

Site capacity assessment – Local Plan 2045

Site name	Warneford Hospital
LP2045 Site Allocation	SPE18
Site size (ha)	8.67ha

Site location



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A) Site overview

Description of current context

- Much of the site is taken up by the main hospital building from the late 19th century, built in the style of a country house set in parkland which has, over time, incorporated additional annexes and self-contained buildings accommodating specialist units and research facilities.
- The immediate surrounding area of the site includes two large green spaces, South Park to the north west and the Warneford Meadow and Orchard to the south east, whilst pockets of residential lie to the north east and south west, as well as Oxford Bible church to the north.
- A little further beyond the site lie some larger institutional areas in the form of the Churchill hospital to the east and Oxford Brookes University campus to the north.
- The site is not in an area of significant deprivation (largely within the 50% least deprived areas in country).
- The site is not within a city/district centre and is closest to Headington District centre (1.4km walk), or East Oxford District Centre (1.5km walk).
- The site is a provider of specialist healthcare and research with aspirations to bring forward new and enhanced facilities to benefit patients and medical research in future.

Site photos



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B) Open space, nature and flood risk

Description of current context

Green infrastructure

- The site itself is characterised by some large areas of green open space—the remaining parkland providing the setting to the hospital which has not been redeveloped through the site's various expansions over the years. This includes a sizable playing field in eastern corner of site. Much of this space is identified as supporting green infrastructure in policy G1.
- Along with the walls, the boundaries are marked by trees and hedges. Several lines of trees, hedges and other forms of planting onsite blend the site into surrounding the landscape.
- There are also other singular features including some significant existing trees scattered across the site which are important to public amenity in the area and will provide valuable ecosystem services. Existing trees are protected by the OCC - Warneford Hospital (No.1) TPO, 1994, which covers much of the site (the entire north-western half and parts of the rest of the site). There is also an orchard adjacent to the south eastern boundary of the site.
- As noted earlier, the site lies between two large green spaces—South Park and Warneford Meadow and Orchard Oxford City Wildlife Site (OCWS), with the latter directly abutting the site.

Biodiversity and ecology

- Potential for protected species constraints in the site likely include roosting bats, foraging and commuting bats, badgers, nesting birds, and reptiles.
- DEFRA's Magic mapping identifies that there are areas of Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat; Broadleaved Woodland; and Traditional Orchards Priority Habitat along south-east boundary.
- Site lies within some of the impact risk zones for the Lye Valley SSSI, according to the 2025 Hydrogeological Impact Assessment, which is susceptible to adverse impacts upon surface and groundwater flows in the area.
- A narrow strip of land along southeast boundary, adjacent to Warneford Meadow and Orchard OCWS, is identified within the county's LNRS as an area that could become important for biodiversity.

Blue Infrastructure

- Whilst the site and its surroundings are in Flood Zone 1, patches of surface water flood risk are present in the south-west of the site and also some smaller patches around the north-east boundaries.

Land Quality

- The site is within 200m of known peat reserves associated with the Lye Valley area.
- Historic and ongoing use of the site as a hospital may mean that there is the presence of contamination on parts of the site.

Analysis and urban design implications

- The existing front lawn has particular value to the setting of the listed buildings and its treatment requires careful consideration. Green, high-quality landscaping in keeping with the character and history of the site is essential.
- The Local Plan 2036 considered that the loss of the sports field was justified due to the need for and benefits of new hospital development, though set out that the loss needed to be mitigated, which would align with the new local plan G1 policy's supporting green infrastructure designation also (which allows for qualitative or quantitative re-provision).
- Existing trees should be retained where possible and this will influence developable area of site and its capacity, particularly where these are afforded additional protection through TPO. Opportunities exist to plant new trees to benefit public amenity and enhance the setting of the Listed Buildings.
- The site likely already scores above the UGF target, however, proposals will need to ensure that overall score is not reduced. High quality features, such as the mature trees, should be retained in the first instance. Where green features are lost, this may necessitate some improvement of existing lower quality areas of greening elsewhere.
- Protected species assessments will likely be needed and it must be shown that development will not harm protected species. New ecological enhancements could be delivered to provide additional habitat supporting local species including their movement across the site from the wider area; it would be particularly beneficial to incorporate measures that can align with those identified in the LNRS for the site.
- Potential for impacts on the nearby Lye Valley SSSI, as well as the adjacent OCWS will need to be carefully considered and addressed where necessary.
- Potential presence of contamination as well as peat deposits will need to be investigated. Contamination will need to be remediated where necessary, meanwhile loss of peat deposits on undeveloped parts of the site, where discovered, will need to be avoided should these be brought forward for development.

C) Historic environment, character and local context

Description of current context

Historic environment

- The site is adjacent to the Headington Hill Conservation Area (to the north-west).
- There are many listed buildings onsite, including: the Warneford Hospital; Nurses Home; Chapel; Mortuary. There is also the lodge and front garden area wall and gate piers at the entrance; as well as the stone in Warneford lane opposite the entrance. These are all Grade II listed. A historic bund which runs along the boundary and into the site also has heritage value.
- The site is also opposite the Grade II Barn at Cheney Farm which is located just over the Warneford Road to the north west.

- Warneford Meadow and Orchard nearby is a locally designated site which features on the Oxford Heritage Asset Register.
- There are no view cones running through the site, although views to/from the listed buildings will likely be important components of their setting.
- Site may have some archaeological interest for potential Roman remains.

Built environment

- 6 buildings are included in the Grade II listing, and the difference in quality and merit is clear between these and other buildings.
- There are various annexes towards the rear of the main hospital making up a small complex. There is also a research centre and inpatient adolescent treatment unit, which are self-contained and set back from the hospital complex and distinctive in character.
- Building heights are relatively low across the site, around 2 to 3 storeys, including the later additions.
- Limestone and light-coloured bricks are the primary material palette of hospital building and boundary walls. The contrast between these and the natural features are a notable element of the character of the site.
- Potentially sensitive edges are on the boundary to the back gardens of the residences on Hill Top Road as well as on to the Warneford Meadow and Orchard OCWS.
- The site is located in the east of the city, within Southfield Park and Hospital Complex (7B) Character Area, which is noted for its large area of open space, areas of medium- to high-density built form, including large scale and occasional grand buildings, and linkages to some notable natural areas of ecological importance like the Lye Valley. The assessment notes the area to have overall high landscape quality and biodiversity value and moderate historic integrity (which is also associated location of substantial Roman pottery). The area is noted to be moderately sensitive to change, with the ecological integrity and elevated position of the area being characteristics of particularly sensitivity.

Analysis and urban design implications

- Redevelopment of the site offers a positive opportunity to address historic piecemeal development across the site whilst also enhancing healthcare and associated research provision on the site.
- Proposals coming forward will need to consider the various heritage sensitivities present and be designed in a way that does not harm (and ideally enhances) the setting of these assets – particularly the listed buildings on site and nearby as well as the adjacent Conservation Area. They may also need to investigate potential archaeological remains.
- Generous gaps between any plots would help to retain the open character of the site and enhance the green setting. Taking opportunities to integrate and connect with greenspaces around the site for any residential element of the healthcare provision would be a positive way to support wellbeing of occupants.
- Materials used for new development could take inspiration from the adjacent Conservation Area as well as the existing Listed Buildings on the site, such as through use of limestone or light-coloured bricks.
- To remain in keeping with the character of the hospital and the wider setting of the site, it is likely that the most appropriate approach will be to keep a relatively low density and relatively low heights, though this should be guided by local context.
- Design will need to respond to the potential sensitivities of the boundaries, particularly from the back gardens of the residences on Hill Top Road as well as the Oxford City Wildlife Site. Should consider potential need for setbacks or how boundary treatments and buffering could be incorporated where necessary.

D) Access, movement and layout

Description of current context

Access into the site

- Roosevelt Drive is the main access route, whilst Warneford Lane runs along northern boundary and provides vehicle/pedestrian access to the west of the mortuary.
- The boundary wall and piers are at least partially covered by the listing.

Layout of the site

- No segregated cycle paths through the site and pedestrian walkways limited outside of built footprint. Arguably, the layout currently prioritises car movements.
- Indeed, several areas of the site are dedicated to parking currently.

Connectivity to wider area

- The site is closest to Headington District centre (1.4km walk) and the various amenities it offers, otherwise, East Oxford District Centre is in the opposite direction (1.5km walk).
- In terms of public transport, the site is fairly well served by frequent buses to the city centre from Roosevelt Drive, with the bus stop being less than 100m from the current access point into the site.

Analysis and urban design implications

- There is potential to rethink the layout of the grounds and consolidate parking provision to enhance non-vehicular movement through the site.
- Additional measures to help prioritise active travel could be incorporated in the site such as dedicated foot and cycle paths and connections, and reducing the priority given to cars and other vehicles.
- Unlikely to be able to create new access into the site due to heritage sensitivity of the boundary wall, as well as presence of designated ecological site adjacent.
- The grounds are large, so can accommodate self-contained annex scale developments with generous gaps in between to retain open character.

E) Other considerations

Other considerations to include in allocations?

Amenity

- Potential for some noise impacts from the Warneford Road which runs adjacent to the site, but not expected to be significant.
- There may also be amenity impacts for neighbours e.g. in terms of noise or lighting where development is proposed close to the boundaries with the back gardens of the residences on Hill Top Road (as well as the OCWS), so this will need to be considered and addressed.
- Site is not in proximity to a current air quality hotspot, although the entire city is an Air Quality Management Area.

Infrastructure needs

- Nothing particular identified at this stage.

F) Landowner aspirations

The site is currently, and is planned to remain, in non-residential uses primarily. Expect to bring forward new hospital and linked research facility and then redevelop the existing listed elements of the site in due course. Element of post grad residential/staff accommodation expected to come forward in addition. An outline planning application for the site was submitted in 2025 and has not yet been determined.

G) Any extra work needed to inform allocation? (won't apply to all sites)

- *Site-specific mitigations identified from SA*
- *Heritage impact assessment*
- *SFRA Level 2 assessment*
- *HRA biodiversity survey conclusions/recommendations*

The early review of potential sustainability impacts arising from developing this site (see individual site assessment form supporting Sustainability Appraisal) identified the potential need for mitigation in relation to significant negative impacts (scored as --) against the following criteria:

- SA objective 11 – specifically, listed buildings due to such assets being onsite.

H) Key considerations informing the minimum number of homes for the allocation policy

Minimum capacity for the site has been calculated with the following assumptions:

- N/A - site allocation primarily for hospital and related research and development use only, with residential linked to this supported but not required.