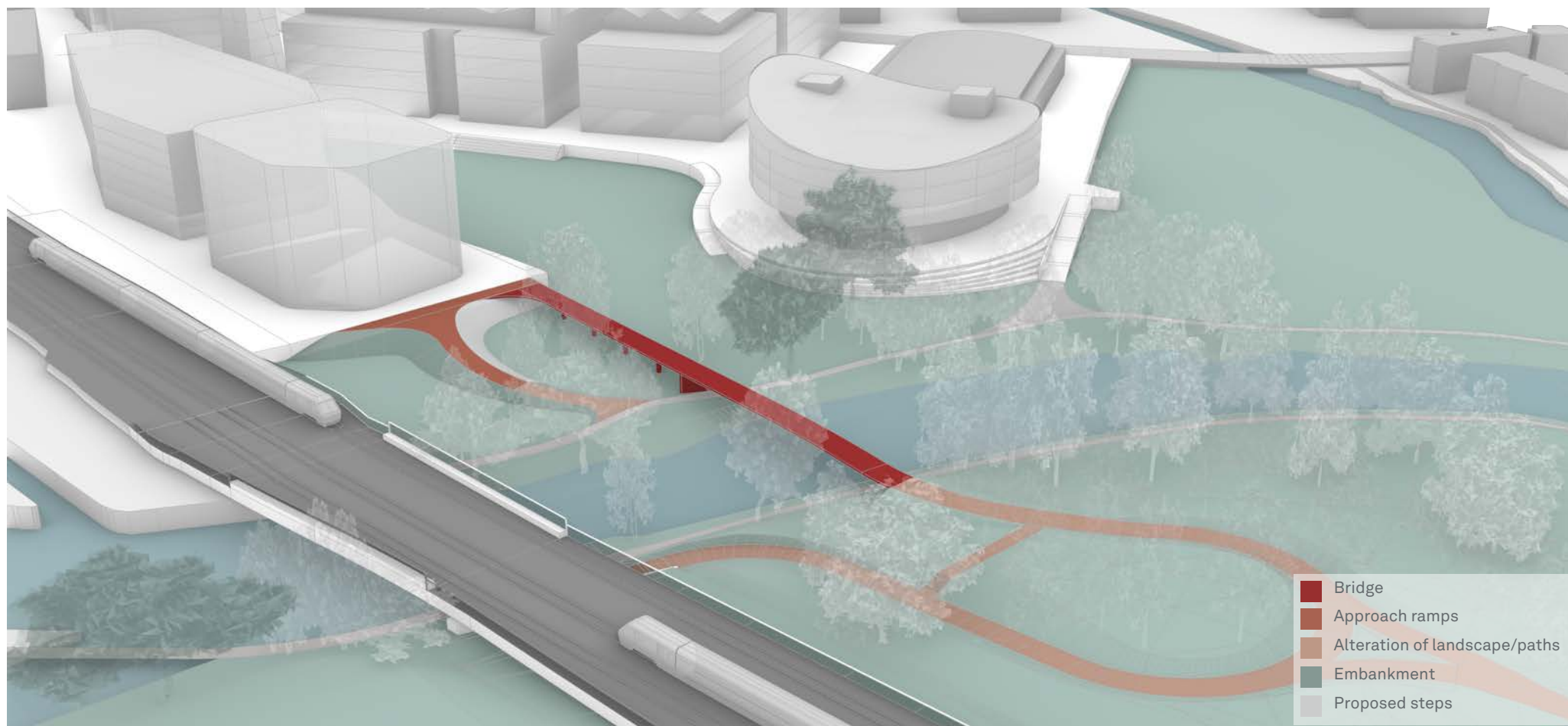
Lessen the severance
of meadows ✗

Limit footprint on floodplain ! 702sqm

Provides a direct route to
the City Centre for all users ✗ 440mProvides a direct route to
the train station for all users ✓ 250m

Indicative Structural Area ✓ 685sqm

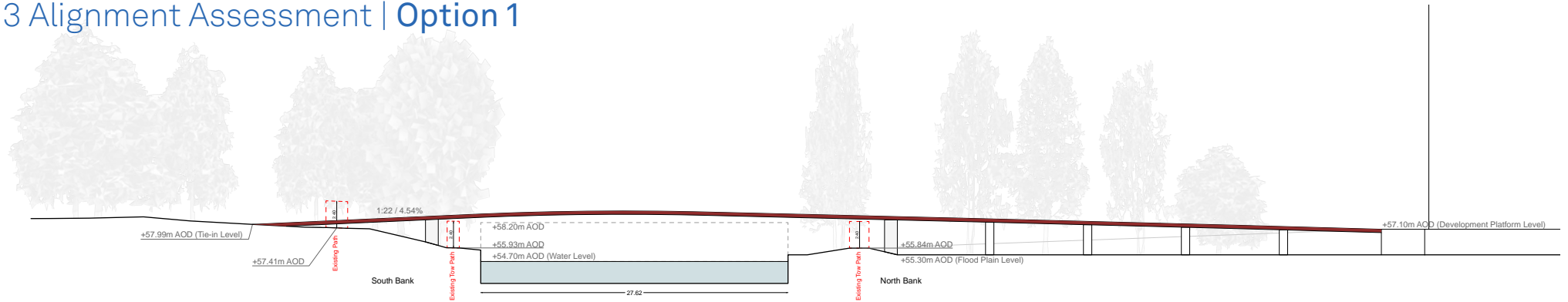
Limit tree loss on both banks ! 25



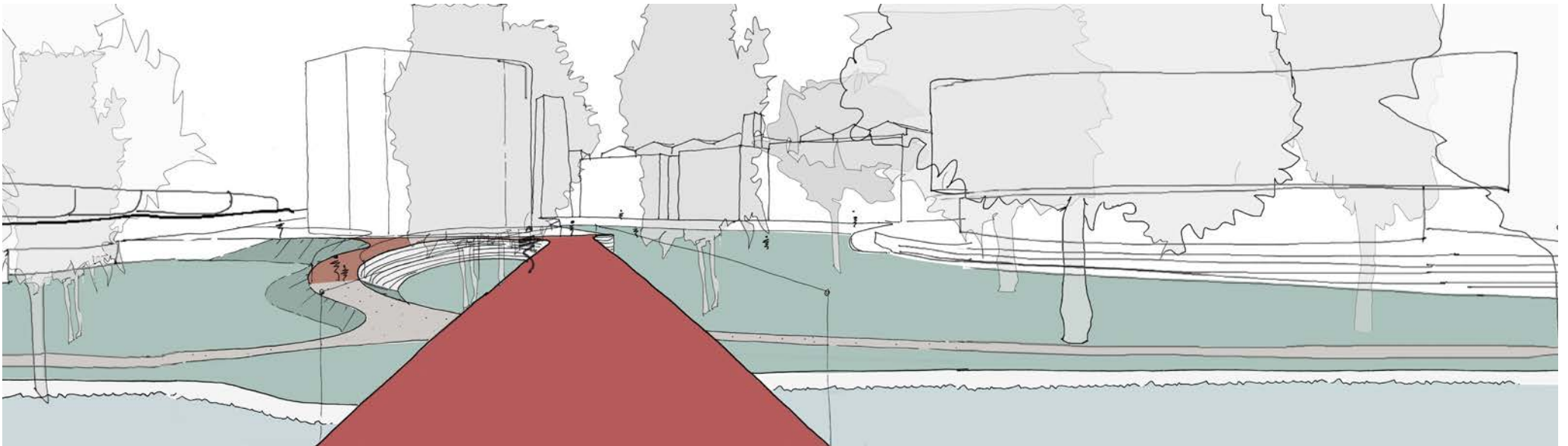
Overview Option 1

Alignment Development Phase A

2.3 Alignment Assessment | Option 1



Section View Option 1



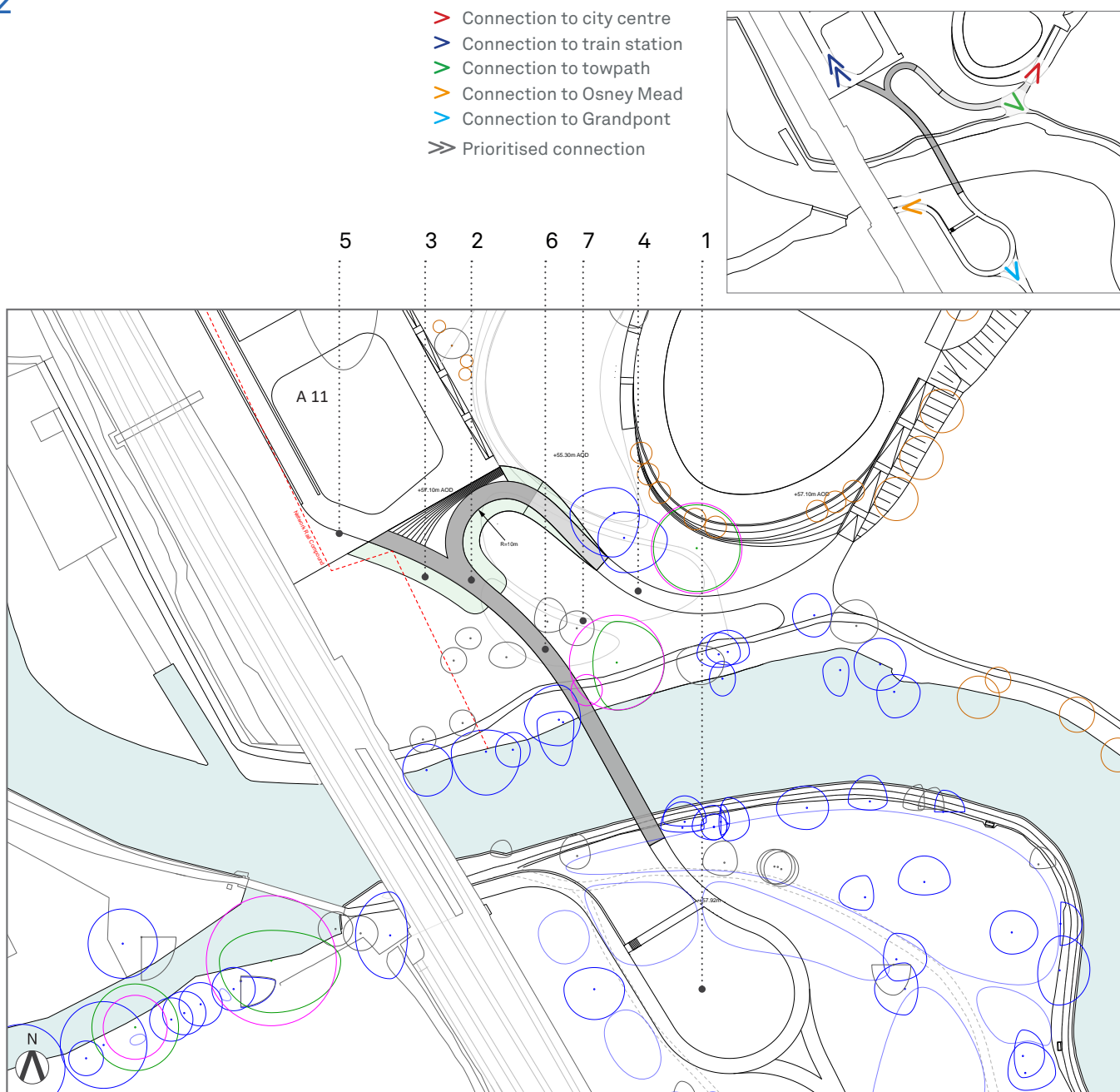
View from Deck Option 1

Alignment Development Phase A

2.4 Alignment Assessment | Option 2

Heading to the western platform of the new development with a split approach ramp. One branch connecting to the high-level platform and the other connecting to the ground level to link with the towpath and head to the city centre.

1. There is a lack of legibility at the south path tie-in loop. While the north ramp layout provides a split approach ramp that aims to provide separate routes to the meadows and to the high-level platform.
2. The user experience is improved as the approach ramps are more closely aligned to the users desire lines. Including the aspiration to encourage cyclists to route to the west of proposed building A11, Becket Lane.
3. A long approach ramp is necessary, which creates a physical severance in the western meadows, creating a significant footprint (total 815sqm). The visual severance is less serious than in previous option, as the approach ramp tries to be better integrated in the development western platform.
4. The connection with the City Centre is lengthy (total 390m), forcing users to go down to go up again at the north bank.
5. The alignment provides a more direct route to the train station as it lands in the western platform.
6. The total area of superstructure and approaches for this option is 609sqm.
7. Loss of trees at the north bank is around 14 and at the south bank is 12.



Plan View Option 2

Alignment Development Phase A

2.4 Alignment Assessment | Option 2

Assessment Criteria
Option 2

Legibility of the crossing !

Positive user experience !

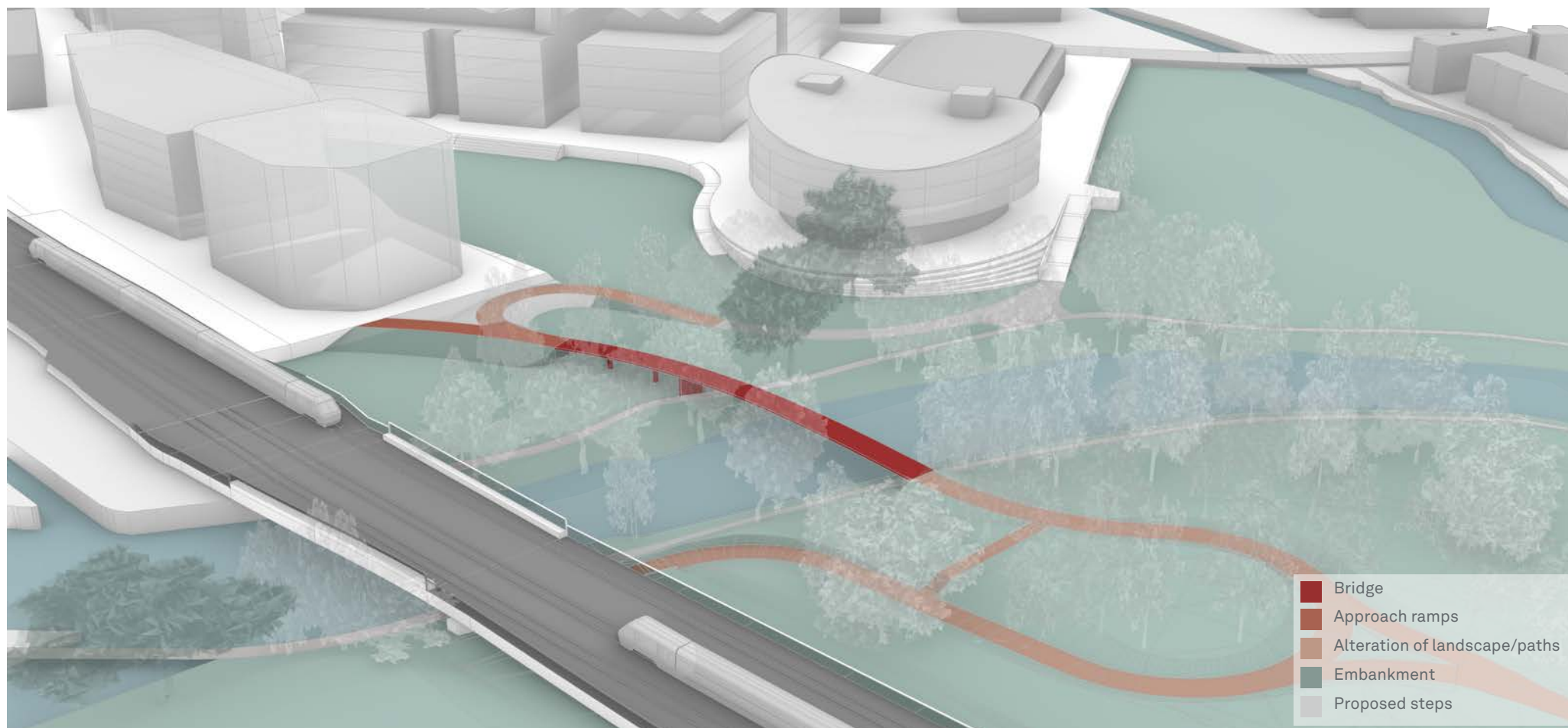
Lessen the severance
of meadows ✕

Limit footprint on floodplain ! 815sqm

Provides a direct route to
the City Centre for all users ✕ 390mProvides a direct route to
the train station for all users ✓ 270m

Indicative Structural Area ✓ 609sqm

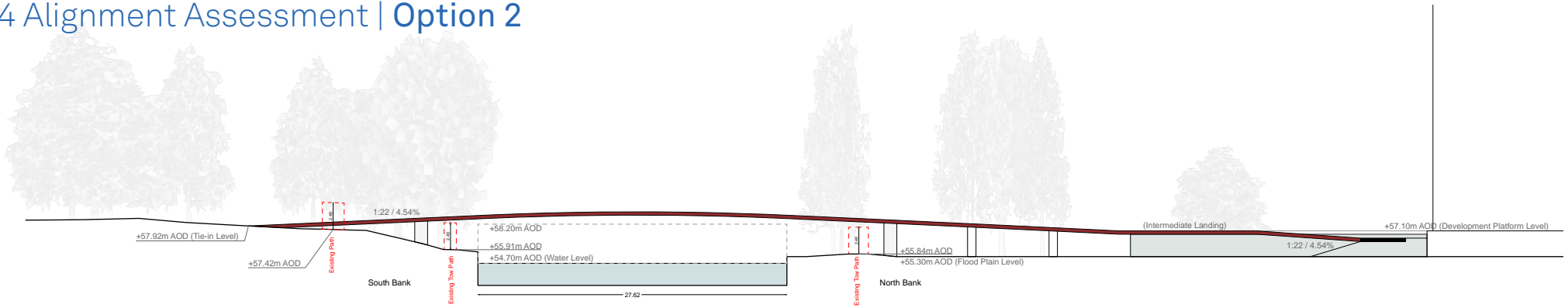
Limit tree loss on both banks ! 26



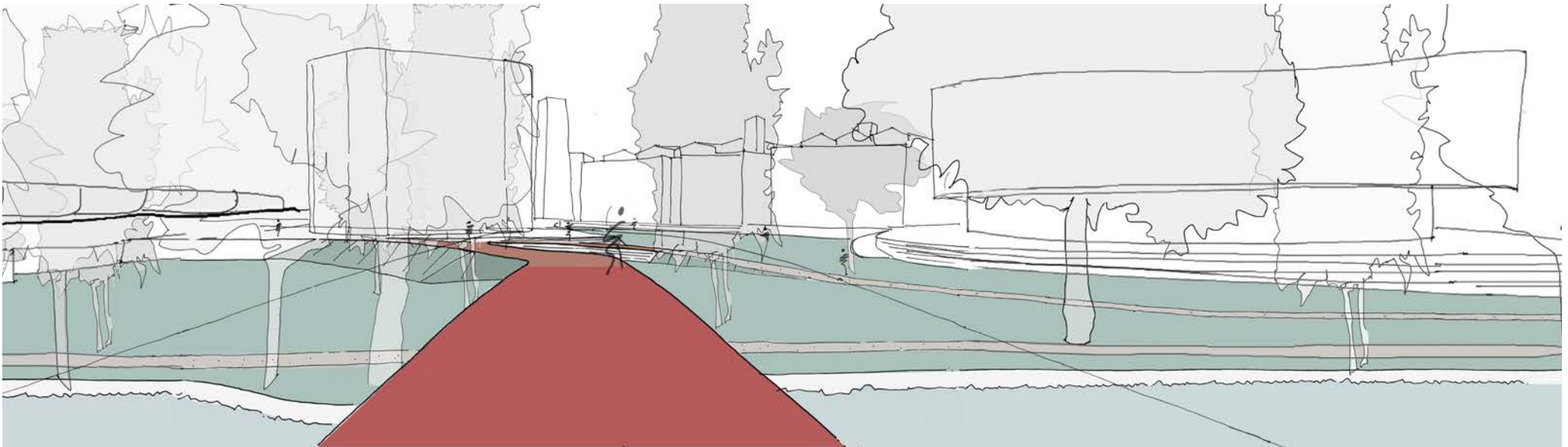
Overview Option 2

Alignment Development Phase A

2.4 Alignment Assessment | Option 2



Section View Option 2



View from Deck Option 2

Alignment Development Phase A

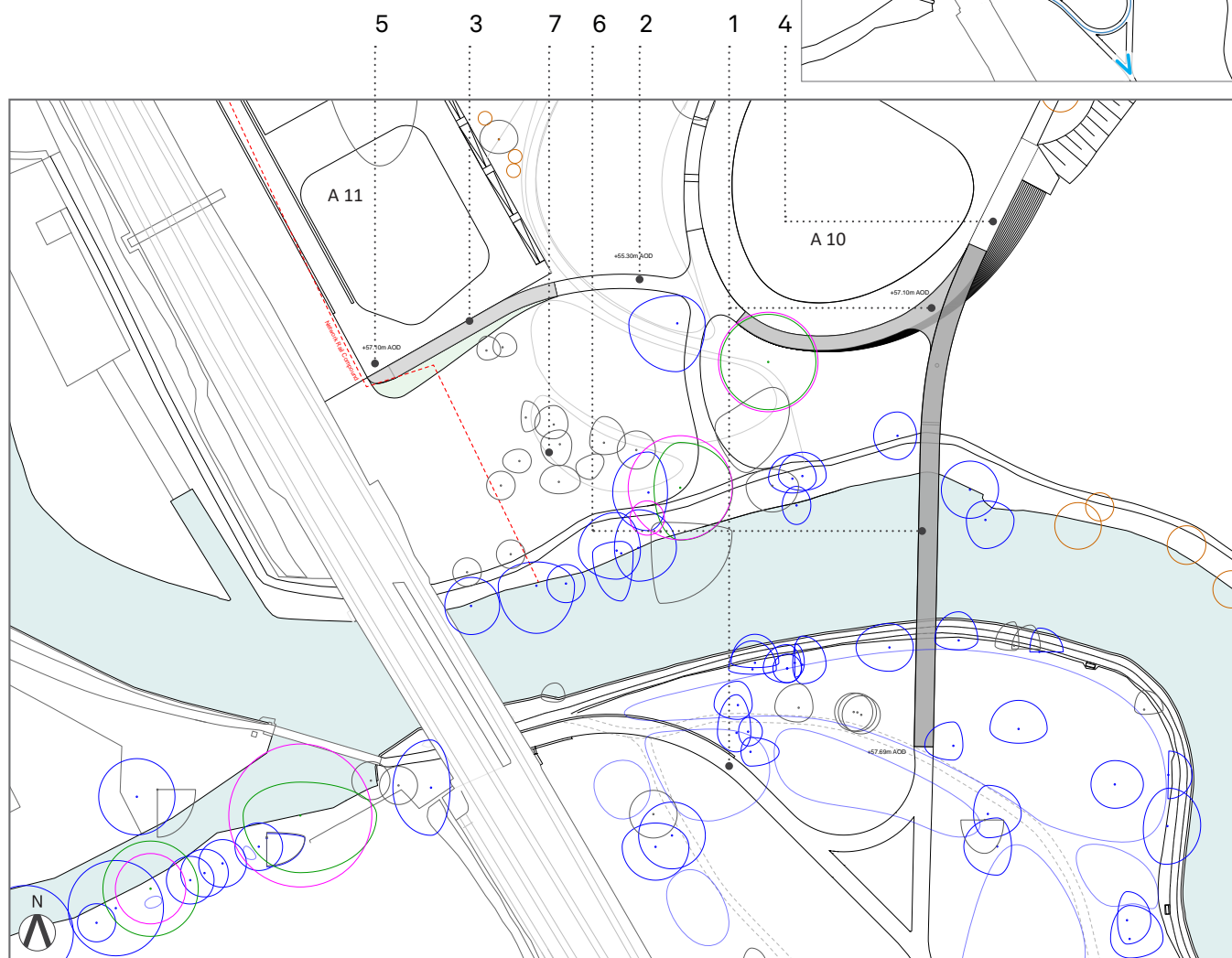
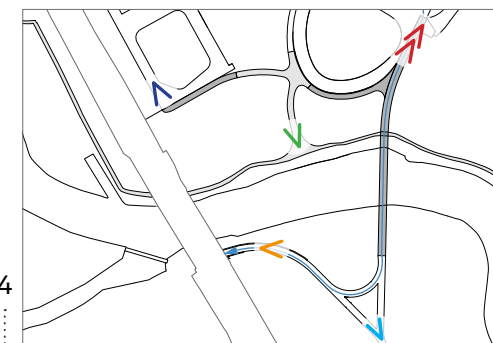
2.5 Alignment Assessment | Option 3

Connecting with the eastern platform of the new development, where building A10 is proposed. The westerly approach ramp forms part of the masterplan terrace outside of building 10 down to ground level.

A second ramp would be built by OxWED alongside the south of proposed building A11 to bring cyclists back up to Becket Lane South and on to the train station.

1. The design of the connecting path at the south bank provides a smoother and more intuitive link to the bridge, creating clear legibility of the alignment at this end. It also happens at the north bank, with a legible route through to the city centre and the station via Oxpens road. The western routing across at floodplain level allows users to connect to the western side of the development and onto the station.
2. The user experience at this crossing is positive as the routes are intuitive and the alignment readily ties into the future development.
3. This option provides future flexibility to integrate the east-west routing into Oxpens masterplan as their plot design come forward at a later stage. The physical severance in the development's meadows area is significantly reduced compared to other options, with the shortest section of approach ramp crossing the meadow. Therefore, the footprint of the proposal is also reduced (total 556sqm).
4. The connection with the City Centre is the shortest possible (total 235m), providing a direct route to this destination.
5. A quieter connection to train station is provided with pedestrians able to move through the development and cyclists able to head to Oxpens Road to reach the station.
6. The total area of superstructure and approaches for this option is 721sqm. (including western ramp)
7. This alignment lessens the environmental impact of the crossing, reducing the tree loss to 4 at the north bank and 7 at the south bank.

- > Connection to city centre
- > Connection to train station
- > Connection to towpath
- > Connection to Osney Mead
- > Connection to Grandpont
- >> Prioritised connection



Plan View Option 3

Alignment Development Phase A

2.5 Alignment Assessment | Option 3

Assessment Criteria
Option 3

Legibility of the crossing ✓

Positive user experience ✓

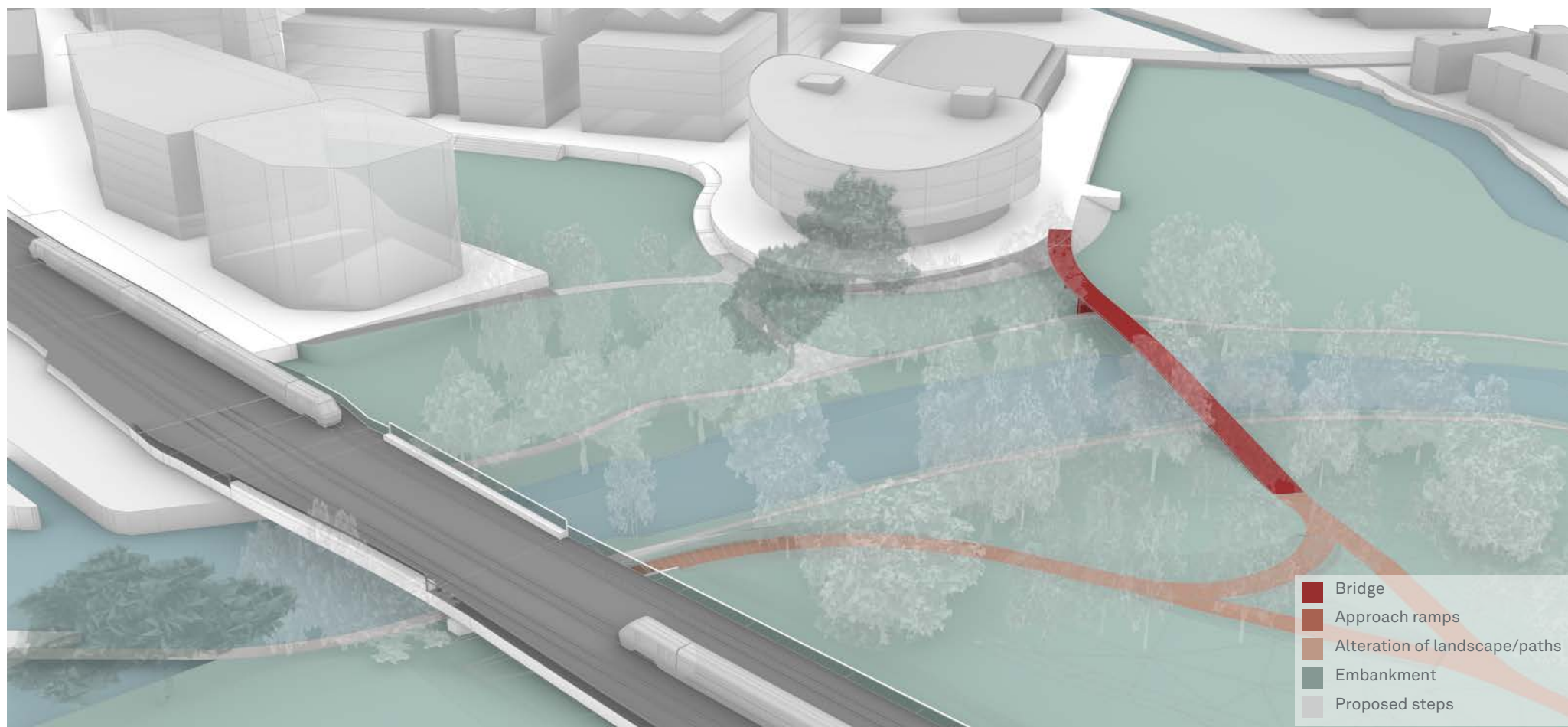
Lessen the severance
of meadows !

Limit footprint on floodplain ✓ 556sqm

Provides a direct route to
the City Centre for all users ✓ 235mProvides a direct route to
the train station for all users ! 315m

Indicative Structural Area ! 721sqm

Limit tree loss on both banks ✓ 11

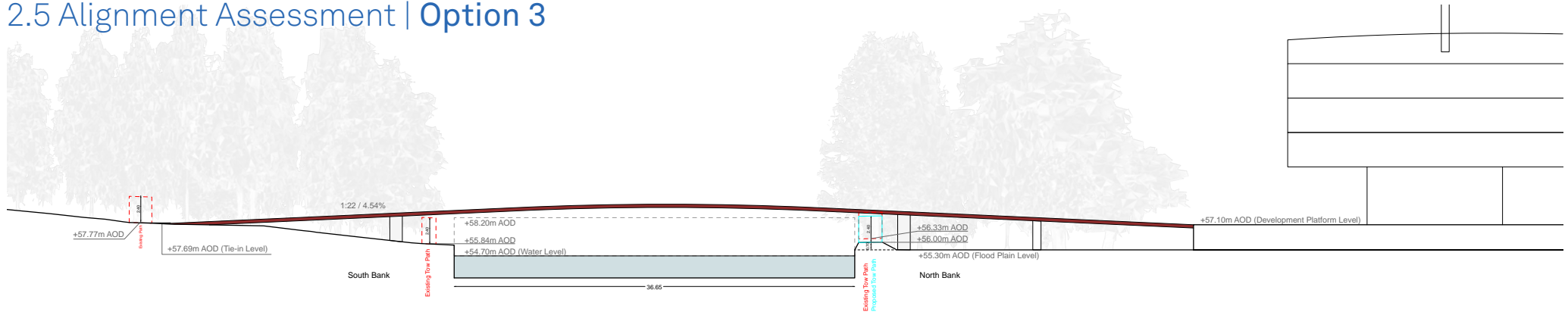


- Bridge
- Approach ramps
- Alteration of landscape/paths
- Embankment
- Proposed steps

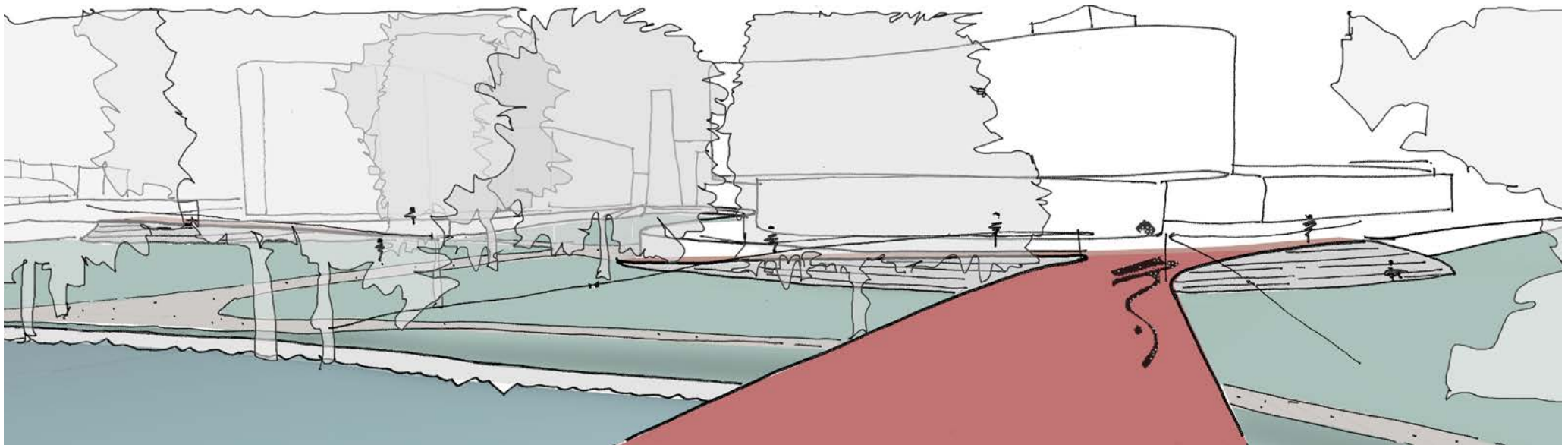
Overview Option 3

Alignment Development Phase A

2.5 Alignment Assessment | Option 3



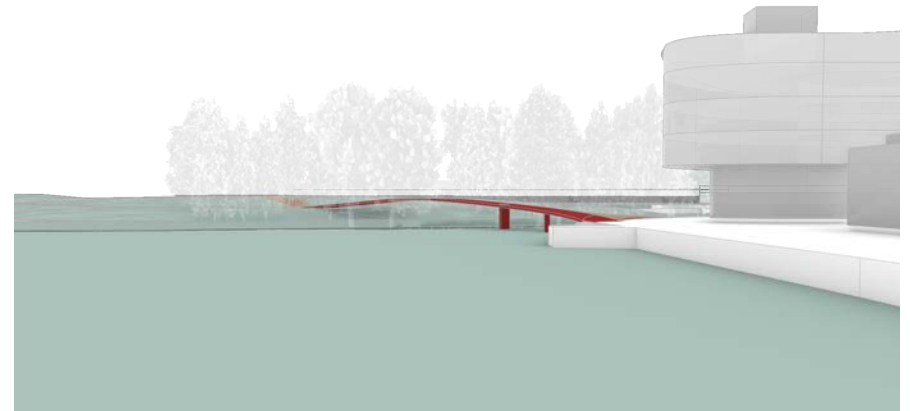
Section View Option 3



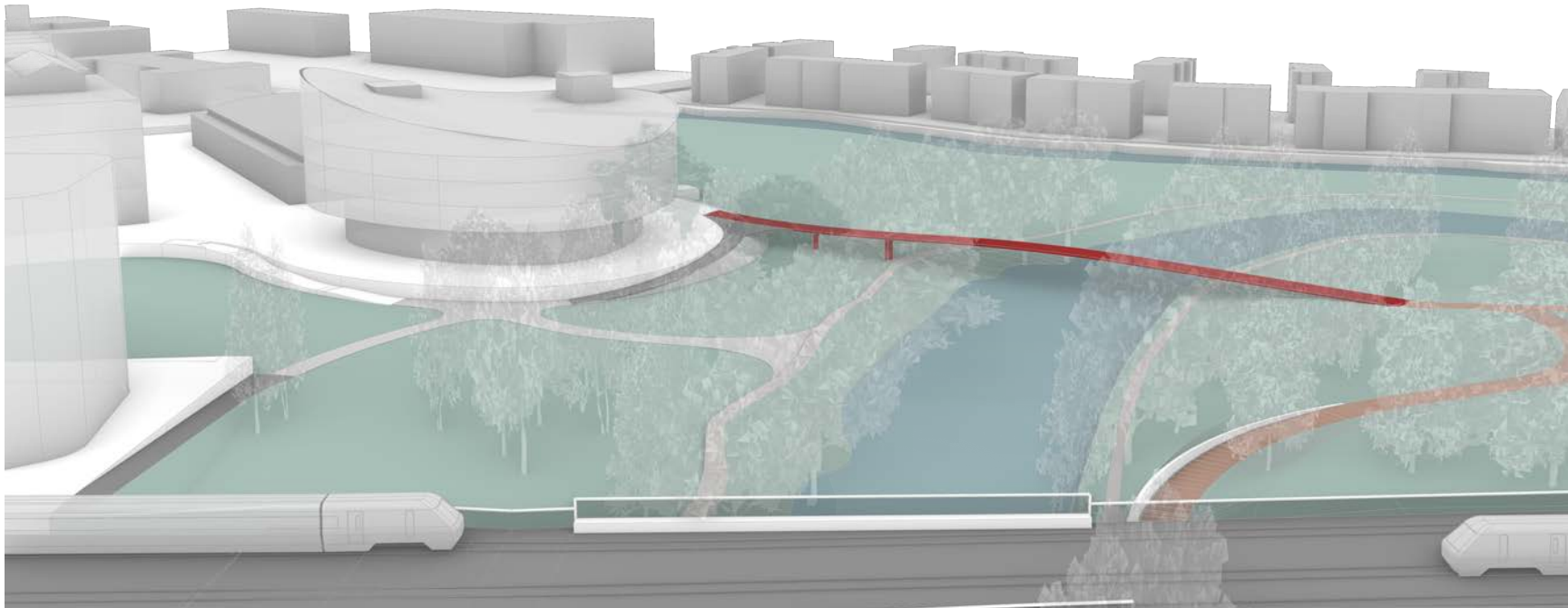
View from Deck Option 3

Alignment Development Phase A

2.5 Alignment Assessment | Option 3



View from Oxpens Road looking South Option 3



Overview from West Option 3

2.5 Alignment Assessment | Option 3

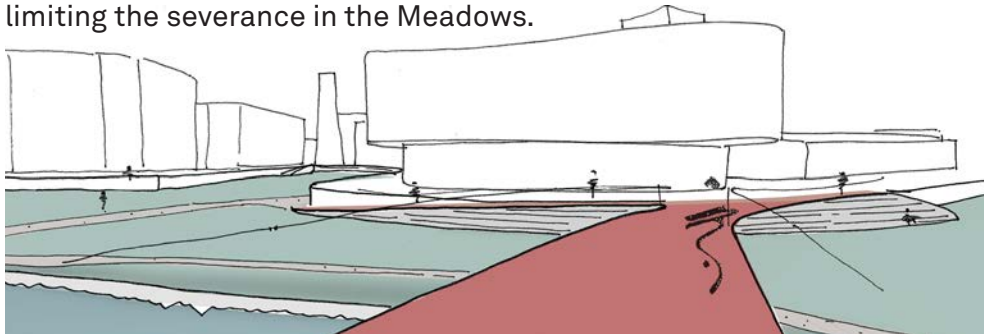
In our initial consultation with planners, as well as during an earlier submission made by the OxWED team, the issue of ‘severance’ was raised as a concern. This referred to the potential for the bridge’s northern approach to negatively impact the meadows, given that routes would have to pass underneath or around the bridge’s structure.

The layout of our proposed Option 3 is radically different to the previous alignment in this location. Moreover, the team is committed to address this issue in the following stage of the project.

Severance North/South

Whilst the primary issue of severance revolves around east/west connectivity, the north/south severance should also be considered. Severance often occurs in areas of low use, which appear less desirable due to their lack of activity. The addition of a pedestrian and cycle route on the eastern edge of the Oxpens development could help to activate the perimeter of it, reducing the severance between the Meadows and the centre of the masterplan. The integration of the ramp into the existing edge of the east platform helps to limit the footprint on the Meadows and to reduce the severance in this direction.

The relationship with the river will need to be carefully addressed to ensure it is respectful and positive. The design of elements such as the deck width, pier shaping, and plan arrangement will play a key role in limiting the severance in the Meadows.



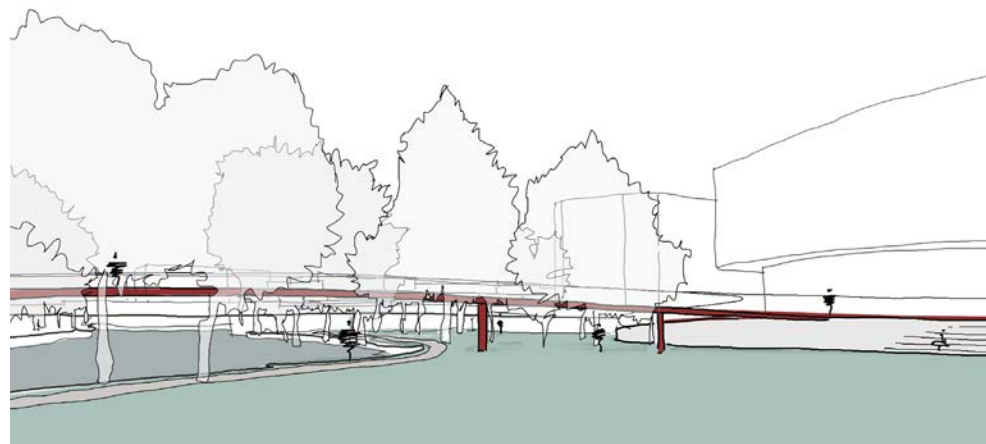
View from Deck Option 3 updated

Severance East/West

The image below shows how the design will need to pay careful consideration to the issue of severance as it crosses over the Meadows. Whilst previous designs have shown quite significant ramps in this area which can clutter the view and limit the visibility of the riverside routes, our intent is to keep the structure to an absolute minimum.

Whilst the full response to this challenge will be outlined in the next stage of design, our working assumption is that the approach span will need to be as transparent as possible, both in its deck structure, piers, and parapet. It will also need to make smooth transitions to the main span and raised platform level of the development. Headroom or ‘clearance’ below the deck is also a key issue. The intent will be to provide sufficient clearance under the bridge to allow for a comfortable flow of users in the east/west direction, whilst maintaining accessible gradients on the bridge itself.

Additionally, a thoughtful approach to the detail design of the bridge soffit will become key. In future stages, imagery will focus on effectively communicating the positive aesthetic value that the new crossing will add to the wider area.



Indicative View from the Meadows Option 3 updated

Alignment Development Phase A

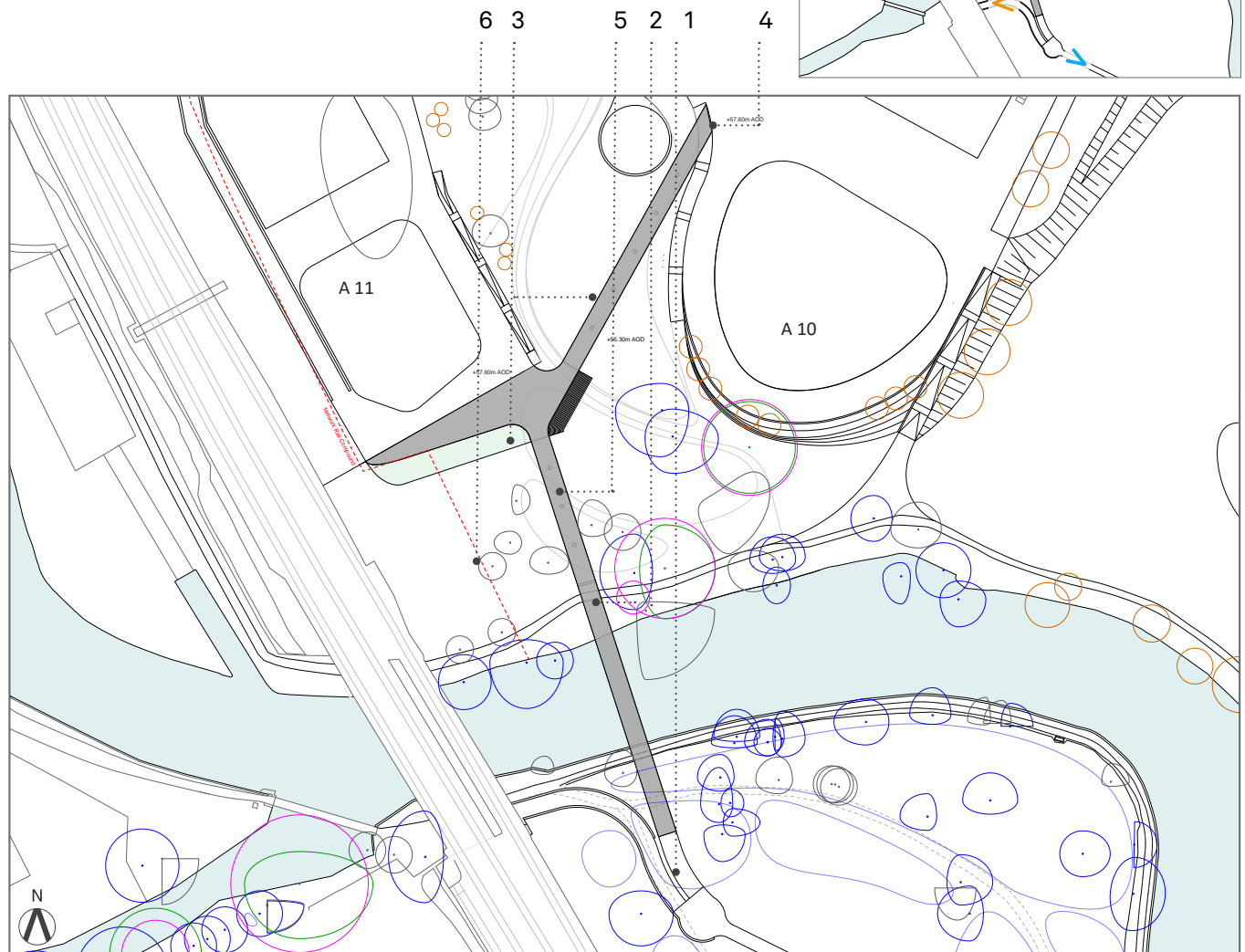
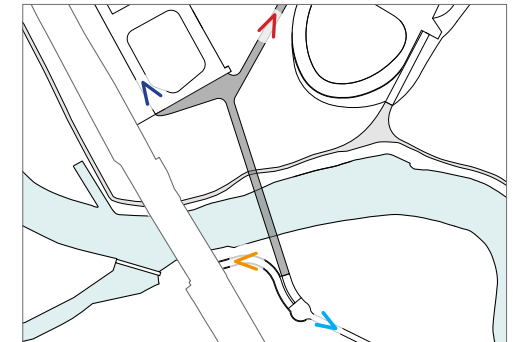
2.6 Alignment Assessment | Option 4

Splitting the approach structure to connect with the upper level of the development on both the east and west sides of the amphitheatre. The eastern approach ramp would cross the theatre area at 2m above ground level, and so would not provide sufficient headroom for users to safely pass underneath.

The option also does not provide a direct route down to the north bank of the river.

1. The approach path at the south fails to provide a smooth and intuitive landing at this end, resulting in a lack of legibility for this alignment. The approach ramp will dominate the project appearance and will compromise the legibility of the main crossing over the river.
2. The user experience is diminished by the landing at the south end and also as users are not able to connect directly with the river front at the north bank.
3. The approach ramp creates a physical and visual severance in the meadows, cutting across the new development views and interfering with the connection with the river. The eastern approach ramp provides only a headroom of 2m. If an embankment solution is needed, the resulting footprint will be very significant (total 819sqm). What may not be technically possible to provide flood compensation volume for.
4. It provides a connection with the NE end heading to the City Centre and via a route above flood event.
5. The total area of superstructure and approaches for this option is 956sqm.
6. Loss of trees at the north bank is around 13 and to the south bank is around 7.

- > Connection to city centre
- > Connection to train station
- > Connection to towpath
- > Connection to Osney Mead
- > Connection to Grandpont
- >> Prioritised connection



Plan View Option 4

Alignment Development Phase A

2.6 Alignment Assessment | Option 4

Assessment Criteria
Option 4

Legibility of the crossing !

Positive user experience !

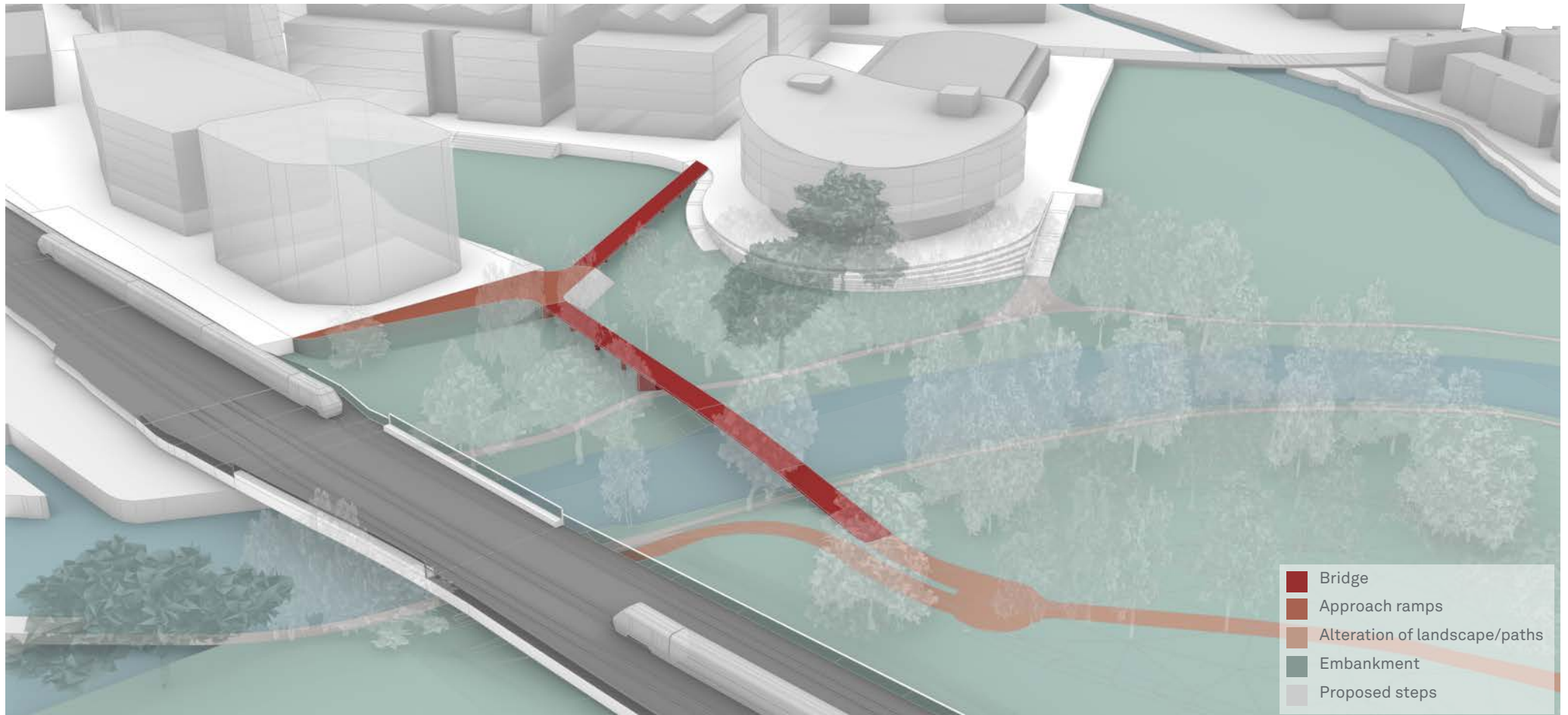
Lessen the severance
of meadows ✗

Limit footprint on floodplain ! 819sqm

Provides a direct route to
the City Centre for all users ✓ 243mProvides a direct route to
the train station for all users ✓ 208m

Indicative Structural Area ✗ 956sqm

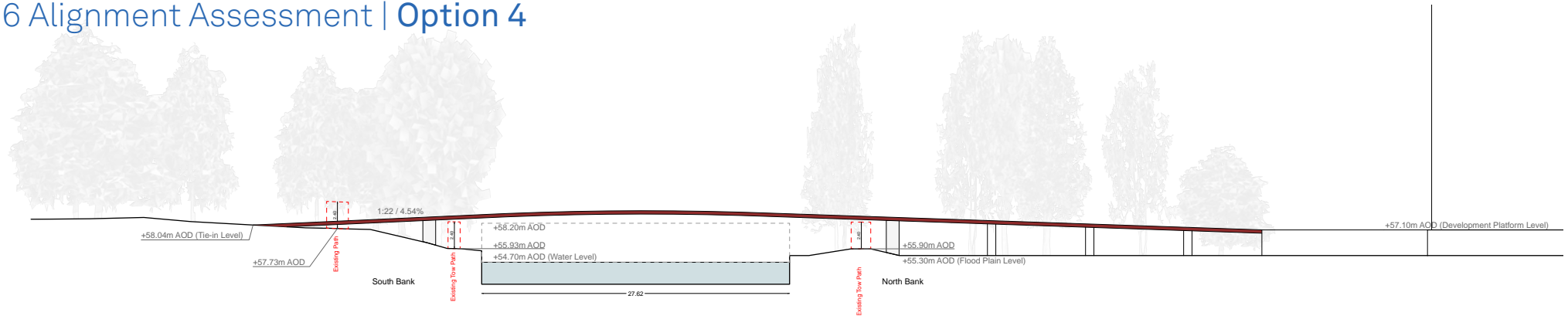
Limit tree loss on both banks ! 20



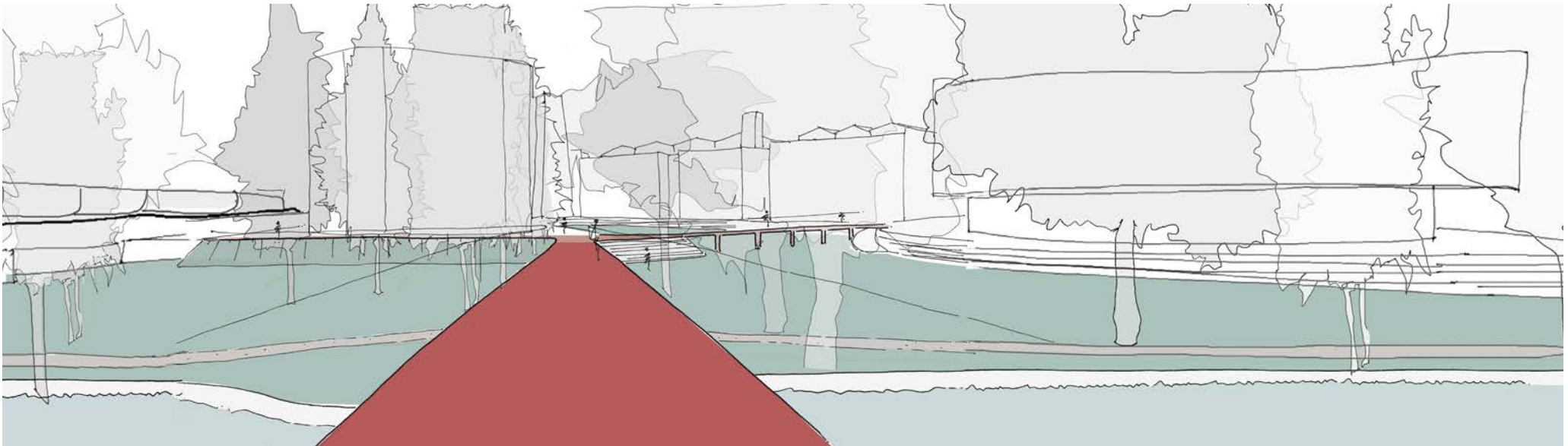
Overview Option 4

Alignment Development Phase A

2.6 Alignment Assessment | Option 4



Section View Option 4



View from Deck Option 4

Alignment Development Phase A

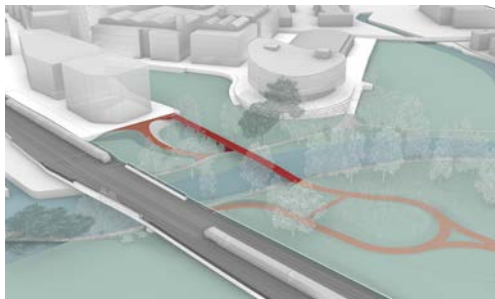
2.7 Alignment Assessment | Summary

Initial Conclusions :

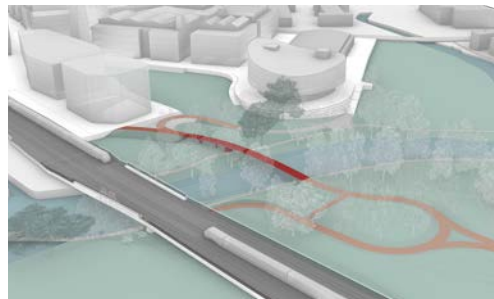
This summary reflects how Option 3 is the alternative that best respond to the assessment criterias studied at this phase of the alignment development.

		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
	Legibility of the crossing	!	!	✓	!
	Positive user experience	!	✓	✓	!
	Lessen the severance of meadows	✗	✗	!	✗
Footprint area	Limit footprint on floodplain	! 702 sqm	! 815 sqm	✓ 556 sqm	! 819 sqm
Length of connection	Provides a direct route to city centre for all users	✗ 440m	✗ 390m	✓ 235m	✓ 243m
Length of connection	Provides a direct route to train station for all users	✓ 250m	✓ 270m	! 315m	✓ 208m
Total Area (superstructure + approaches)	Indicative Structural Area	✓ 685 sqm	✓ 609 sqm	! 721 sqm	✗ 956 sqm
Total tree loss	Limit tree loss on both banks	! 25	! 26	✓ 11	! 20

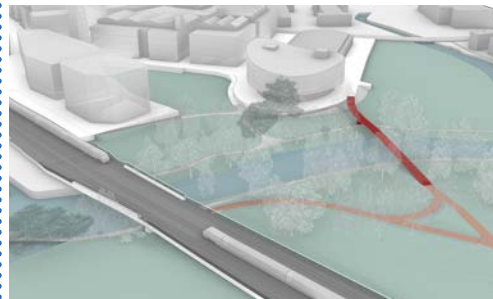
Option 1



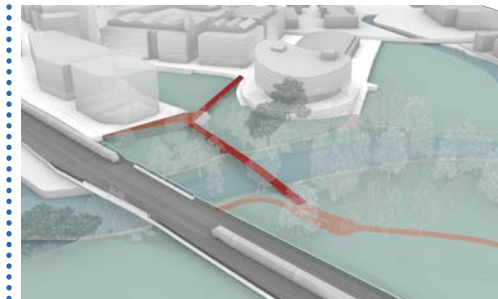
Option 2



Option 3



Option 4



03 | Alignment Development Phase B

Following the collaboration with the OxWED team, the initial movement strategy developed to allow more extensive cycling throughout the Oxpens site. This required the re-assessment of the key desire lines into and around the development. This section outlines the further options which have been developed and assessed, including a proposal from OxWED themselves.

3.1 Revised Movement Strategy

Proposal Movement Plan for Pedestrian and Cyclists

As a result of the ongoing engagement with OxWED, there has been the opportunity to discuss and revisit the initial movement plan for bridge users through the Oxpens development, in order to improve connectivity in the scheme and beyond.

The diagram explores how cycle routes could be integrated into the masterplan, allowing for a more extensive shared used space and reducing the pedestrian only area to the core of the development.

It was suggested that the potential flows to the heart of Oxpens scheme and onwards, may be taken into consideration and help to define the building footprint at the ground level of the eastern platform.



-  Potential Shared used space Pedestrians + Cyclists
-  Potential flows



Diagram of Proposal for Pedestrian and Cyclist Movements



3.1 Revised Movement Strategy

Revised Pedestrian and Cyclists Connectivity

This diagram captures the revised strategy for movements within the masterplan as defined in the latest OxWED bridge proposal.

It shows a shared pedestrian and cycle area around the northeast edge of the amphitheatre to connect to the east (heading to Oxpens Road and City Centre) and to the north (heading to train station).

The masterplan also defines a no 'public' access around building A9 with no access to either the east or west side of the building for bridge users.

-  No 'public' access
-  Potential Shared used space Pedestrians + Cyclists

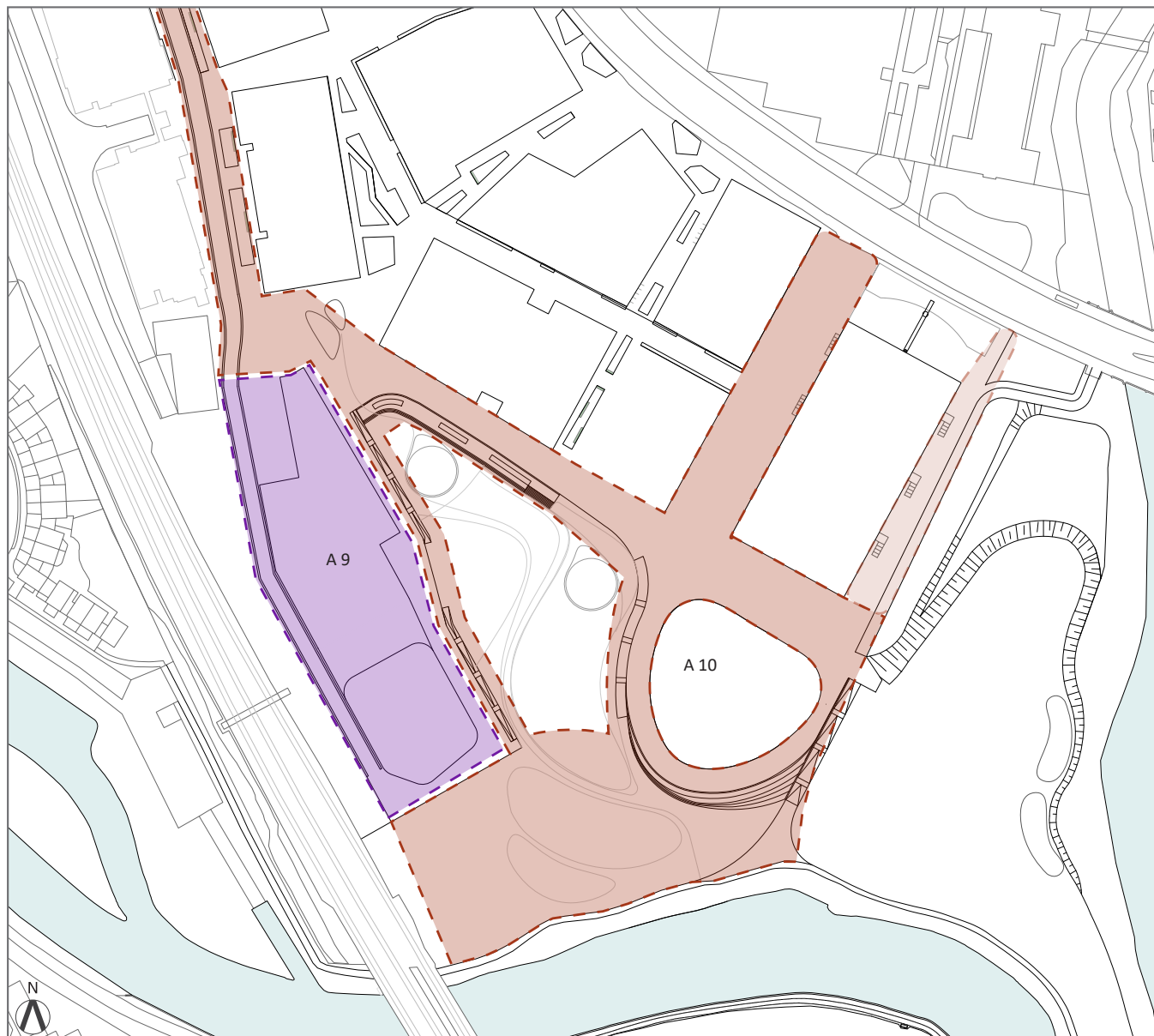


Diagram of Revised Strategy for Pedestrian and Cyclist Movements

Alignment Development Phase B

3.2 OxWED Bridge Proposal

The OxWED team reviewed their pedestrian and cycling movement strategy, adjusting the shape of the eastern and western development platform, proposing an option which is shown opposite. Essentially this proposal is a refined version of the original 'Option 4' (in Phase A) and as such shares many of the same characteristics.

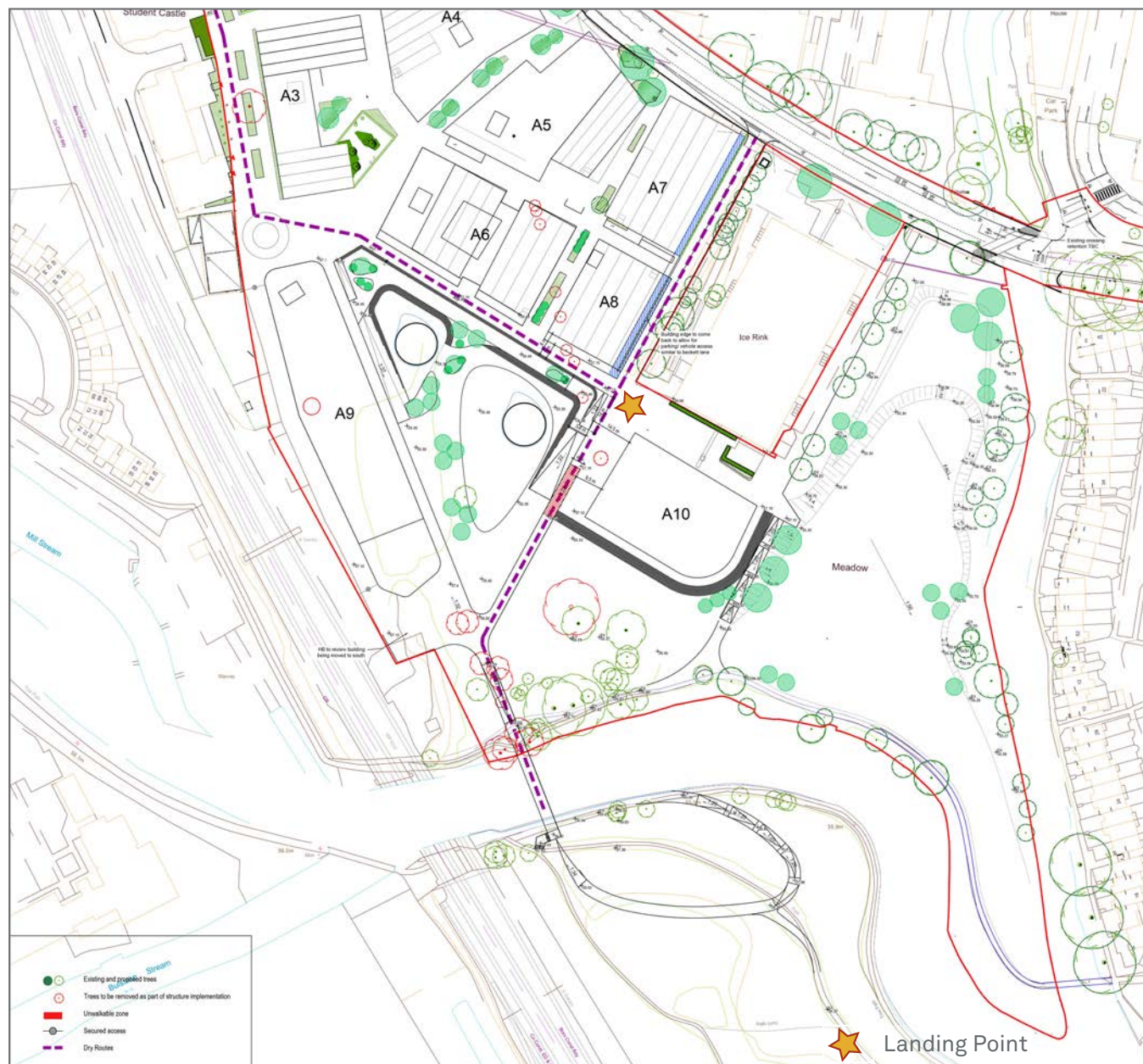
This bridge option lands first at the western high level built-up platform before another separate bridge structure continues on above the amphitheatre floodplain to the eastern development platform.

The key feature of this proposal is the eventual northern landing point to the west of building A10 and the acceptance of cyclists through the centre part of the development.

The main aspects of this option regarding the following themes are:

Connectivity

- The proposed alignment serves the development but does create an unnecessarily lengthy route for users to reach the City Centre.
- The Oxpens masterplan is still developing and discussions with OxWED have suggested that potentially building A9 might not be publicly accessible on its east facing facade and the western facade may become a servicing route. Without this connectivity, all users are directed towards the same landing point at building A10, forcing those headed towards the train station to travel along two side of a triangle. A simpler and more efficient alignment would be to cross directly from the river span to the west side of building A10.



Plan OxWED Bridge Proposal (and Revised Movement Strategy)

3.2 OxWED Bridge Proposal

- The proposal crosses the meadows at height and does not provide any direct connection with the meadows or towpath.
- The proposal pushes the alignment of the river span west, worsening the connectivity aims at the south bank. The path approach for the option does not provide a smooth and intuitive bridge landing at the south end, compromising the legibility of the whole solution and diminishing the user experience.

Placemaking

- This option will cut across views between the amphitheatre and the river, creating an important visual and physical severance. The openness of this connection was a characteristic which we had originally understood to be of significant importance to the masterplan concept.
- Locating the bridge to the western edge of the meadow would result in the bridge not being as well over-looked as per other alignment options creating a greater potential for anti-social behaviour.

- The proposal suggests two structures of different nature: the crossing over the river and approach ramp to west platform and the high-level link at the heart of the development. These two may conflict visually, specially if they end up being designed by different teams.

Deliverability

- The route relies on the Oxpens development platform construction being completed at the same time as the bridge is completed and opened to the public.
- There is a concern about routing through a development site and the ability to use the path at all times particularly ability to bridge to A10 in the short term. Temporary routes may need to be created until the Oxpens development is built out.

Cost of delivery

- A longer structure (providing an additional bridge) will increase the overall cost of the new structure, to a point that this option is not affordable.

Sustainability

- Landing at the Oxpens western platform means it is needed an additional structure to land east. The indicative structural area for this option is 30% greater than any other alignment option explored, increasing the carbon footprint of the proposal.

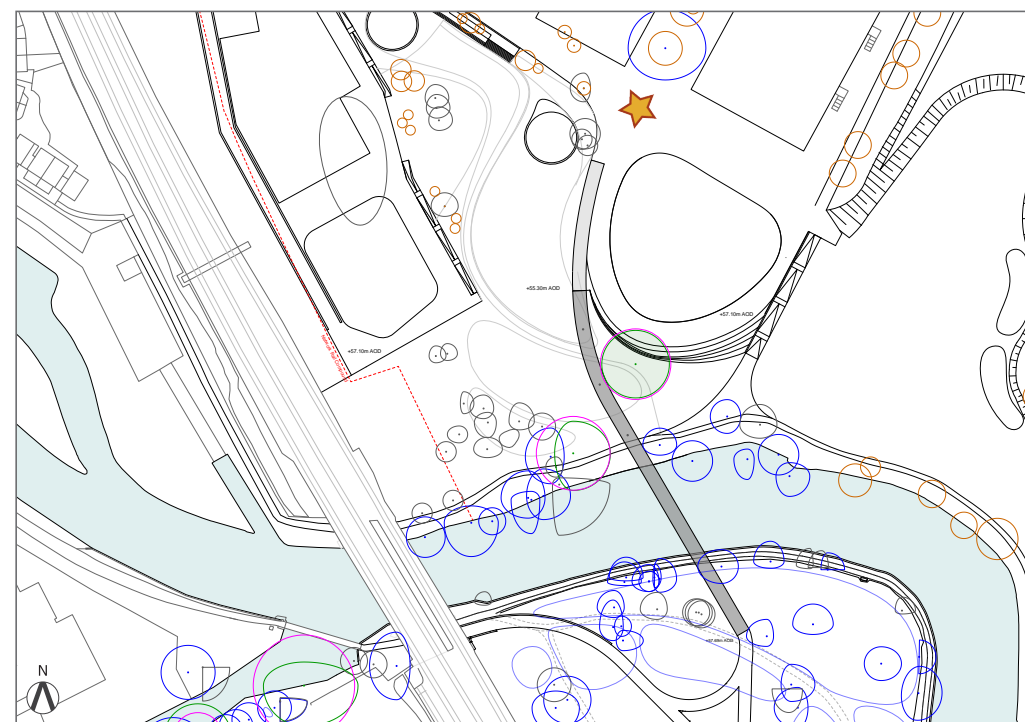
3.3 Bridge Alignment Option 5

The design team recognised the potential of the key feature of OxWED proposal; the new landing point for all users to the west of building A10 at the eastern high-level development platform.

It was also acknowledged the advantage that the new landing point of facilitating additional movements through the new development when directing users to the main destinations; the City Centre and train station.

In response to this, a further option has been considered – Option 5. This new option lands all users into the heart of the development, contributing to the activation of the scheme whilst also allowing for good onward connectivity.

In the following page, Option 5 alignment will be assessed against the defined design principles, as we did with previous options in phase A.



Option 5

Alignment Development Phase B

3.4 Alignment Assessment | Option 5

Connecting with the landing point to the west of building A10, at the eastern platform of the new development. Allowing for onward connectivity to the west of the ice rink and north of the amphitheatre.

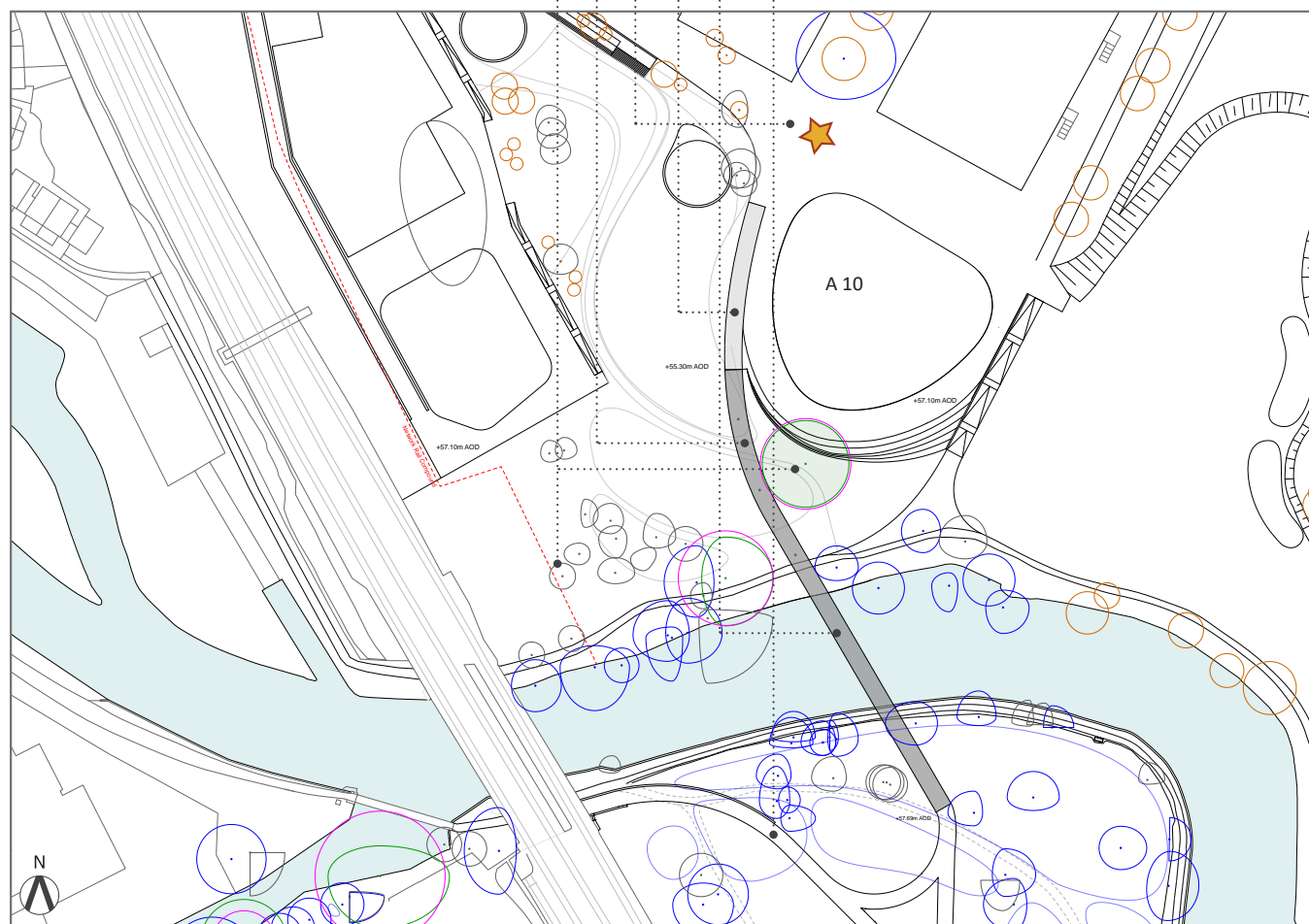
The proposal seeks to direct all users to the heart of the development, contributing to the activation of the scheme.

It also acknowledges the value of the frontage of building A10 and its ground floor.

1. The design of the connecting path at the south bank provides a smoother and more intuitive link to the bridge, creating clear legibility of the alignment at this end. This is also true at the north bank, with a legible route through to the city centre and the station.
2. The user experience at this crossing is positive as the routes are intuitive and the alignment readily ties into the future development.
3. The approach ramps can be partially integrated into the east development's platform, so the physical severance in the meadows is significantly reduced compared to other options. Therefore, the footprint of the proposal is quite reduced (total 190 sqm).
4. The connection with the City Centre and train station is relatively short, providing a direct route to this destination for all users (length 278m).
5. The total area of superstructure and approaches for this option is 649 sqm.
6. This alignment lessens the environmental impact of the crossing, reducing the tree loss at both banks to 13. The alignment avoids the loss of the class A Ash tree T10.

Length of the connection is measured to connect point A to B (landing point), as indicated in the connection diagram.

- > Connection to city centre
- > Connection to train station
- > Connection to towpath
- > Connection to Osney Mead
- > Connection to Grandpont
- >> Prioritised connection



Plan View Option 5

Alignment Development Phase B

3.4 Alignment Assessment | Option 5

Assessment Criteria
Option 5

Legibility of the crossing !

Positive user experience ✓

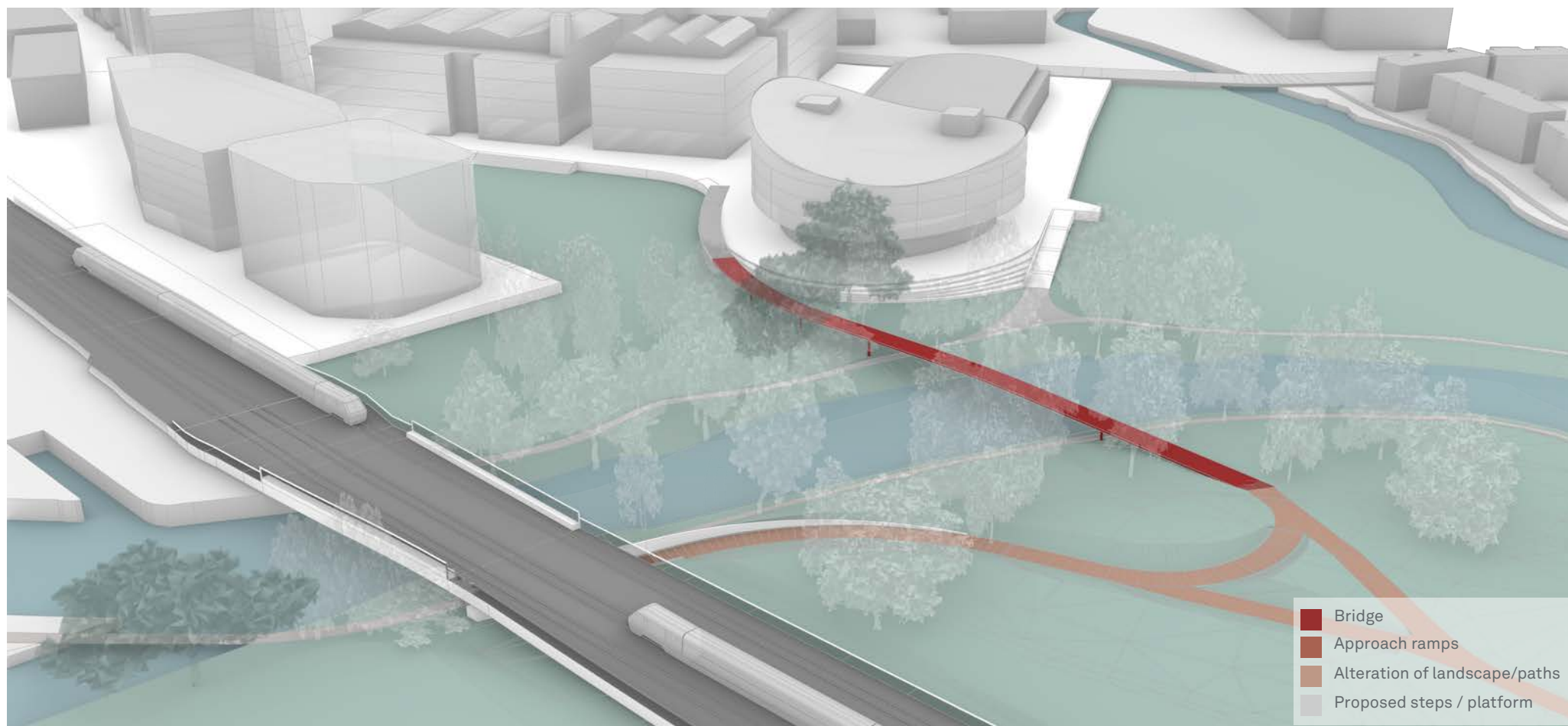
Lessen the severance
of meadows !

Limit footprint on floodplain ✓ 190sqm

Provides a direct route to
the City Centre for all users ✓ 278mProvides a direct route to
the train station for all users ✓ 278m

Indicative Structural Area ✓ 649sqm

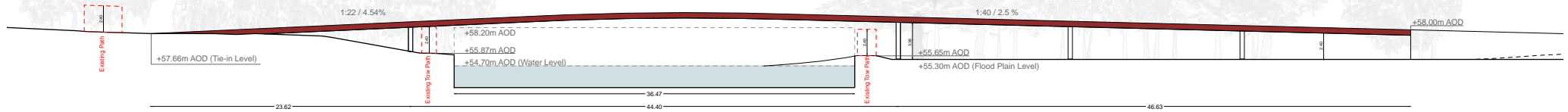
Limit tree loss on both banks ✓ 13



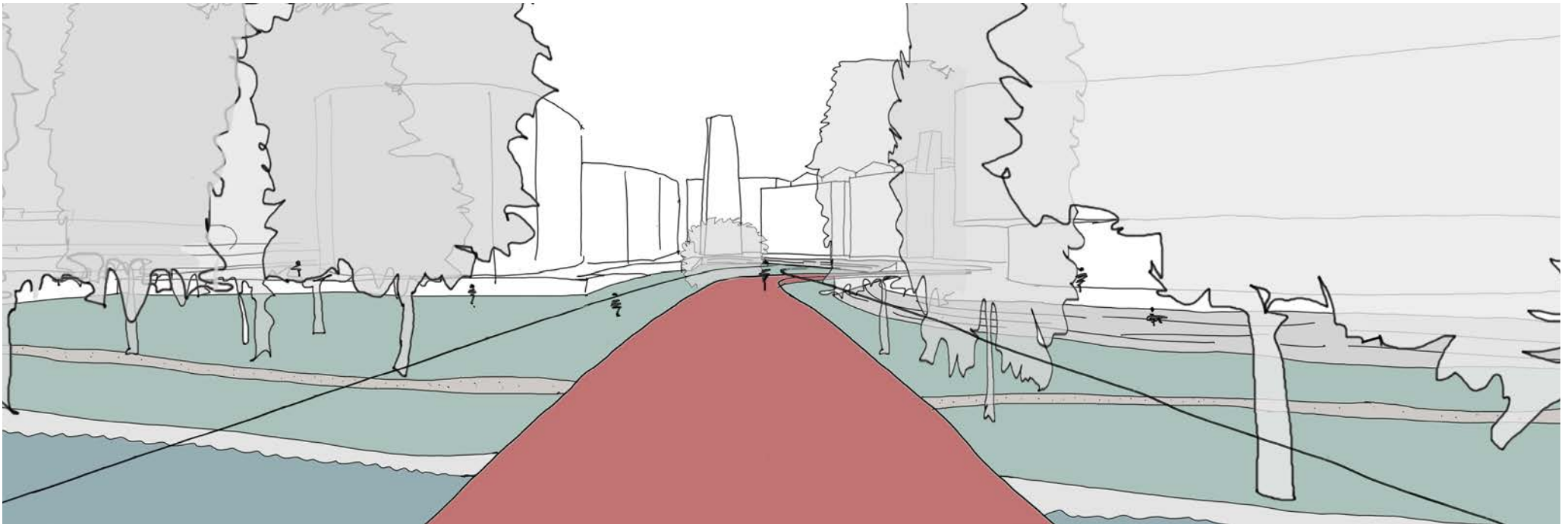
Overview Option 5

Alignment Development Phase B

3.4 Alignment Assessment | Option 5



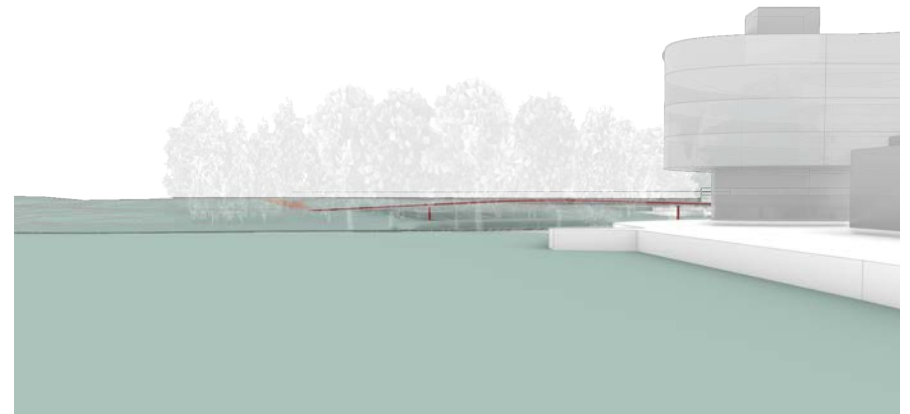
Long Section Option 5



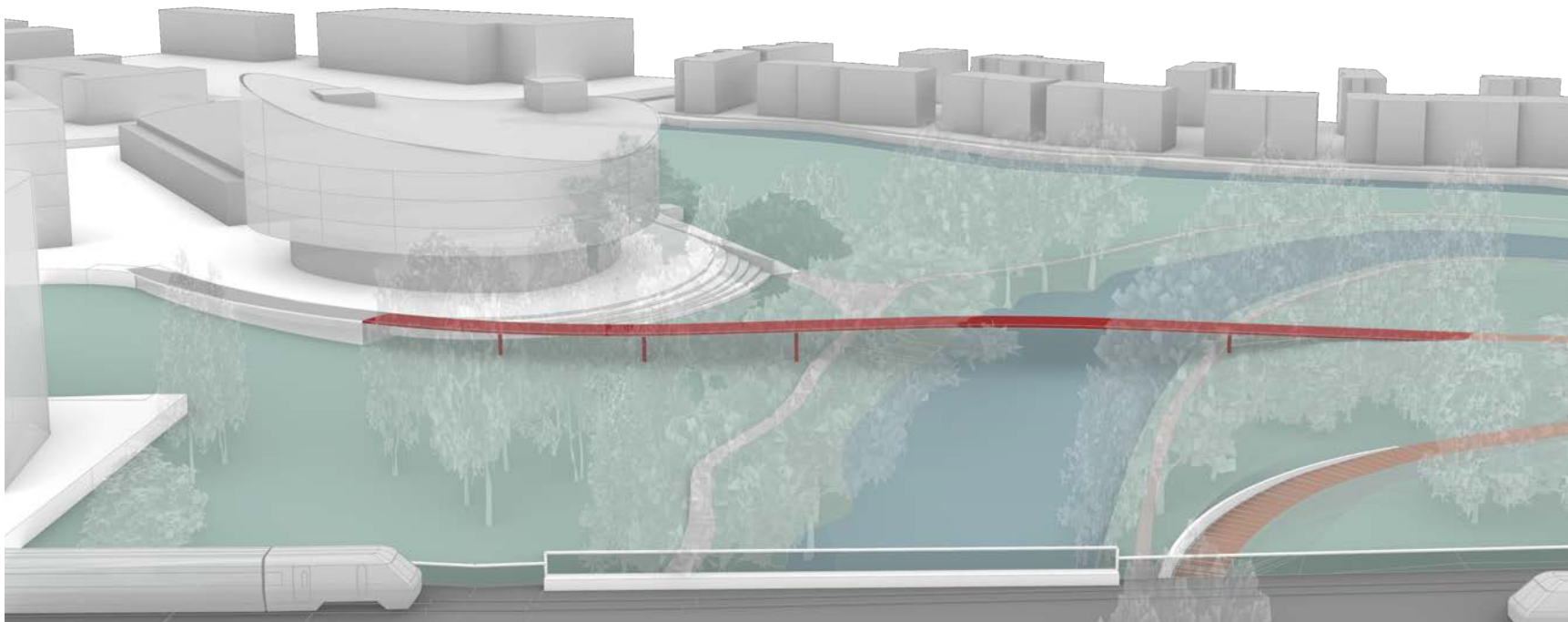
View from Deck Option 5 - looking north towards amphitheatre

Alignment Development Phase B

3.4 Alignment Assessment | Option 5



View from Oxpens Road looking South Option 5



Overview from West Option 5

04 | Recommendations

This final section outlines the two options which best address the Bridge Aspirations. Option 3 is the 'preferred' solution, with Option 5 being an 'alternative'. The report closes with a summary of the the Next Steps to work through during RIBA Stage 3.

Recommendations

4.1 Assessment Summary | Option 3 (updated)

Assessment Criteria
Option 3 updated

Legibility of the crossing

Positive user experience

✓

✓

Lessen the severance of meadows

Limit footprint on floodplain

!

✓

112sqm (+207)

Provides a direct route to the City Centre for all users

Provides a direct route to the train station for all users

✓

✓

236m

300m

Indicative Structural Area

Limit tree loss on both banks

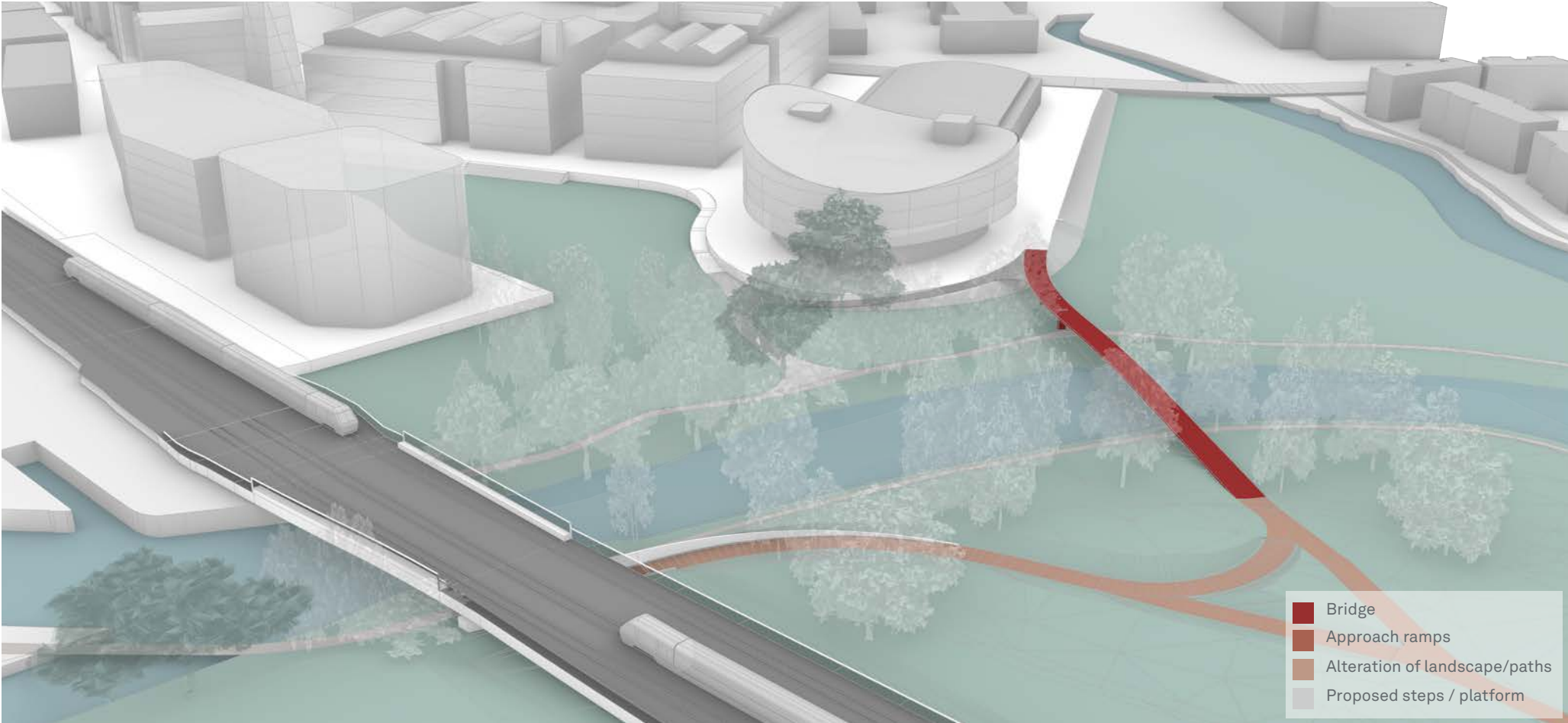
✓

✓

414sqm (+170)

11

The summary of this updated option is added for two reasons; to highlight the length of the connection to the new landing point which provides a direct route to both destinations, and the removal of the most westerly ramp what reduces the total indicative bridge structural area (+potential ramp to ground) and bridge footprint on the floodplain (+potential ramp to ground).





Overview Option 3 updated


Recommendations


4.1 Assessment Summary | Option 5


Assessment Criteria
Option 5


Legibility of the crossing 


Positive user experience 


Lessen the severance of meadows 

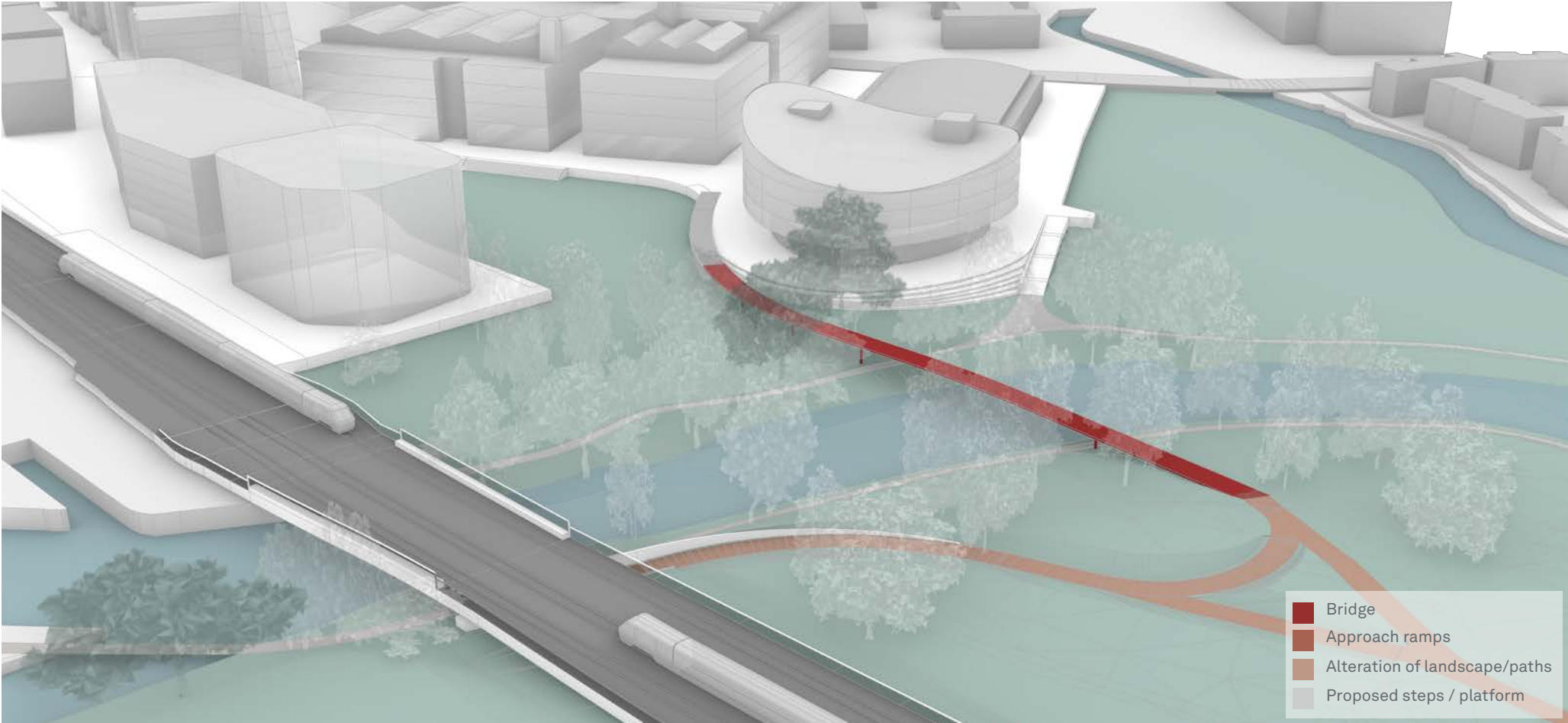
Limit footprint on floodplain  190sqm

Provides a direct route to the City Centre for all users  278m

Provides a direct route to the train station for all users  278m

Indicative Structural Area  649sqm

Limit tree loss on both banks  13



Overview Option 5

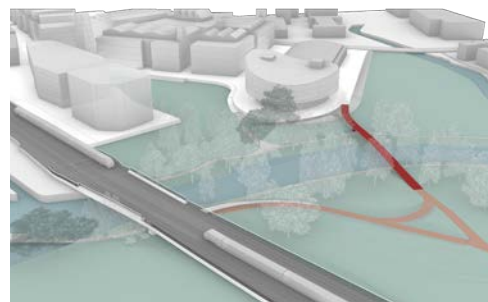
Recommendations

4.1 Assessment Summary | Option 3 vs. 5

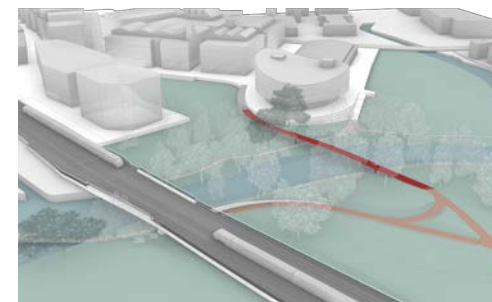
		Option 3 (updated)		Option 5	
	Legibility of the crossing	✓		!	
	Positive user experience	✓		✓	
	Lessen the severance of meadows	!		!	
Footprint area	Limit footprint on floodplain	bridge (+potential ramp) ✓	112sqm (+207sqm)	✓	190 sqm
Length of connection	Provides a direct route to city centre for all users	✓	236m	✓	278m
Length of connection	Provides a direct route to train station for all users	✓	300m	✓	278m
Total Area (superstructure + approaches)	Indicative Structural Area	bridge (+potential ramp) ✓	414 sqm (+170sqm)	✓	649 sqm
Total tree loss	Limit tree loss on both banks	✓	11	✓	13

Note: dimensions for option 3 (updated) differentiate between the bridge structure and a potential additional ramp down to meadows ground level.

Option 3



Option 5



Recommendations

4.2 Preferred Bridge Alignment | Option 3

The final preferred bridge alignment considers the revised movement strategy for pedestrians and cyclists through the Oxpens development at the north bank. It also values that the alignment for the connecting path at the south bank provides a smooth and intuitive link to the bridge.

Therefore, the design team believes that Option 3 is the preferred alignment approach to be taken forward to the RIBA stage 3 for development.

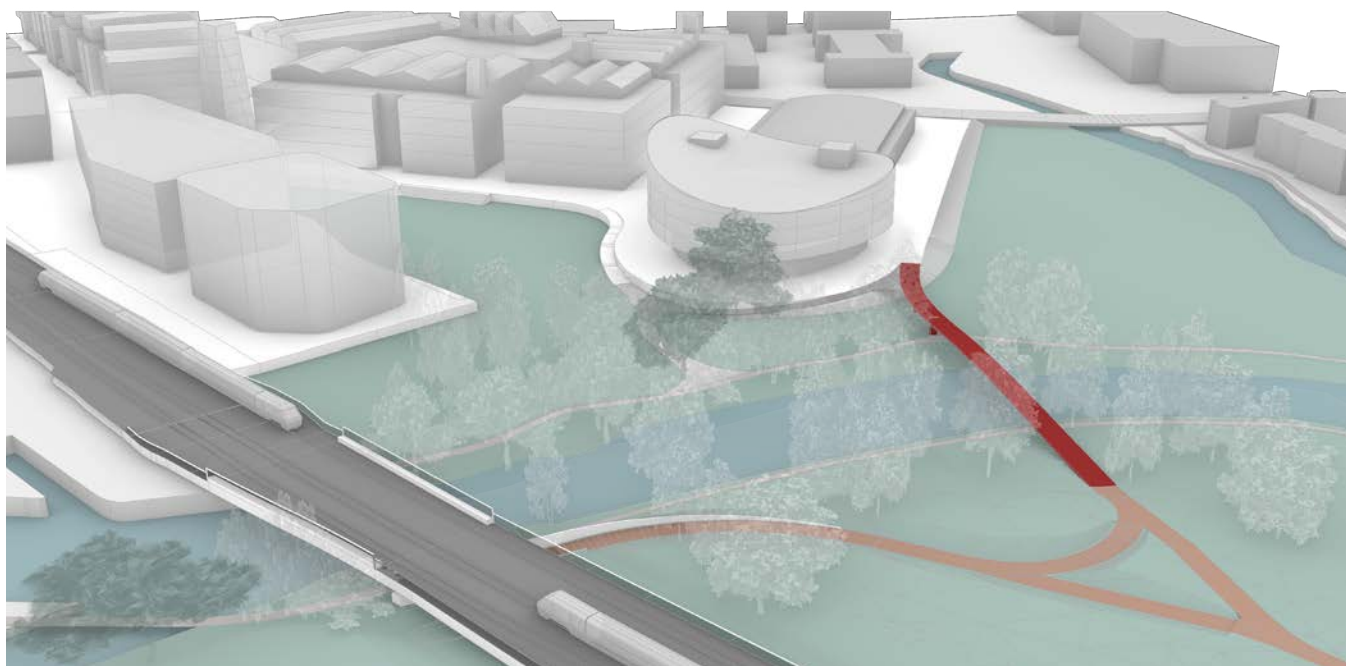
The main strengths of this option are:

Connectivity

- It provides the strongest legibility with a route that is intuitive at both ends and helps users to navigate the setting, naturally guiding them along their desire lines.
- The route allows for the quickest direct route to the City Centre. It also provides a connection to the train station for all users via the northeast edge of the amphitheatre. This results in a positive and attractive user experience.
- The crossing offers a new viewpoint over the river which allows for a balanced relationship with the Meadow and the new Oxpens development, helping to orientate users.

Placemaking

- The alignment is the most legible from Oxpens Road and the Meadow, contributing to a positive wayfinding aim and enhancing the setting.
- The bridge abutment and westerly approach ramp can be easily integrated into the new development's east platform. This will reduce the flood compensation challenges.
- The alignment contributes to keep people well over-looked from several points, promoting a natural surveillance. It will increase the user's sense of security and discourage anti-social behaviour.
- The proposal acknowledges the value of the frontage of building A10 and its interaction with the meadow and the river's edge. Option 3 provides future flexibility for OxWED to integrate the east-west routing into their masterplan as their plot design come forward at a later construction stage of the development.
- The distinct design of the new bridge and its positive addition to the setting will attract attention to the new development, adding value to it.



Overview Option 3

Recommendations

4.2 Preferred Bridge Alignment | Option 3

Deliverability

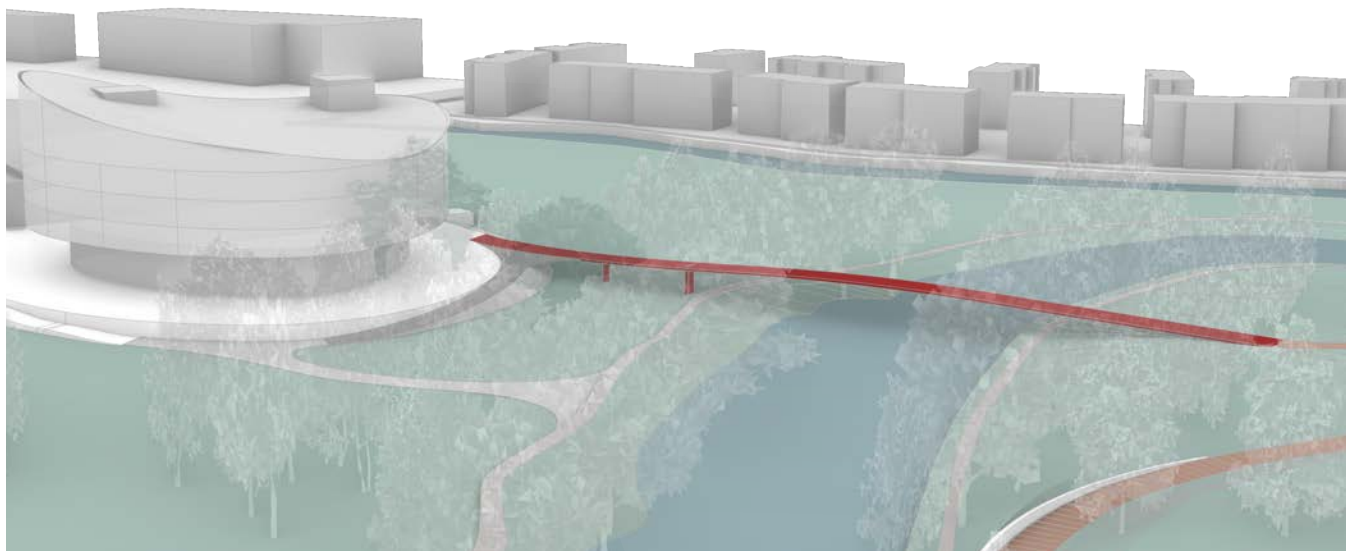
- The route does not need to rely on Oxpens development platform being created to link to in the short term, avoiding also that temporary routing needs to be created to be put into service. A connection to the existing path adjacent to the ice rink could be considered.
- The land required for the construction of Option 3 is entirely in Oxford City Council's ownership.
- This alignment provides the greatest flexibility to Oxpens development masterplan design, compared to other eastern alignment options.

Sustainability

- A shorter approach span in comparison to Option 5 (40% shorter) will contribute to reduce the whole infrastructure carbon footprint.
- The new movement strategy allows for the removal of the most westerly ramp, reducing the structural area and footprint of the proposal.

Cost of delivery

- The total length of the superstructure for option 3 is less than the other options providing cost benefits.



Overview Option 3

Recommendations

4.3 Alternative Bridge Alignment | Option 5

This option is also based on the revised movement plan for bridge users around Oxpens development. It also provides an adequate alignment for the connecting paths at the south bank.

This option would be considered acceptable for the design team in case the preferred Option 3 is not taken forward. Although the legibility of this alternative is not as successful as the preferred alignment.

The main characteristic of this option regarding the following aspects are:

Connectivity

- This alignment provides a route with good overall legibility, allowing for onwards connectivity to the west of the ice rink or north of the amphitheatre.

Placemaking

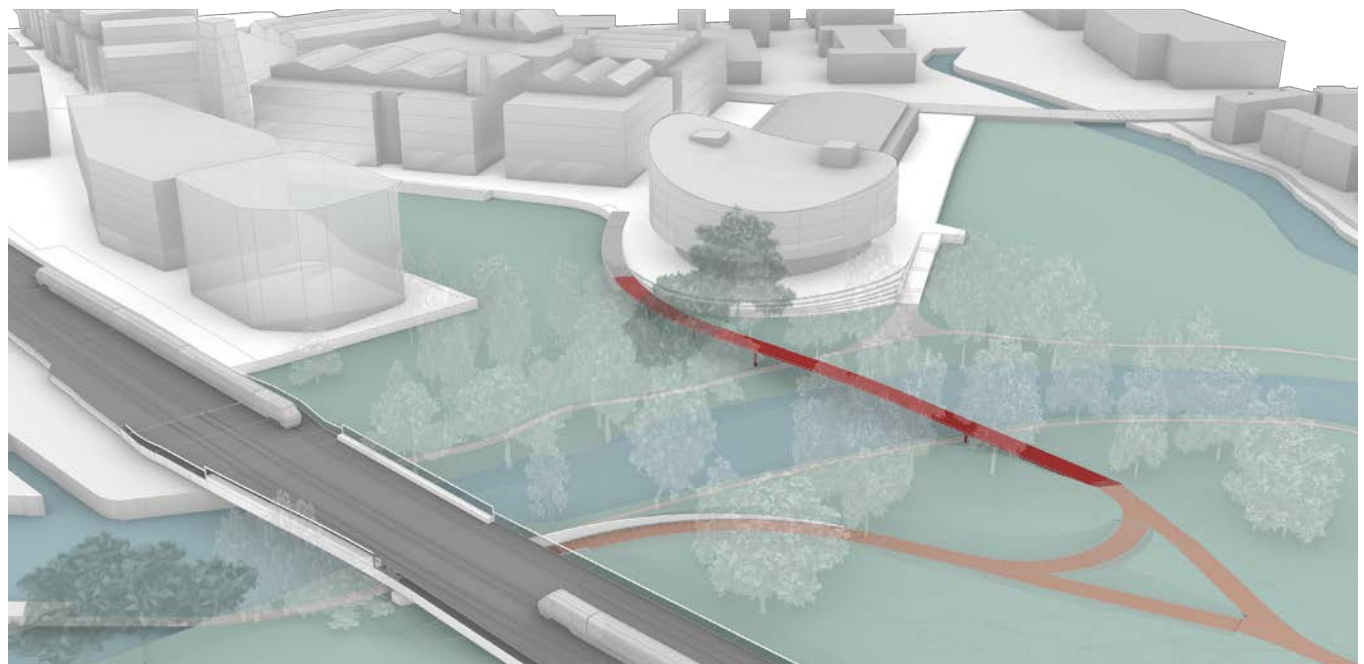
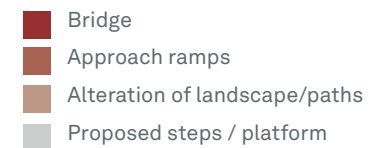
- The route is less legible than option 3, as the structure would not be as visible from Oxpens Road.
- The bridge abutment can be easily integrated into the west side of the new development's high-level east platform.
- Its location into a wider section of the Meadows may help to reduce the feeling of severance, compared with option 3.
- The Option 5 alignment facilitates additional movements through the new Oxpens development, as it directs users to the heart of the scheme.

Deliverability

- There is a concern about routing through a more central part of a development that may be under construction, in particular the ability to bridge to the west side of A10 in the short term.
- Option 5 requires the establishment of a publicly accessible route across OxWED owned land adding to the challenge and risk of delivery.
- The above two points contribute to the preference of Option 3 over Option 5. Option 3 is more deliverable than Option 5.

Sustainability and Cost of delivery

- Option 5 alignment results on a longer approach span and therefore greater indicative structural area and larger carbon footprint, and also more expensive.



Overview Option 5

4.4 Conclusions and Next Steps

Conclusions

Putting people at the heart of the design to ensure the new bridge will be an enjoyable and an attractive addition to the setting requires the selection of an alignment that is direct and intuitive, guiding users along their desire lines.

The successful solution will be respectful of the setting, and in particular the unique characteristics of the Meadows. It will limit negative impacts on the site and become integrated with the landscape.

The right solution will consider the environment by only building as much structure as is necessary, so as to reduce the environmental impact and the carbon footprint.

The selected alignment will progress to the next stage, where a carefully designed architectural form will directly address concerns such as severance and the relationship with the river, whilst maintaining a clear and legible route.

It is recognised that Option 5 is an alternative solution, however, based on the assessment of each bridge alignment option, **the design team recommends the further development of Alignment Option 3 as the alternative that best meets the key design principles regarding the bridge alignment.**

4.4 Conclusions and Next Steps

Next Steps

We recognise the outstanding architectural quality of Oxford and the unique beauty of the setting and we are committed to respect and enhance it along the design process.

The next steps for the following stage (RIBA 3) are:

- Engaging with more stakeholders to communicate the narrative of our design process and the nature of our conclusions. Also, to understand their own view, concerns and needs.
- Aiming to build on previous discussions and progress collaboratively with OxWED, searching for a mutually beneficial outcome.
- Responding to planners concerns about aspects as severance and visual appearance of the new object in the setting and how it will interact with the Meadows and the river, from the user perspective.
- Focusing on communicating the positive visual value of the proposal on the wider setting and how it addresses issues such as severance and integration.
- Setting up the principles for the Bridge Design, making sure those are achieved for the crossing solution, independently of the selected alignment.
- Developing bridge typologies that suitably respond to the specific assessment criteria and become legible and elegant addition to the site.

The aim will be to progress in more detail a single option for an unique selected alignment.

