

Layla Moran MP
Councillor Gareth Epps

24th July 2026

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Layla and Gareth

Re Oxpens River Bridge construction - path closures

Thank you for your letter regarding the planned footpath closures associated with the construction of the Oxpens River Bridge.

We fully recognise the significant disruption that residents have experienced during the prolonged closure of Botley Road, and we appreciate the concerns that have been raised about the timing and impact of these additional footpath closures. We understand that the routes through Grandpont Nature Park and Oxpens Meadow have become important walking and cycling connections for many residents travelling between West Oxford and the city centre whilst the Botley Road works have been taking place.

The Council has carefully considered these impacts throughout the planning of the project, as the County Council will have done in granting the permission for the pathway closures. We welcome the opportunity to provide clarification on the points you have raised.

Timing of the closures relating to the Botley Road works

We share your concerns arising from Network Rail's recent announcement that the reopening of Botley Road will be delayed further.

However, delaying the closure of the paths until after the full reopening of Botley Road would have a significant impact on the delivery of the Oxpens River Bridge project. It would delay the overall construction programme, prolong the period during which Oxpens Meadow is affected by works, and increase project risk by requiring a greater proportion of construction activity to be undertaken during the flood season and increasing the potential for construction work impacting the next boating season on the river. This could also all lead to significant cost increases.

For these reasons, and to ensure the bridge can be delivered safely and within the current programme, unfortunately it is not considered feasible to postpone the planned pathway closures.

Closure of both riverside routes

We would like to clarify that while the pathways are closed an alternative route for pedestrians and cyclists will remain available through Grandpont Nature Park throughout the works.



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The section between the Gasworks Rail Bridge and the end of Whitehouse Lane will only be closed for short periods of time for construction vehicle access to build the new bridge.

The available alternative route has been incorporated into the project planning to ensure continued pedestrian and cycle access through Grandpont Nature Park to Grandpont Rail Bridge, Whitehouse Road via the tow path when necessary, as well as the city centre.

The Oxpens Meadow paths will need to be closed on 29th July, with the Grandpont paths needing to close on, or soon after, 3rd August.

The expectation is that the paths will reopen when the bridge is complete, which is currently programmed for Spring 2027. The formal agreement, approved by the County Council, is to provide the ability to close them for up to 56 weeks, which is to allow for a contingency period that we hope is not needed.

Assessment of current usage and impacts

The Council recognises that these routes are well used and perform an important function, particularly while Botley Road remains subject to restrictions. This is why a diversionary route has been put in place at the Grandpont Nature Park.

The Oxpens River Bridge is itself being delivered to improve long-term walking and cycling connectivity between Grandpont, Oxpens and the city centre. While temporary disruption is unavoidable during construction, the completed scheme will provide a new strategic crossing and significantly enhance sustainable travel connections in this part of Oxford.

Accessibility and suitability of diversion routes

The alternative route through Grandpont Nature Park will remain available for pedestrians and cyclists and will be monitored and maintained during the closure period.

In addition, the recently opened southern footpath beneath the Botley Rad rail bridge provides an improved route for pedestrians travelling into and out of the city centre and offers an additional option for many users.

We will continue to monitor conditions on the diversion route and work with the contractor to ensure that it remains safe and usable throughout the construction period.

Communication with residents

We acknowledge the concerns that have been raised regarding communication and understand why the notices indicating a potential closure period of up to 56 weeks caused alarm as well as the limited notice given. A press release was issued yesterday to provide further detail and clarification.

The Council will continue to provide updates through the project webpage and other communications channels as the scheme progresses. We will also seek to keep residents informed of key milestones and will review opportunities to reduce disruption wherever it is safe and practical to do so.



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We appreciate that these closures will cause additional inconvenience at a time when residents have already experienced significant disruption associated with the Botley Road works. Nevertheless, the temporary closures are necessary to enable the safe and timely delivery of a major infrastructure project that will provide lasting benefits for walking, wheeling and cycling connectivity across the city.

Thank you for raising these concerns on behalf of residents. We hope this provides clarity on the rationale for the closures and the measures being taken to maintain access during the construction period.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Susan Brown
Leader, Oxford City Council



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