

Oxford Central West

The outcome of a design charrette to explore a coordinated solution



The Charrette



WestonWilliamson+Partners illmanyOUNG





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The Academy of Urbanism and Oxford Civic Society brought together a group of professionals on a pro bono basis over an intensive two day period to look in a coordinated way at the development of the Oxford Central West area.



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An aerial photograph of the Oxford Central West area. The image shows a mix of urban development, including residential buildings, industrial structures, and a large green field. A river or canal flows through the middle of the scene, with many boats moored along its banks. In the foreground, there are several large, modern buildings with flat roofs. The overall scene is a dense urban environment with some undeveloped areas.

Aim of the event

Oxford Central West is one of the most extraordinary and underdeveloped parts of the city. With plans being developed for Oxpens, Osney Meads and the station there is an opportunity to take a coordinated approach to the whole area. This however is difficult for any one party to do and so became the focus for the Charrette

Past

The marshy, flood-prone land to the west of Oxford was undeveloped until quite late in its history. This provided an opportunity first for the canal and then for the railway to get close to the heart of the town. By this 1900 plan the area was a tangle of railway sidings, industry and worker housing.

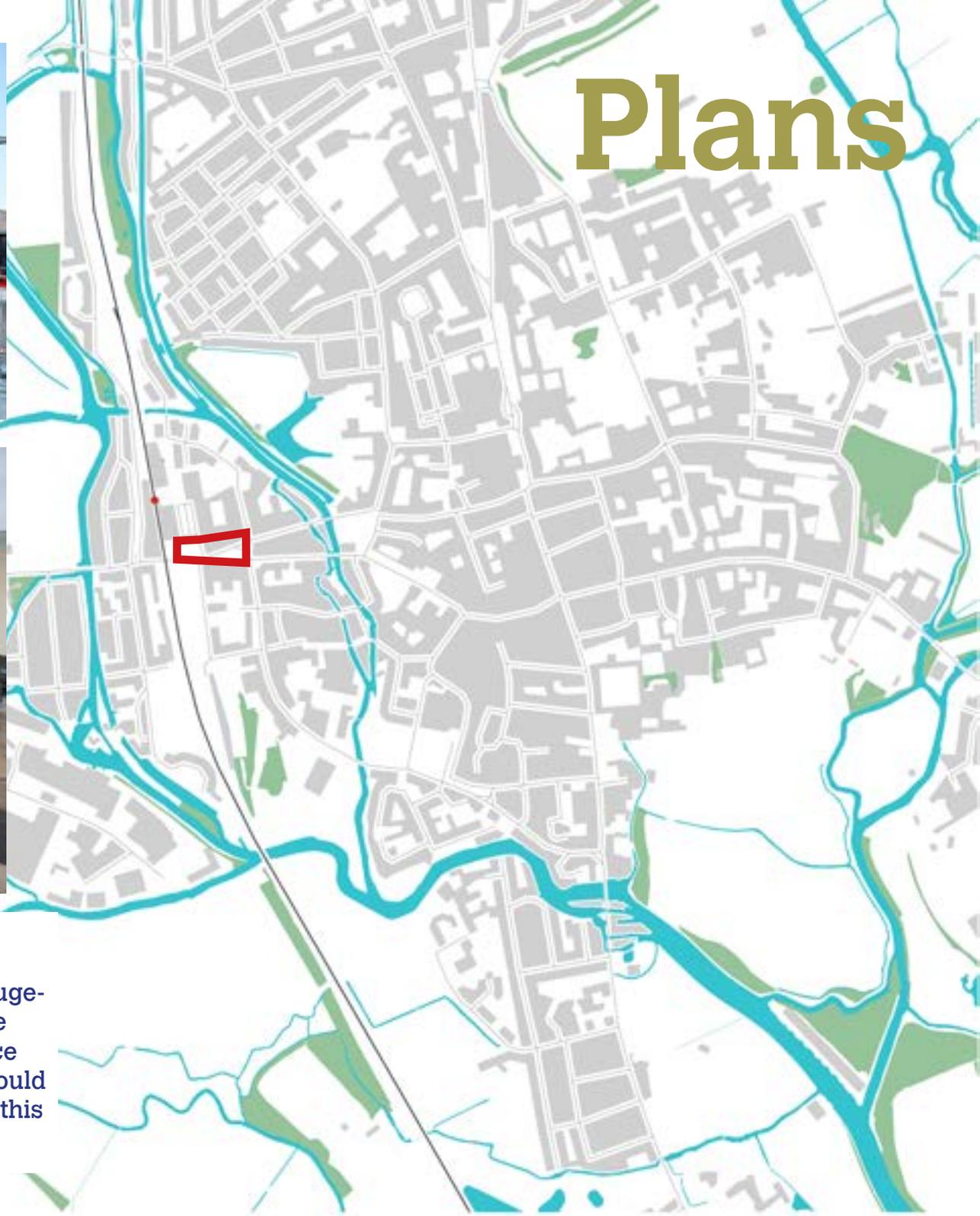


Plans



Frideswide Square

The recent improvements to Frideswide Square have hugely improved the arrival experience from the station. The large traffic circulatory system that dominated the space has been replaced with a shared space solution. This could one day include a station for the Oxford tram, although this is far from being agreed.



Plans



The Station

The Council has aspirations to redevelop Oxford Station. This is necessary to increase the capacity of the line but also to improve the arrival experience in the city. The plans show the new station with five platforms on the site of the existing station with a car park and coach station to the south of Botley Road.

Plans



Osney Mead

The University has released plans for the redevelopment of Osney Mead to transform the industrial estate into a knowledge park. This will include engineering, laboratories and a range of business space from start up accommodation to headquarter buildings. The plan also includes student and graduate housing.



Plans



Oxpens

The planning department has prepared an SPD for the Oxpens site. This proposes a mix of medium rise mixed use accommodation along Oxpens Road. The southern part of the site is in the flood plain and is retained as green space.

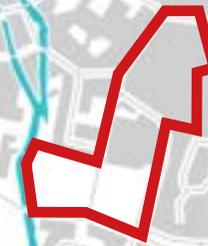


Plans



Westgate

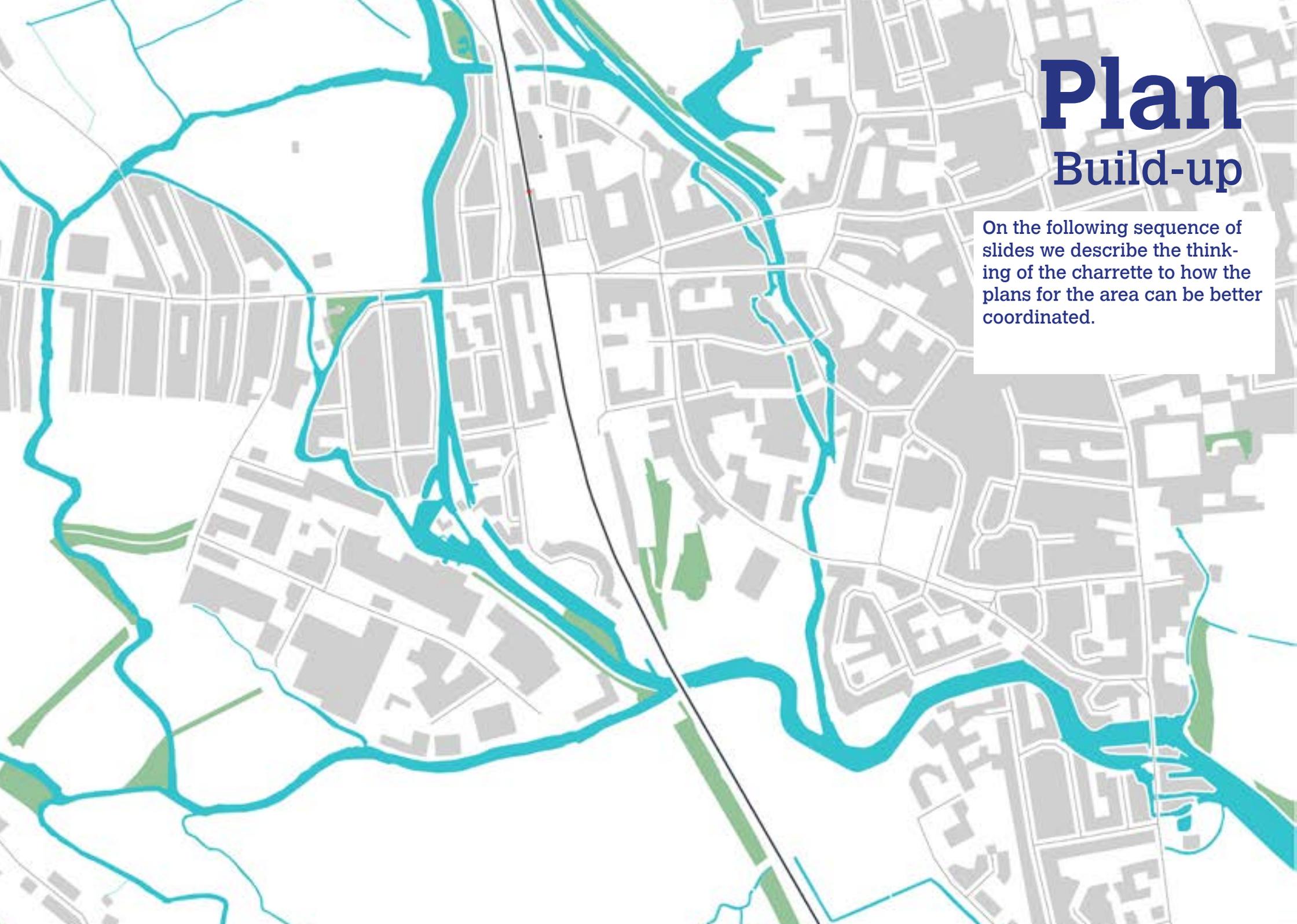
While not part of Oxford Central West, the Westgate development will have a huge impact on the area. The retail scheme by Land Securities and the Crown Estate is currently under construction. It will include 80,000m² of retail space anchored by a John Lewis Store. A basement car park will provide up to 1,1000 parking spaces.





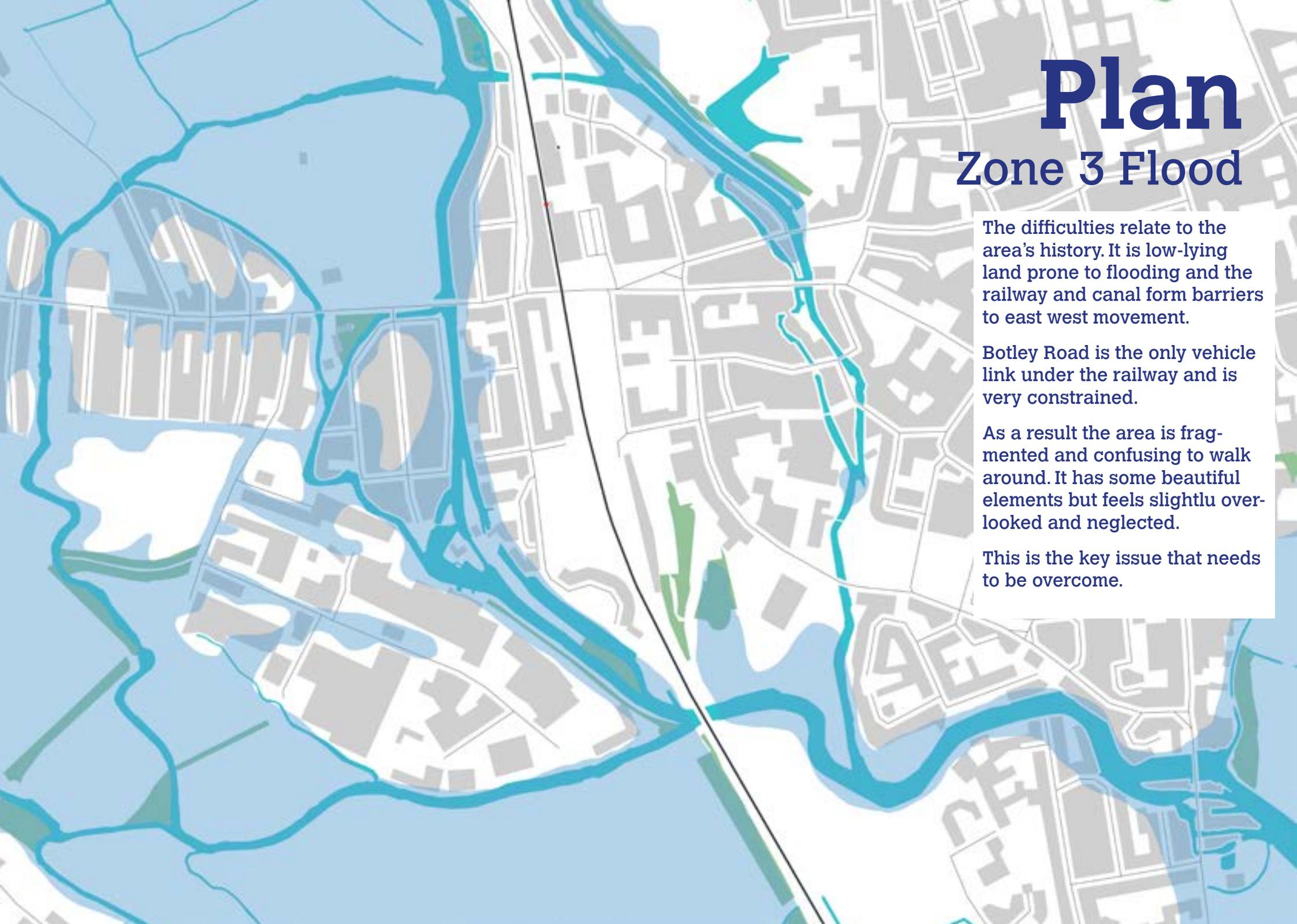
A coordinated approach?

These plans will transform the Oxford Central West Area in the next decade. However while each scheme works within itself, it is was not clear to the workshop that they all workked together, nor that they made the most of this amazing piece of Oxford, encircled by its moat and equal in area to the city centre.



Plan Build-up

On the following sequence of slides we describe the thinking of the charrette to how the plans for the area can be better coordinated.



Plan

Zone 3 Flood

The difficulties relate to the area's history. It is low-lying land prone to flooding and the railway and canal form barriers to east west movement.

Botley Road is the only vehicle link under the railway and is very constrained.

As a result the area is fragmented and confusing to walk around. It has some beautiful elements but feels slightly overlooked and neglected.

This is the key issue that needs to be overcome.

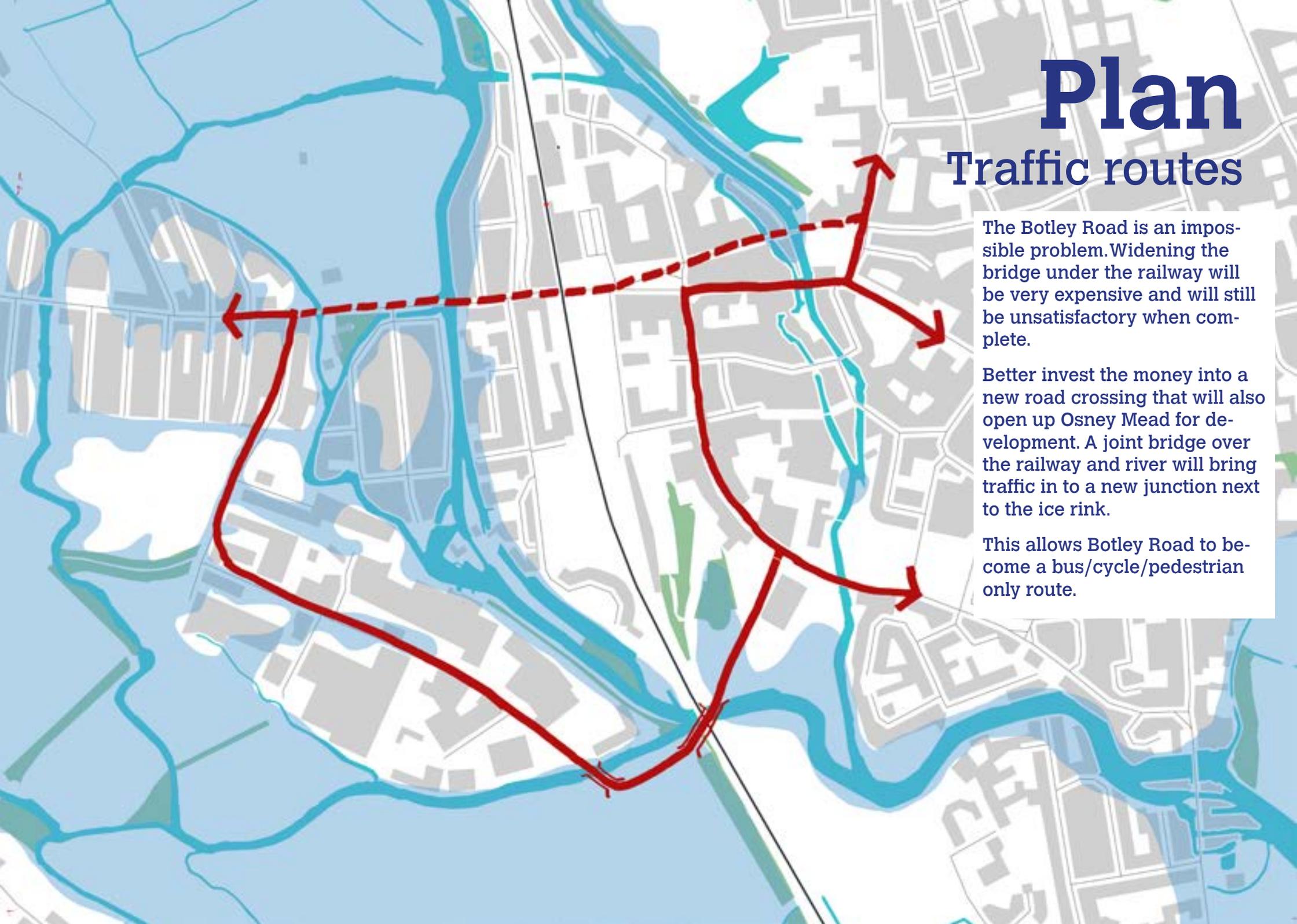
Plan

Traffic routes

The Botley Road is an impossible problem. Widening the bridge under the railway will be very expensive and will still be unsatisfactory when complete.

Better invest the money into a new road crossing that will also open up Osney Mead for development. A joint bridge over the railway and river will bring traffic in to a new junction next to the ice rink.

This allows Botley Road to become a bus/cycle/pedestrian only route.



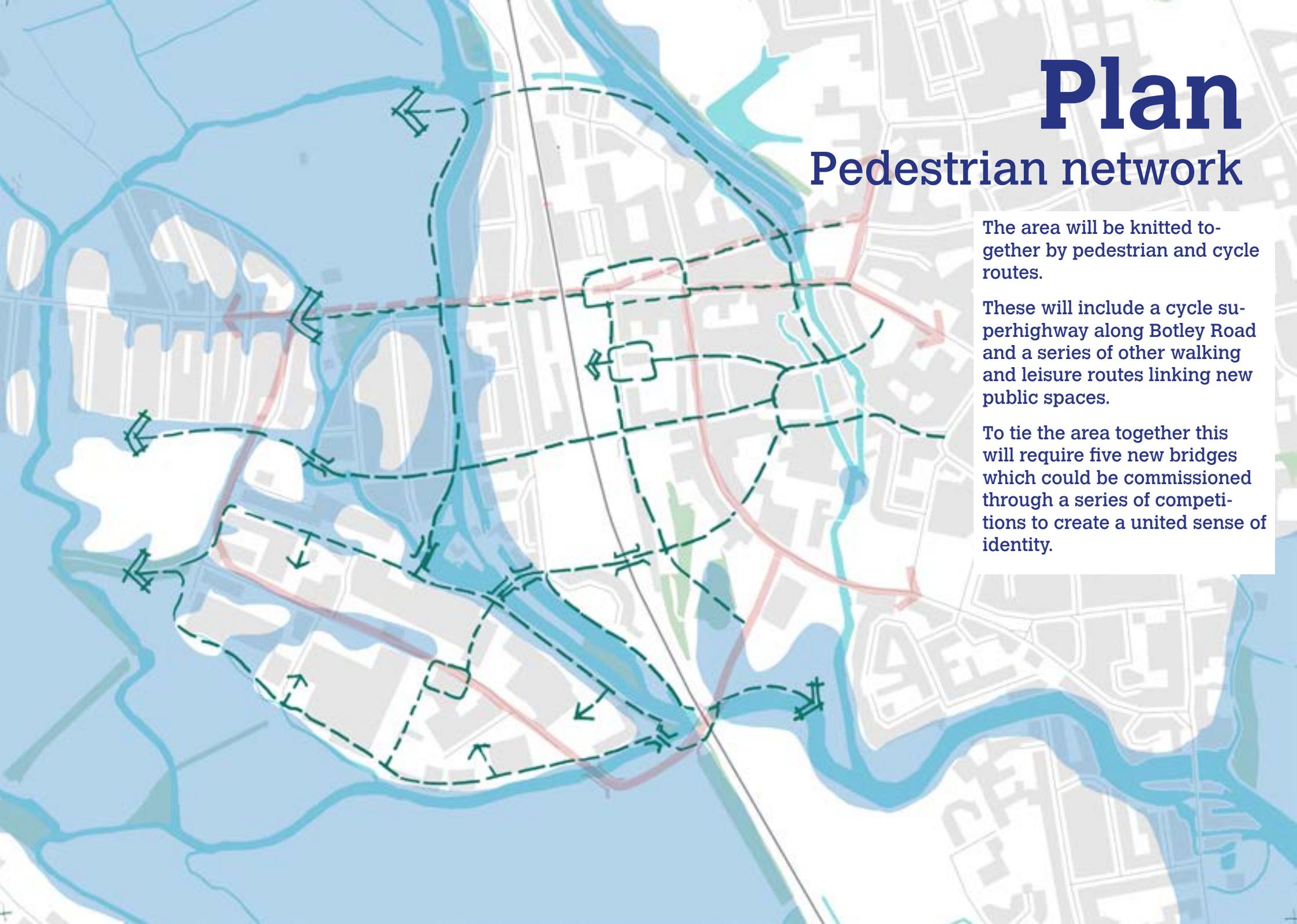
Plan

Pedestrian network

The area will be knitted together by pedestrian and cycle routes.

These will include a cycle superhighway along Botley Road and a series of other walking and leisure routes linking new public spaces.

To tie the area together this will require five new bridges which could be commissioned through a series of competitions to create a united sense of identity.



Plan Green Infrastructure

A Green Infrastructure Strategy will be designed to provide flood mitigation. It will preserve historic green spaces and open up the waterfront to greater public access.

The spaces will be linked by avenue planting along all of the main pedestrian routes.



Places Attractions

The pedestrian network will tie together existing and potential attractions in the area as well as providing links to the city centre.

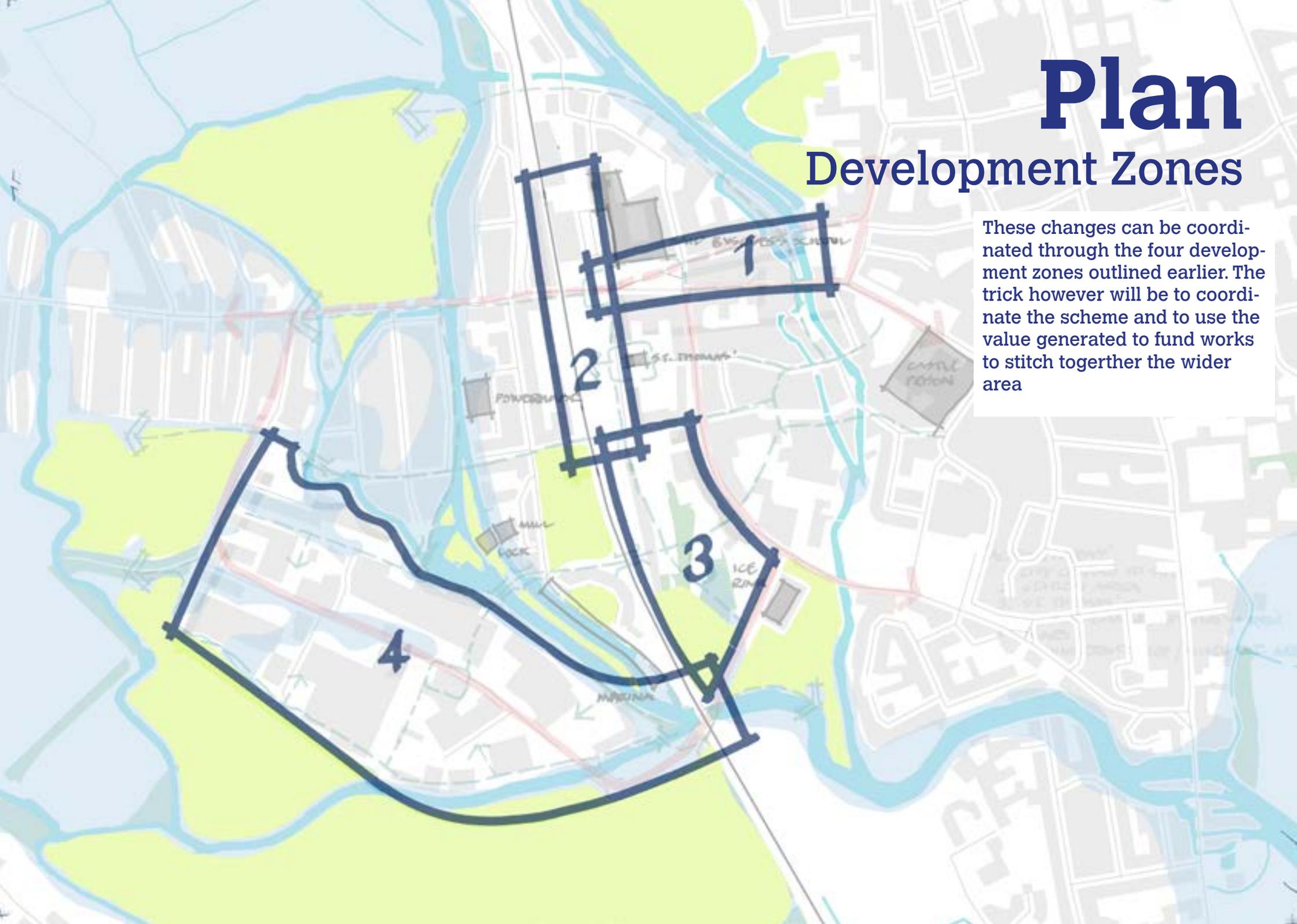
The largely hidden St. Thomas Church and the vacant Powerhouse on the canal could become prominent waymarkers and attractions.



Plan

Development Zones

These changes can be coordinated through the four development zones outlined earlier. The trick however will be to coordinate the scheme and to use the value generated to fund works to stitch together the wider area



Plan

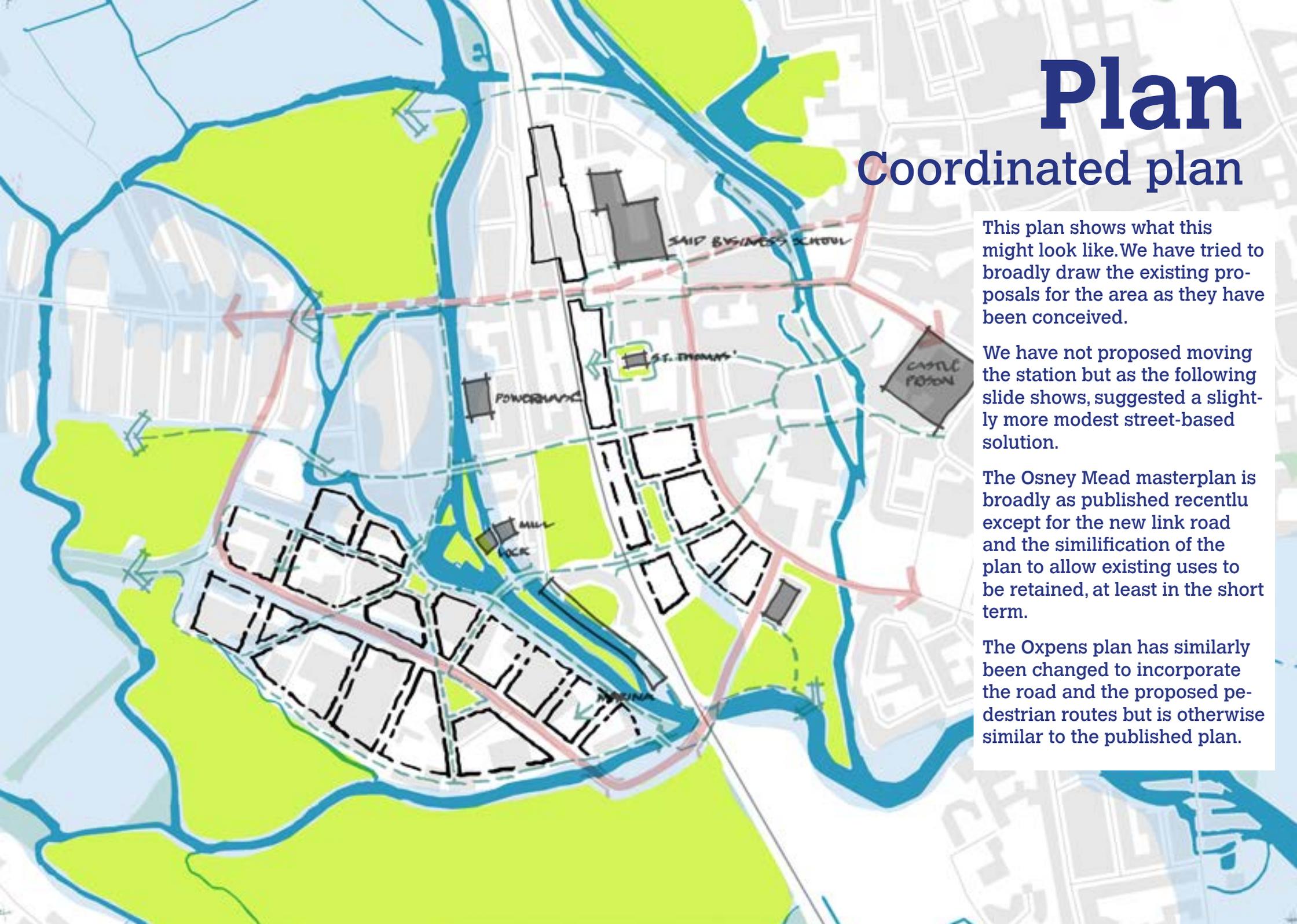
Coordinated plan

This plan shows what this might look like. We have tried to broadly draw the existing proposals for the area as they have been conceived.

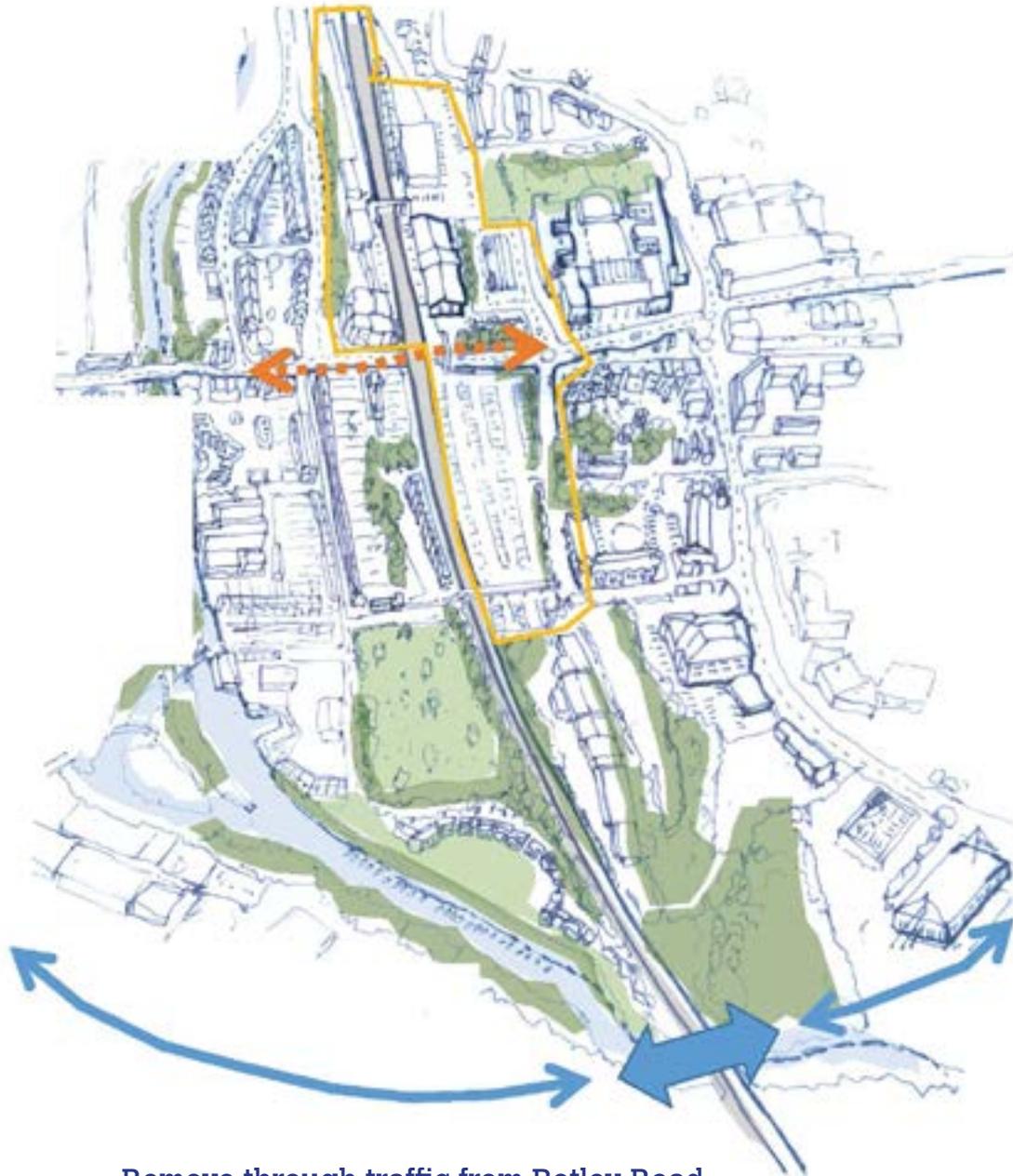
We have not proposed moving the station but as the following slide shows, suggested a slightly more modest street-based solution.

The Osney Mead masterplan is broadly as published recently except for the new link road and the simplification of the plan to allow existing uses to be retained, at least in the short term.

The Oxpens plan has similarly been changed to incorporate the road and the proposed pedestrian routes but is otherwise similar to the published plan.



Station Strategy



Remove through traffic from Botley Road, identify station development zone

Transport



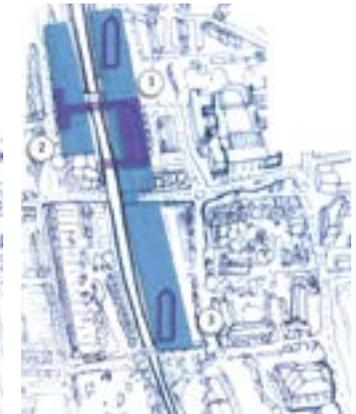
1. Botley Road to become a public transport/pedestrian/cycle corridor
2. New Road through Osney Mead for through traffic
3. Re-distributed public transport pick up areas on street zones – liner bus station on carpark site.
4. Coach/Bus route

Public Zones



1. Extend public zone to include under Botley bridge and create a unified 'Plaza' Link a public transport plan to the plaza
2. Improve routes for pedestrians to and from the station linking new development zones and routes to and from the centre

Development



1. New North South development zone linking station site with carpark site. Complimentary functions to station zone, hotel, office, small retail. Overstation development.
2. New station within development site, access from Botley side with new drop off zone. New bridge connections
3. New gateway to the city



This station in Cannes is a really good example of a new station that creates an active street frontage and feels integrated into the town. This could be Opens Road.

Conclusion

There is a way of making the whole area into somewhere that is coherent and connected and which makes the most of its unique sense of place. There is also a way of procuring a new station at a realistic budget, dealing with congestion on the Botley Road and even sorting out the bridge without spending millions. All that is needed is an area-wide perspective.

