# Oxford’s Botley Road closure extended to 2026 amid protests and business boycotts



The prolonged closure of Botley Road in Oxford, a vital route for both residents and local businesses, has become a contentious issue amid significant redevelopment efforts at Oxford Station. Originally closed in April 2023 as part of a £161 million upgrade, the road is now not slated to reopen until August 2026. This extended closure has led to frustration among business owners and has sparked protests and calls for government intervention.

Network Rail, responsible for the project, has faced criticism for the persistent delays, which they attribute to unexpected engineering challenges, including the diversion of complex utility services beneath the road, such as sewer systems. These complications were not only unforeseen but have also been compounded by the discovery of an inverted brick arch, further complicating the timeline for the project. Although Network Rail has announced that improved pedestrian and cyclist access will be made available by the summer of 2025, the overall sentiment among local business owners is one of skepticism.

Tom Rainey, owner of the Punter pub and The Porter House restaurant and hotel, has voiced particular dissent regarding Network Rail’s handling of the situation. He expressed frustration over what he perceives as a lack of genuine support, stating, “It’s basically Network Rail’s way of trying to avoid [giving] financial assistance to the businesses affected.” Rainey and other business owners are participating in a boycott of business rates, arguing that without a clear path to reopening or substantial support, they should not have to shoulder the financial burden during this tumultuous period.

The issue has also garnered political attention. Anneliese Dodds, MP for Oxford East, and Layla Moran, MP for Oxford West and Abingdon, have both raised concerns with Rail Minister Lord Hendy regarding the financial strain on local businesses and the need for urgent support. Hendy acknowledged that stakeholders are working closely with Network Rail to find a balanced solution that takes into account the significant impacts on local commerce while also upholding a prudent approach to public spending.

Despite these discussions, the prevailing feelings among business owners and local residents remain one of disillusionment. The question of how to address the economic fallout from the closure is becoming increasingly pressing. Local officials and residents alike are anxious about the ripple effects of the prolonged disruption on Oxford’s community fabric, particularly as many businesses are reporting financial losses.

Looking ahead, the need for a sustainable strategy to support those suffering from the continued disruption is clear. With the promise of improved access and station facilities on the horizon, it is crucial that the voices of local businesses are not only heard but actively addressed in the months leading up to the reopening of Botley Road. As the community contemplates the future, the challenge remains for Network Rail and local government to restore confidence and provide tangible support to those hardest hit by this extensive redevelopment.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3: Source (1), Source (2), Source (3), Source (5)
2. Paragraph 4: Source (1), Source (2), Source (3)
3. Paragraph 5: Source (3), Source (4), Source (6)
4. Paragraph 6: Source (1), Source (3), Source (7)
5. Paragraph 7: Source (1), Source (2), Source (4)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25163288.oxford-network-rail-support-botley-road-traders/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/western/oxfordshire/botley-road-bridge-replacement/> - Network Rail's Botley Road bridge replacement project aims to upgrade Oxford Station by replacing the existing bridge. The project has faced delays due to challenges in diverting complex utility services beneath the road, including sewer systems. The new timeline sets the reopening of Botley Road for August 2026, with improved pedestrian and cyclist access planned for the summer of 2025. The project is part of a £161 million investment to enhance station capacity and local infrastructure. The delay has been attributed to unforeseen engineering challenges and utility diversions.
* <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/botley-road-to-reopen-august-2026/> - Oxfordshire County Council announced that Botley Road, closed since April 2023 for station redevelopment, will reopen in August 2026. The £161 million project faced delays due to the discovery of an inverted brick arch and utility diversions. Improved pedestrian and cyclist access is expected this summer. Local businesses have expressed concerns over the prolonged closure, with some reporting financial losses. The council emphasizes the importance of the redevelopment for future rail projects and economic growth.
* <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/roadworks/future-transport-projects/oxford-city-station-phase-2c> - The Oxford City Station Phase 2C project involves a £161 million investment to expand Oxford Station, including a new platform and western entrance. The full replacement of the Botley Road bridge addresses vehicle headroom issues, historic flooding, and active travel needs. Utility services beneath the road must be diverted before bridge replacement, leading to the road closure. The project has been delayed, with Botley Road now expected to reopen in August 2026. Improved access for pedestrians and cyclists is planned for this summer.
* <https://www.cherwell.org/2025/02/03/botley-road-will-not-reopen-until-2026/> - Cherwell reports that Botley Road in Oxford will remain closed until August 2026, according to Network Rail's announcement. The closure, initiated in April 2023 for station redevelopment, has been extended due to unforeseen engineering challenges and utility diversions. The project is part of a £161 million investment to enhance station capacity and local infrastructure. The prolonged closure has raised concerns among local businesses and residents about the impact on the community and economy.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce81pzewxlzo> - BBC News reports that Network Rail has announced Botley Road in Oxford will reopen in August 2026. The road has been closed since April 2023 for station redevelopment, causing significant disruption to residents and businesses. The delay is attributed to engineering challenges and utility diversions. Improved pedestrian and cyclist access is planned for the summer. Local businesses have expressed concerns over the prolonged closure, with some reporting financial losses. The council emphasizes the importance of the redevelopment for future rail projects and economic growth.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cly9943l9lro> - BBC News reports that a group of Green councillors in Oxford is calling for the city council to consider legal action against Network Rail over the management of the Botley Road closure. The councillors argue that Network Rail underestimated the project's scale, leading to prolonged disruption for residents and businesses. The road has been closed since April 2023, with reopening now scheduled for August 2026. The council is urged to explore potential legal avenues and consider a public inquiry into the project's management.