

# OUFC NEW STADIUM DEVELOPMENT

Design and Access Statement

**AFL**  
architects



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## Document issue History

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## Purpose of this Design and Access Statement report

This Design and Access Statement provides full details of Oxford United’s New Stadium Development proposal and should be read in conjunction with the supporting application documents and plans.

This Design and Access Statement (‘DAS’) has been prepared by AFL Architects (‘AFL’) on behalf of Oxford United FC (OUFC) in support of a full planning application. The report explains the constraints, design rationale and key decisions made which resulted in the development proposal submitted for Planning.

The context of the site has been carefully considered along with identifying constraints and opportunities. The proposal is consequently a consolidated response to this analysis.

The design statement starts with a summary of the project brief followed by a summary of the site location and context.

We have worked closely with a team of consultants to develop the application proposals. Therefore, this statement should be read in conjunction with the documents/drawings contained within the planning application submission pack (particularly the Planning and Transport Statements).

## Report Prepared by AFL Architects





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## 1. Introduction

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The Client

Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) is the sole professional football club in the city of Oxford and currently compete in EFL's League One. In 2001 they moved to The Kassam Stadium from The Manor Ground, where they played their football for nearly three-quarters of a century.

### 1.2 Project Background

With OUFC's current agreement with the Kassam Stadium coming to an end in 2026 and no hope of renewing the lease. Oxford United FC now find themselves in a position where they can no longer play at the The Kassam Stadium and want to create a home they can call their own for the 2026/27 season and beyond.

There is then an urgent need to develop a new stadium in order to protect the future existence of this Oxfordshire institution.

The club is now in a race against time to open a new stadium by the summer of 2026. If they can't open by the start of the 2026 season, they will be homeless. Playing out of the county is something none of the parties want, even for a short while and the Club can't contemplate a long-term move away, as it would mean a loss of OUFC's name, identity, and heritage.

We are limited by the number of games we can play at the Kassam Stadium so moving to a new stadium means our Women's team can play at the same ground as the Men's team.

### 1.3 The Design Team

**AFL Architects** are acting as Architect and Lead designer. The company and designer team have decades of experience in the Sport & Leisure sector. Their recent experience include projects such as:

- Lusail Stadium - Qatar World Cup
- Gtech Community Stadium - Brentford FC
- The Racecourse Ground Kop - Wrexham FC

**Ridge & Partners** are a multi-discipline property and construction consultancy that will continue to fulfil the roles of:

- Project Manager
- Planning Consultant
- Cost Consultant
- Transport Consultant
- Sustainability Consultant
- Health & Safety Consultant

**Mott Macdonald** are Civil, Structural, MEP and Fire engineers for the OUFC New Stadium Development. They have dozens of projects in this sector all over the globe, including works for the London Olympics as well as recent work at Casement Park for Euros Football 2028.

**Fabrik** is an award-winning multi-disciplinary Landscape Planning, Design, Arboriculture and Masterplanning practice that specialises in commercial, leisure, residential, healthcare and education sectors in both regeneration and greenfield sites.





## 2. Project Brief

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## 2 Project Brief

### 2.1 Project Vision

To establish a new home in a purpose built, best-in-class, sustainable stadium with exemplary transport connections and community and commercial facilities.

The vision is to create a sustainable sports, entertainment and lifestyle landmark in Oxfordshire which is locally loved and internationally recognised.

The stadium will set the benchmark for community benefit, environmental performance and commercial innovation and put the visitor experience at the heart of everything it does. The client and design team are committed to following a set of foundational principles, highlighted below:

- Visitor experience at its heart

Constructing a new landmark for Oxford which instils community pride, is accessible and welcoming for all who visit.

- Creating a space that serves all who use it equally

Bringing our Women's Team home, and ensuring the site and all facilities are a safe and inclusive place for all, with improved connectivity and access to the site, removing barriers to participation.

- United with the community

Being an active and positive part of the community, and having a positive impact on the health and well-being of the community, with useful amenities that will support community activities.

- Sustainability at the heart of the design

Ensuring that environmental and commercial sustainability is central to the proposals. Facilitating the transition to sustainable travel for fans and the prioritisation of the use of public transport.

- Creating publicly accessible green spaces and gardens

Enhancing the local natural environment with increased biodiversity, more planting, gardens, and public spaces that can be enjoyed year round.

- Safeguarding the future of the club with a strong commercial offer

Enhancing local amenities and creating an exemplary commercial offer to boost the club's vitality and ensure its ongoing success.

### 2.2 Spacial Requirements

The proposal is for a scheme that includes:

- 16,000 seat Stadium
- 180 room Hotel incl. Restaurant
- 1000 capacity Conference & Events space
- 820m<sup>2</sup> Health & Well-being space
- 690m<sup>2</sup> Gym facility
- 200m<sup>2</sup> Sports Bar

The scheme must also incorporate a wider masterplan of the area including a public realm, parking, transport links and site-wide landscaping enhancements.

### 2.3 Design Guidance

The proposal is designed to align with the following guidance:

- Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds - Sixth Edition, 2018
- Accessible Stadia - Supplementary guidance
- UEFA Stadium Infrastructure Regulations, Manuals & Guidelines to align with UEFA CAT 4.
- Relevant British Standards



### 3. Planning Context

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### 3 Planning Context

The planning application has been submitted after extensive consultation with the Local Planning Authority (Cherwell District Council), other key stakeholders, fans of the football club and the local community.

#### 3.1 Planning Policy

A full assessment of the proposed development against local and national planning policy is contained within the Planning Statement that accompanies this application.

The site is situated in the Oxfordshire Green Belt, where both local and national policy seek to ensure such land is kept permanently open to prevent urban sprawl.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines the construction of new buildings as inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is by definition harmful, and should not be approved unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Whilst it is acknowledged that this is an extremely high bar and a difficult test to meet, it is considered that OUFC's needs and the overall benefit for the Club are so significant to meet the 'very special circumstances' test.

#### 3.2 Need for the Development

OUFC has played football at The Kassam Stadium since 2001, following a move from The Manor Ground. However, from 30th June 2026, OUFC will have no legal right to use or occupy the Kassam Stadium, there is no right of renewal in the licence, and there is no statutory security of tenure. As such, there is an urgent need to develop a new stadium in order to protect the future existence of one of the oldest football clubs in the UK.

#### 3.3 Site Search

There is currently no relevant planning policy regarding the location of sports stadiums, and there is no policy guidance for undertaking an assessment of alternative sites.

However, relevant case law in respect of stadium development has been reviewed as the availability of alternative sites is often a material consideration in the determination of those cases.

Whilst there is no consistent approach taken by Appellants in the cases, the Brighton and Hove Albion appeal decision provides a useful benchmark for assessing alternative sites. It provides the most in-depth analysis of all case law, and an Inquiry took place solely on the approach to assessing alternative sites, with the Secretary of State setting out key criteria to be considered. As such, this example is used in order to inform the site analysis undertaken in this case.

The key questions to be considered are as follows:

- Is the site acquisition a realistic proposition?
- Is the site large enough for the stadium and required parking/circulation?
- Can a stadium be built without incurring unaffordable development costs?
- Any overriding site specific planning issues?
- Is the site accessible by sustainable modes of transport?
- Can a stadium be built without any unacceptable environmental or visual impact?

These criteria informed the assessment and helped to understand whether there are any alternative sites that are practical, realistic and feasible to accommodate a proposed stadium development.

#### Area of Search

The starting point for the site search was to align with the criteria set out by the English Football League (EFL) for relocating clubs, as Oxford United are also required to obtain approval from the EFL for any relocation of the club's Stadium to a new site. The most stringent constraint is a requirement that the location of any new stadium remains linked to the City of Oxford.

The EFL have confirmed that if the Club proposed a site that was not within or within close proximity to the City of Oxford, they would unlikely give consent for the move. This would result in a position where the Club would have to be renamed, removed from the league, and would have to start again at the bottom of the football pyramid. This would not be a viable option for the Club.

The Case Study of Bolton has been used as a precedent to inform the area of search. Under the current regulations, the furthest a club has been provided consent by the EFL to relocate its stadium was in the case of Bolton, which was approximately 7 miles from the old ground and 5 - 6 miles from the city centre of Bolton.

Whilst the suitability of site from the EFL perspective is more to do with the relationship and links to Oxford, a search radius of 7 miles from Oxford City Centre was deemed appropriate in the context of the above as the starting point for the search.

#### Assessment Phases

A phased approach to assessing alternative sites was undertaken. An initial assessment was undertaken by Savills which provided an initial review of sites within the 7-mile radius. This assessed a total of 64 sites and considered the site area, landowner intention, accessibility, viability and any key constraints. An initial planning appraisal was then undertaken of these sites which reviewed the planning policy context and planning history of each site. Where specific constraints were identified, further assessment work was undertaken by specialist consultants in respect of these issues, namely landscape and visual impact, heritage impact and flood risk.

Finally, the assessment work was pulled together with a conclusion made in respect of each of the factors considered in the Brighton and Hove Albion case highlighted above. An overall conclusion as to the suitability and availability of each site was also made, which also included a comparison to the application site.

#### Summary of Assessment

Based on the methodology adopted, the ASA demonstrates that there are no other feasible, practical and realistic alternatives to accommodate a proposed stadium development within the area of search identified through discussions with the EFL. There is an existential need to deliver a new stadium by 2026 and the only viable option which may be available to acquire and is capable of delivering a well-connected, sustainable stadium within the necessary time-frame for OUFC is the Site.



### 3.4 Very Special Circumstances

As above, development of a stadium in the Green Belt should be refused unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The very special circumstances in this case are set out in full in the Planning Statement. However, the pressing needs of Oxfordshire's only professional sports club and the ability of the club to continue playing in its home area qualifies as a very special circumstance. Additional benefits to the club include the financial sustainability of owning its own stadium, as well as the ability to host Womens matches.

Assessment work has demonstrated that there are no other feasible, practical and realistic alternatives to accommodate a proposed stadium. In addition to this, the proposed development will deliver a number of socio-economic benefits including the provision of commercial/community facilities and public open space, provision of significant number of jobs, improving connectivity in the local area, as well as environmental benefits including a sustainably designed stadium, significant planting and a biodiversity net gain.

### 3.5 OCC - Project Priorities

AFL's output will remain conscious of the Oxfordshire County Council requirements and wishes, highlighted below:

- Maintain a green barrier between Oxford and Kidlington and protecting and enhancing the surrounding natural environment, improving biodiversity, connecting habitats and supporting nature recovery.
- Improve public access to high-quality nature and green spaces.
- Enhance facilities for local sport groups and on-going financial support.
- Significantly improve the infrastructure connectivity in this location, improving public transport to reduce the need for car travel in so far as possible, and to improve sustainable transport through increased walking, cycling, bus and rail use.
- Develop local employment opportunities in Oxfordshire.
- Increase education and innovation through the provision of a sports centre of excellence and facilities linked to elite sport, community sport, health and well-being.
- Support the County Council's net zero carbon emissions pledge through highly sustainable development.

### 3.6 OCC - Issues to address

- The scale of OUFC's proposal - including identifying the land required for the stadium, the ancillary commercial, the community sports clubs and the community land which will not be built upon.
- OUFC support to local sports clubs - details on how OUFC will ensure that their interests are protected.
- Access to the site - details on how OUFC will achieve an increase in the use of public transport from 20 to 90%.
- Parking proposals - details on how OUFC propose to manage the risk of the impact of uncontrolled parking, including in residential areas on match days.
- Biodiversity gain and the enhancement of the surrounding natural environment - details on how OUFC will achieve to these goals.





## 4. Site & Surroundings

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## 4 Site & Surroundings

The Site is located to the north of Oxford and south of Kidlington, set within a landscape that is dissected by the major transport corridors of Oxford Road, Frieze Way, the A34 and the Oxford to Bicester railway line (including Oxford Parkway Station and Park & Ride).

### 4.1 Location & Context

The landscape between Kidlington and Oxford is predominantly agricultural. The immediate surroundings of the site have been influenced by human and development pressures and have experienced significant change over time.

Movement corridors including the A34, A4260 Frieze Way, Bicester Road, Oxford Road and railway line cut through the landscape, defining the site edge, cutting through the landscape. A PRoW network provides good informal recreation access for the site.

The proximity of the site to the transport hub at Oxford Parkway station makes it easily accessible for fans and users of the site on non match days.





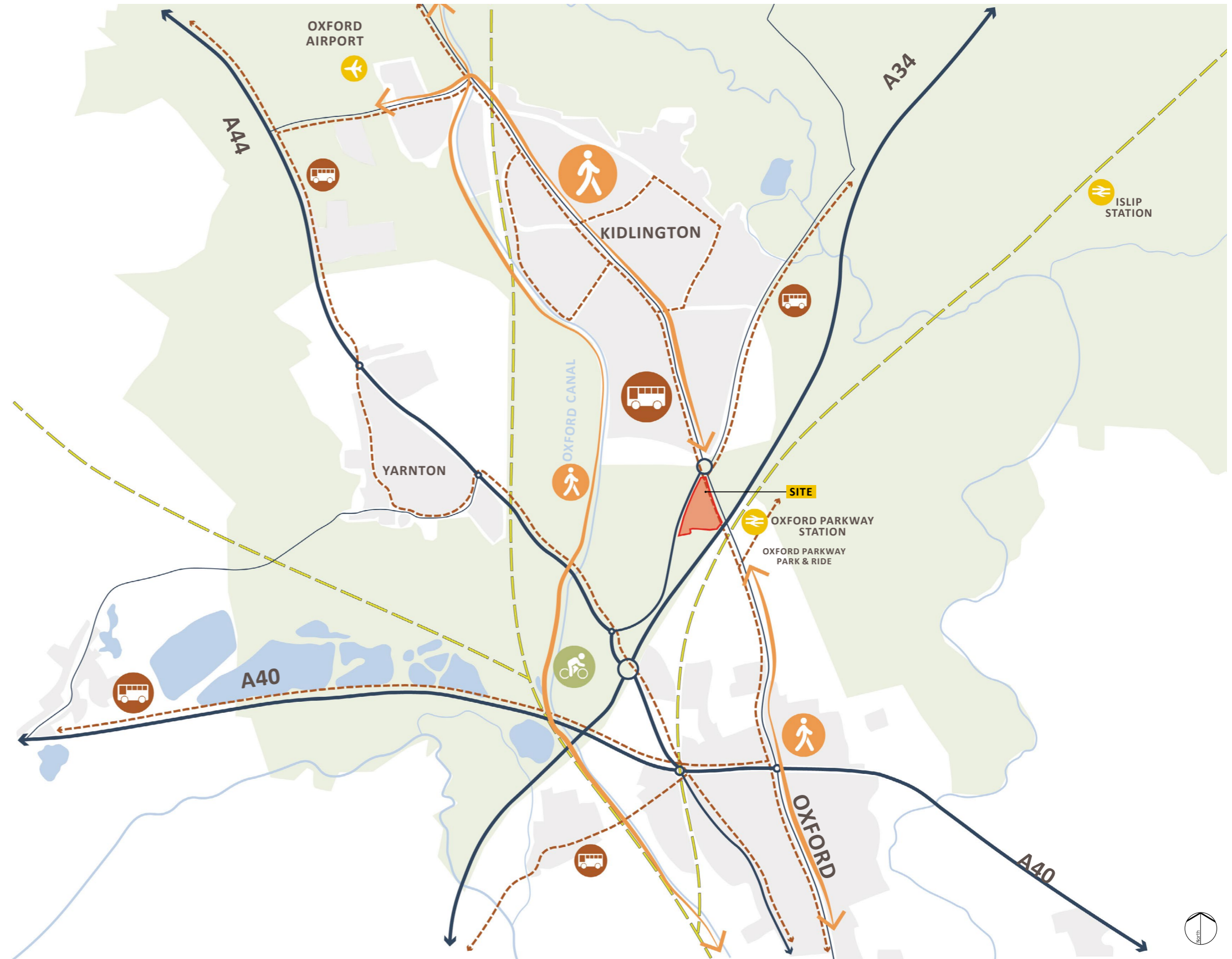


## 4.2 Connectivity

A number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW), predominantly footpaths, extend from the settlement edge into the surrounding landscape around the site, providing access in all directions. National Cycle Route 51 runs through the centre of Kidlington.

The transport corridors of the A34, railway line, A4260 Frieze Way and Bicester Road. The most prominent feature being Oxford Parkway station and its associated Park and Ride.

In addition to train travel, there are several bus routes that serve the Kidlington/ North Oxford area.



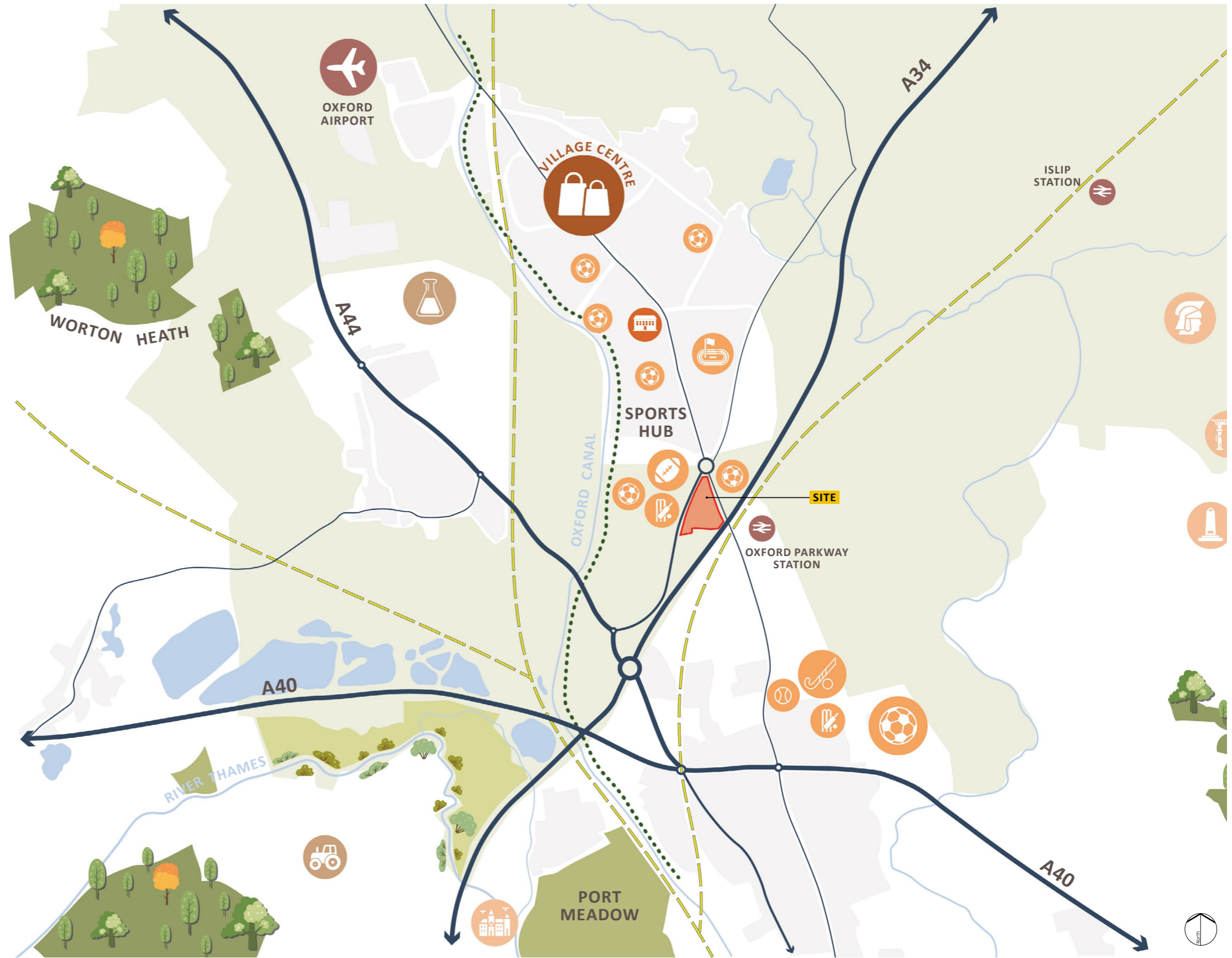
### 4.3 Facilities

Located north of Oxford, the new football stadium is surrounded by a range of impressive sports facilities that cater to a diverse range of interests. There are also frequent public transport links, making it easy for people to access the proposed stadium and surrounding facilities without the need for a car.

For those who enjoy spending time outdoors, there are a number of public parks and green spaces in the area that are perfect for walking, cycling and picnicking.

Overall, the new football stadium is located in an area that offers a wealth of sports facilities and outdoor recreational opportunities.

Stratfield Brake Sports Ground is located to the immediate west of the Site and provides a large open space for formal sports and recreation.





#### 4.4 Green Corridors

Strategically the site offers the opportunity to connect to a wider network of; footpaths, cycle routes, the Oxford canal, wider countryside and nearby towns and villages in a way that is attractive, safe and enjoyable for walkers and cyclist, while also promoting environmental and cultural stewardship.

The prioritising of sustainable transport options aims to reduce the environmental impact of match day and non match day travel to the site and its facilities.

#### 4.5 Connectivity Opportunities

The current site is fairly inaccessible for pedestrians and, together with a lack of adequate pathways and busy roads, the whole area between Oxford Parkway Railway Station and Kidlington is under utilised by the Kidlington and wider Oxford community.

Opening up the triangle to pedestrians and cyclists, whilst adding important crossings across Oxford Road and Frieze Way, will improve the active travel connections in and around the site dramatically.

Fortunately, the Cycle and pedestrian networks in the area are already being upgraded as part of a wider infrastructure improvement. This brings with it an opportunity to connect into and enhance this active travel movement, with The Triangle scheme acting as a key node along the network.

Overall, through the proposed interventions, we have the opportunity to create a fully accessible public realm far larger than the existing in accessible farmed land.







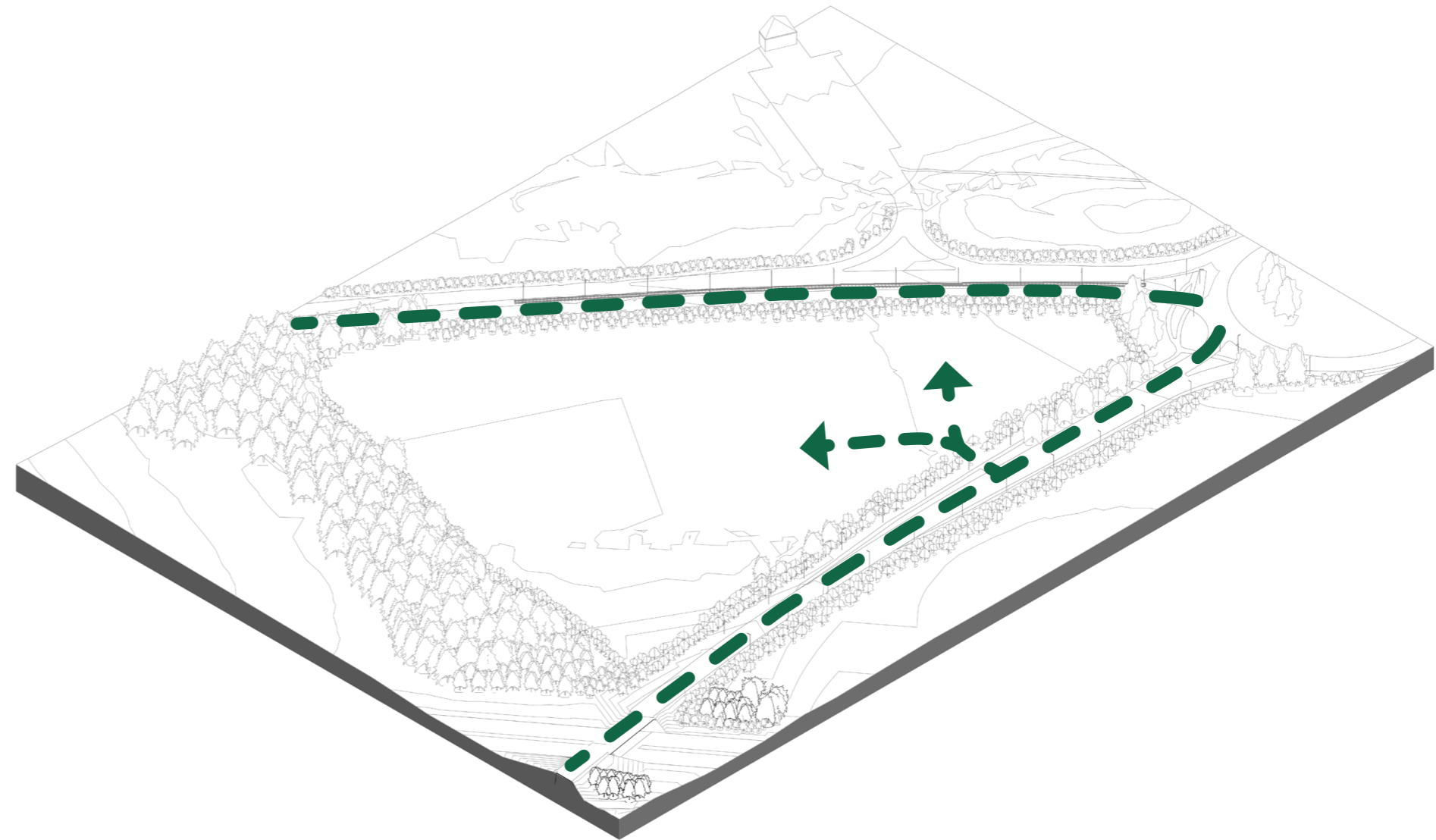


#### 4.6 Existing Site Access

As we've previously established, the site enjoys excellent connectivity, and reaching it can be achieved with relative ease by several methods of transport. Nevertheless, the site itself is presently somewhat challenging to access, both on foot or by vehicle.

Frieze way to the West is a dual carriageway. There are currently no pedestrian pavements or cycleways along the length of this road. Oxford Road to the East is a typical single carriageway with narrow pavements to both sides. There are no zebra or traffic-light-controlled pedestrian crossings adjacent to the site.

The only current access route onto site, shown below, is from Oxford Road. Access to the gate is overgrown, narrow and crosses over the pedestrian walkway down towards Kidlington roundabout.







### 4.7 Surrounding Context

#### Land Use

The Triangle is designated as farmland and is currently home to a willow tree plantation, which is regularly maintained and on a regular basis.

The East and West boundaries of the site are lined by established hedgerows and a spattering of mature trees of mixed quality. The trees to the South are of medium to high quality and form part of the wider Stratfield Brake woodland.

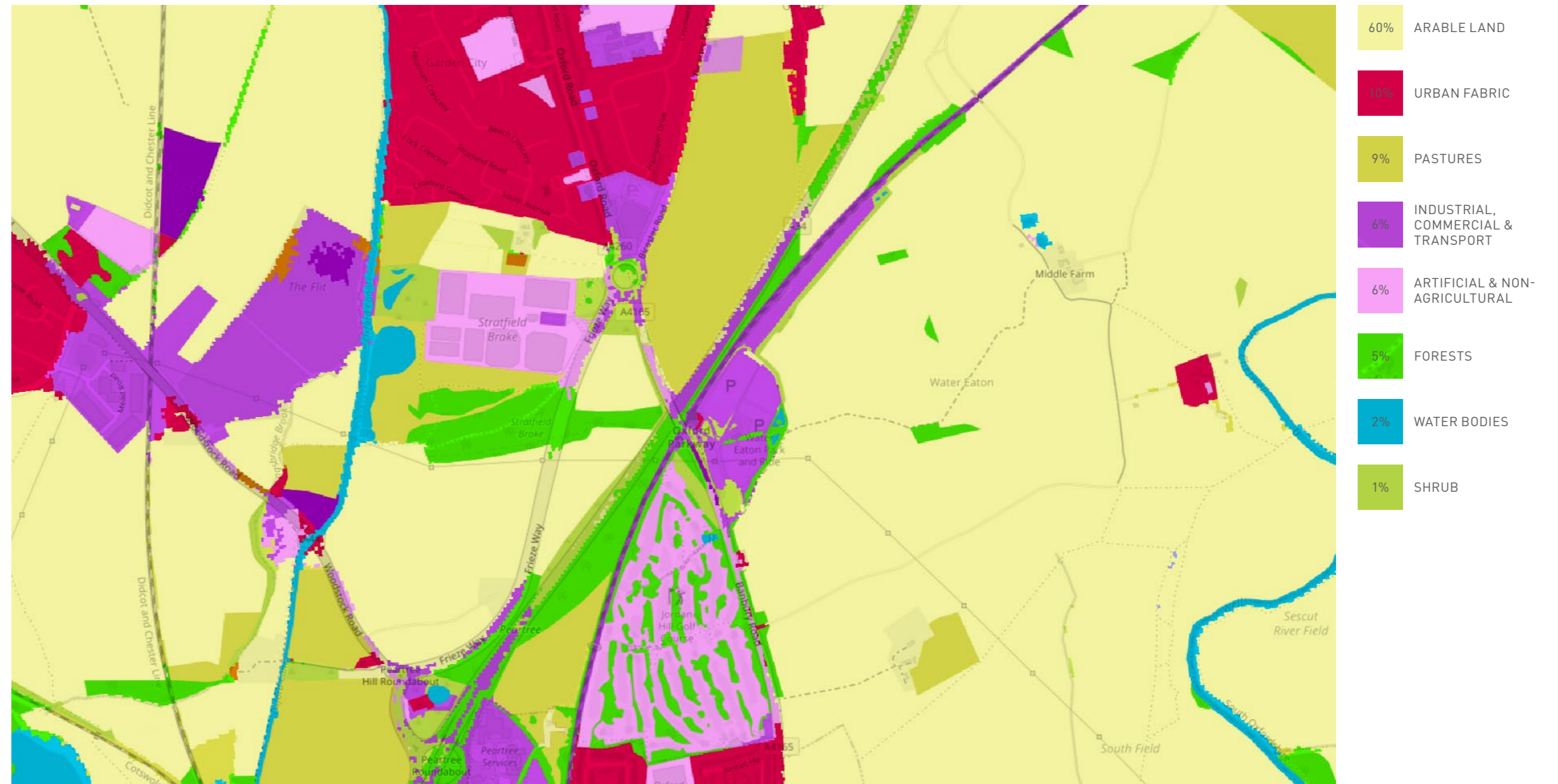
Unfortunately, due to Frieze Way, this woodland is disconnected from the much larger, and publicly accessible part to the West of the dual carriageway.

There is further farmland directly to the South of the Stratfield Brake wooded area and to the East of the site, across Oxford Road.

#### Architectural Context

At present, the Triangle development site is in proximity to three primary structures: the Oxford Parkway Railway station, the Stratfield Brake Sports Pavilion, and Sainsbury's Kidlington.

These buildings, owing to their diverse uses and differing architectural periods, contribute little, if any, to an overall architectural style and coherence of the surrounding area.



OSM - LAND-USE DIAGRAM



OXFORD PARKWAY TRAIN STATION



STRATFIELD BRAKE SPORTS PAVILION



KIDLINGTON SAINSBURY'S



## 4.8 Kidlington Development

The Triangle development has the potential to become a prominent addition to the growing landscape of Kidlington.

Within the vicinity, numerous projects are already underway, with some dedicated to commercial ventures and others geared towards residential expansion. (Areas highlighted in black)

Many of these schemes are already advancing through the intricate phases of design and planning and could be well established by the time The Triangle project completes.

Our scheme could create a focus point for these developments and provide the much needed community facilities and improvements to the surrounding infrastructure.

### PR6a

Allocated for residential development in the Cherwell District Local Plan Partial Review.

690 dwellings (50% affordable housing), a primary school and community retail and sports facilities, on approximately 25 hectares of land.

### PR6b

Allocated for residential development in the Cherwell District Local Plan Partial Review.

670 dwellings (50% affordable housing) and footbridge improvements on 32 hectares of land.

### PR6c

Land at Frieze Farm (30 hectares will be reserved for the potential construction of a golf course should this be required as a result of the development of Land to the West of Oxford Road under Policy PR6b).



### PR7a

Allocated for residential development in the Cherwell District Local Plan Partial Review.

430 dwellings (50% affordable housing), community sports facilities and allotments as well as an extension to Kidlington Cemetery, on 21 hectares of land.

### PR7b

Allocated for residential development in the Cherwell District Local Plan Partial Review.

120 homes (50% affordable housing), improvements to transport infrastructure, enhancement of the existing orchard and creation of a nature conservation area on 10 hectares of land.

### PR8

Allocated in the Cherwell District Local Plan Partial Review for a new 'urban neighbourhood' including:

1,950 dwellings (50% affordable housing), secondary school, 2no. primary schools, local centre, nature reserve, amongst other community facilities, on over 100 hectares of land.





### 4.9 Green & Blue Infrastructure

A coordinated “Green & Blue Infrastructure” approach is to be used at the scheme with the utilisation of rain-gardens, attenuation basins and swales reducing the amount of crates. Working alongside the Engineers and Ecologists the green and blue infrastructure acts on multiple levels, providing sustainable drainage, biodiversity net gain and generates an aesthetically pleasing space.



#### LEGEND

- EXISTING TREES TO BE RETAINED
- PROPOSED TREES (OFFSITE PR SCHEME)
- PROPOSED BOULEVARD TREES
- GREEN ROOF
- ATTENUATION BASIN/SWALES/RAIN GARDENS








### 4.10 Pedestrian & Cycle Opportunities

Plugging into the local authority led improvements to Oxford Road the development will be able to provide a more aesthetically pleasing/ user friendly east west connection. By providing a new safe crossing to Frieze Way the scheme generates a stronger connection to the wider countryside either side the development, this will be a mechanism that benefits the surrounding community.



LEGEND

-  EXISTING TREES TO BE RETAINED
-  PEDESTRIAN & CYCLE ROUTES CONNECTING TO SITE
-  PEDESTRIAN & CYCLE ROUTE FROM TRAIN STATION CONNECTING TO SITE/
-  STEPS FROM STATION
-  PEDESTRIAN/ CYCLE CROSSING



### 4.11 Stadium Approach

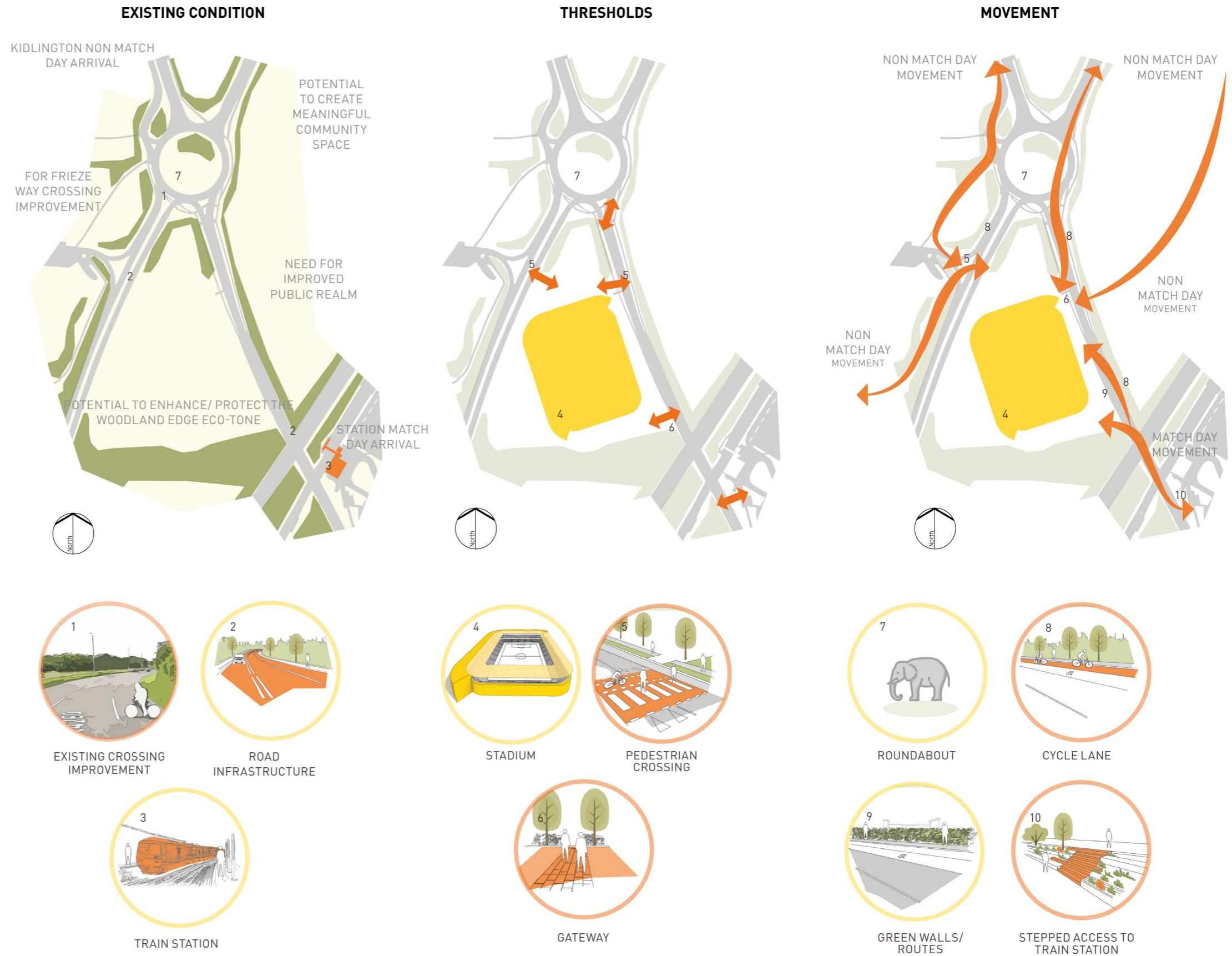
Understanding the approach to the site for both match days and non match days alike is key to delivering a scheme that works year round for the benefit of all. The diagrams identify the existing site condition and potential opportunities, indicate thresholds and highlight movement corridors.

- Existing
- Thresholds
- Movement

The triangle site is configured in such a way that the northern section allows the opportunity to deliver a public space that can meaningfully be utilised by the wider community. This space could be further enhanced with improvements to crossing points over Oxford Road and Frieze Way. As identified in the local authority SPG, Oxford Road is in need of public realm improvements which the development can assist in delivering.

Stratfield Brake wooded area to the southern edge will be enhanced through the creation of an eco-tone edge in line with Ecologist suggestions, safeguarding the woodland pocket from human intervention. This enables the woodland patch to maintain it's untouched nature, protecting the flora and fauna within.

The thresholds of the development provide the opportunity to deliver safer connectivity between the site and the wider countryside, generating a sustainable recreational network that benefits non match day and match day users of the site.





## 4.12 Spatial Comparisons

The design of the public open space at the triangle needs to provide multiple uses:

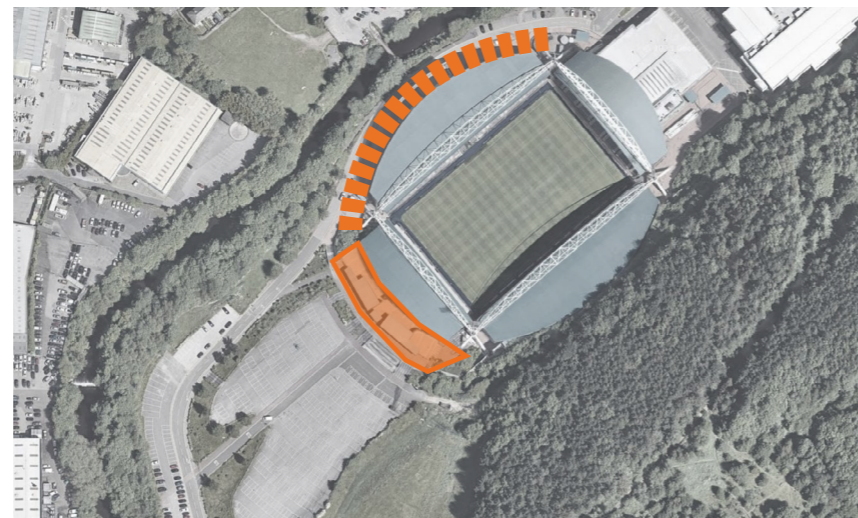
- Provide an area for biodiversity
- Provide a space for community use
- Provide a space for fans of the club

The northern section of the site has been identified as the area for biodiversity enhancements and will be very green in nature and to the south of this, the space directly fronting the hotel, restaurant, gym and bar is the perfect location for 'the plaza at the triangle'.

The first spatial comparison selected is with Gloucester Green Town Square, which was selected for its flexible multi functional uses, such as pop up markets (Figure 04).

The fan zone that Preston North End opened in 2021 was also chosen as an example of a recently completed facility (Figure 02), whilst Tranmere Rovers fan-park is currently seeking funding and approval for a ground of similar size (Figure 05).

Huddersfield Town's stadium (Figure 01) was selected due to its woodland setting and the Viking stadium in Norway (Figure 03) was selected due to its relationship with nearby commercial units and public realm.



01 HUDDERSFIELD TOWN, KIRKLEES STADIUM, HUDDERSFIELD, UK  
CAPACITY: 24,500 EXTERNAL FAN ZONE 1,875M<sup>2</sup> PLUS CONCOURSE



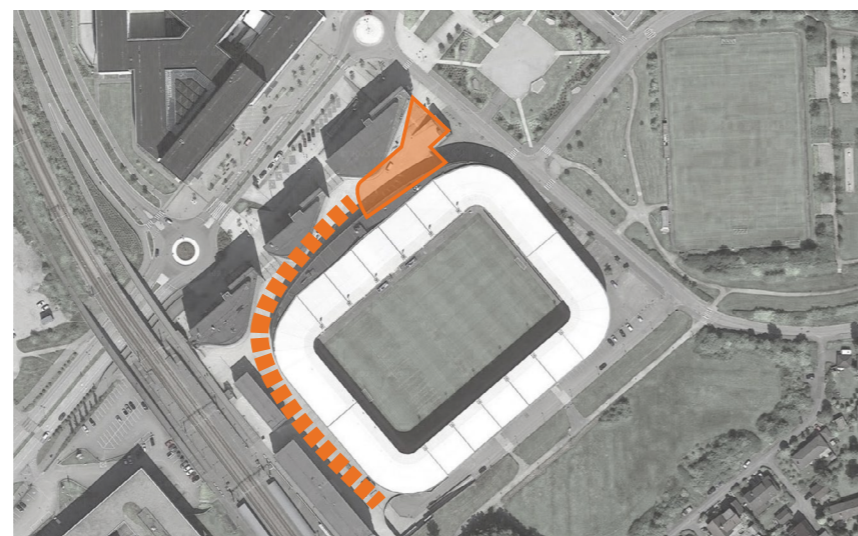
04 GLOUCESTER GREEN TOWN SQUARE MARKET, OXFORD  
OUTDOOR MARKET AREA CIRCA 2,715M<sup>2</sup>



02 PRESTON NE, DEEPDALE, PRESTON, UK  
CAPACITY: 23,408 EXTERNAL FAN ZONE AREA CIRCA 2,340M<sup>2</sup>



05 TRANMERE ROVERS, PRENTON PARK, BIRKENHEAD, UK  
CAPACITY: 16,587 EXTERNAL FAN ZONE CIRCA 1,655M<sup>2</sup>



03 VIKING STADIUM, STAVANGER, NORWAY  
CAPACITY: 15,900 EXTERNAL FAN ZONE 1,910M<sup>2</sup> PLUS CONCOURSE



06 OXFORD UTD,  
CAPACITY: 16,000 THE PLAZA CIRCA 3,015M<sup>2</sup>