

Site capacity assessment – Local Plan 2045

Site name	Oxford Brookes University Marston Road Campus
LP2045 Site Allocation	SPE11
Site size (ha)	1.18

Site location



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A) Site overview

- The site comprises the former Milham Ford School, which closed in 2003 and is currently in use as the Oxford Brookes Marston Road Campus. The site is currently allocated for academic use, employer linked affordable housing, or residential development in the event that Oxford Brookes University vacates the use.
- The proposed allocation is one part of what were formerly extensive school grounds. The former playing field area in front of the school is leased by Oxford City Council and is now Milham Ford Nature Park. In 2006 Brookes sold part of the site to the south for housing; the new streets were named Mary Price Close and McCabe Place in memory of two former headmistresses.
- The site falls within the 'New Marston - Inter-war/post-war suburbs' townscape category on the edge of the Headington Settled Plateaux landscape character area. This is an extensive area of inter- and post-war residential housing between the historic villages of Headington and Old Marston.

Site photos



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B) Open space, nature and flood risk

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Description of current context

- The footprint of the site is almost completely built on, although the boundaries along Jack Straw's Lane and the eastern boundary are lined with trees and hedgerows. The trees will be important for the amenity and visual relief for the occupiers of the site and neighbours, and will also provide valuable ecosystem services. While the existing trees are mainly confined to the perimeter, they will influence developable area of site and its capacity if fully retained.
- Milham Ford Nature Park lies directly adjacent and forms the eastern boundary of the site, whilst housing/gardens abut directly west of the site and to the south separated from the site by a further line of trees/hedges.
- The quad formed within Milham Ford School grounds contains important areas of lowland meadow grassland and is described in Oxford landscape assessment report as a good example of how recreation and wildlife can be accommodated side by side. Both the Nature Park and the quad are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. However, within the site (redline) boundary there is a low amount of natural surface cover relative to the amount of development on the site and as such the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) score within the site boundary is likely to be below the proposed policy requirement.
- The New Marston Meadows SSSI is a short distance away, and is sensitive to changes in the flows and quality of water in the river Cherwell due to being in its floodplain.
- Potential protected species constraints include roosting bats, foraging and commuting bats, breeding birds, reptiles, amphibians, badgers, and invertebrates.
- The site is located in Flood Zone 1, although there are some areas of increased surface water flooding risk particularly along the southern boundary of the site and the perimeter of the inner quad.

Analysis and urban design implications

- The main 'Nature Park' should be excluded from any development area, while any development should be encouraged to retain the Quad as well. There may be an opportunity to fund ongoing and additional habitat management through any development.

- The requirements for open space on the site will be dependent on the type of development that is brought forward on the site – residential development will be required to have an open space provision of 10% of site area - and will in turn depend on the options that are decided on i.e. reuse of the existing buildings or wholesale redevelopment of the site.
- The tree lines on the perimeter are mature. They provide amenity for the residential neighbours and for occupiers of the site and should be retained where possible regardless of the development option chosen for the site.
- Proposals for the site should integrate more natural features and surface cover types to enhance the UGF score for the site, the policy requirements for which will require an uplift from existing levels regardless of the use.
- Mitigation of surface water flood risk/runoff should also be taken into consideration during the design phase in terms of the layout or SUDS, and these may also be integrated into the green infrastructure provision of the site.
- Due to the sensitivity of the SSSI, development proposals should make the most of opportunities to integrate SuDS and make use of the natural features, such as the natural slope of the site, as part of drainage plans for the site.

C) Historic environment, character and local context

Description of current context

Historic Environment

- The site sits just to the south of the Doris Field Memorial Park view cone which begins a short way to the north east and looks south west. The Oxford View Cones assessment highlights that the nature park adjacent to the site provides for a secondary view of similar quality however, and the wider view *influenced the design and landscaping of the former school.*
- The site is just outside the boundary, but within the setting of, the Headington Hill Conservation Area which will be a consideration.
- There are no statutorily designated heritage assets on site, however the building has recently been included on the OHAR (i.e. local list) and is identified as a landmark in the Oxford in the landscape assessment document.
- Site contains no known archaeological sites and has limited or uncertain archaeological potential

Built Environment

- The site itself is a rectangular area accessed to the north from Jack Straw's Lane and to the south from McCabe Place and Mary Price Close. To the northern edge of the site, along Jack Straw's Lane, the site is defined by tree and hedge lined boundaries. Milham Ford Nature Park is directly adjacent and forms the western boundary of the site, whilst residential buildings with very large rear gardens form the eastern boundary.
- The former school building has a very formal layout with four wings formed around the central quad. There have been several additions and extensions which are most evident towards the north of the site. These appear to have been added in an ad hoc manner and are generally unsympathetic to the original building.
- Land previously belonging to the former school was developed into terraced blocks of flats. Although they are not associated with the current use, these terraces have several

elements that evoke the original school building such as the layout of the formal layout of the terraces, the heights and massing of the blocks and the roofscape.

Analysis and urban design implications

- The entire site, but particularly the eastern side, is directly adjacent to the conservation area and would need to respond to this appropriately.
- The OHAR designation report highlights the elements that are distinctive to the Milham Ford School building and its significance as a historical landmark. While it does not have statutory status it does have several features that contribute to its importance as a local landmark. Design proposals should take into account the status of the buildings as a local landmark in a historic, social and physical sense.

D) Access, movement and layout

Description of current context

- Access is only to the north and south of the site. The previous Local Plan allocation identified that Jack Straw's Lane is likely to be the most suitable access if the site is redeveloped; however access can also be achieved via McCabe Place and Mary Price Close. Access from south via Mary Price Close is a shared surface road with residents parking directly outside front doors on western side, and more defined parking off the main road to the east.
- On Jack Straw's Lane, the pavement is continuous on northern side, but only to the east of site entrance on the southern side. Road is fairly quiet/residential with residents tending to park currently on north side. Similar situation on McCabe Place, though a little more open. Access onto site currently gated.
- There is a car park to the north of the site, accessed from Jack Straw's Lane, it is set on a higher level and the access goes up a slope. There is also some additional parking to the south east of the site, as well as limited disabled parking to the western edge of the site, accessed from McCabe Place and Mary Price Close respectively. The rest of the site is built up with the Oxford Brookes buildings.
- The nearest bus stops are located on Marston Road to the west of the site and are within a suitable walking distance to support car free development. The site is also within the MS Controlled Parking Zone of the city.

Analysis and urban design implications

- Movement through site, between north and south is currently not possible as extensions to school effectively cut site in half. There may be opportunities to open this connection for pedestrians/cyclists (not cars) to facilitate sustainable/active travel through wider area. It could also have positives for surveillance/safety.
- There would also potentially be an opportunity to open up a connection into the nature park on the western boundary (currently closest access is to the south off McCabe Place). Development might be an opportunity to secure some contributions to improve movement through the nature park, if this would not negatively impact upon the biodiversity value of the site.
- The limited access to the site even from the north (a street which is only likely to be able to accommodate some limited increase in vehicle movement, if any) suggests that any parking allocated within the site ought to be restricted. Therefore, the site would appear to lend itself to car free development or uses which would not increase vehicle movement radically (e.g. student residential).

E) Other considerations

Other considerations to include in allocations?

- Reuse of as much of the original building fabric as possible is encouraged where this is feasible, not only to preserve the historic significance of the site but also for sustainability reasons.
- Particular attention should be paid to new lighting and its impacts on biodiversity, particularly on the western side of the site adjacent to the nature park, efforts should also be made to minimise negative impacts of noise and poor air quality.

F) Landowner aspirations

- Landowner seeks to maintain the principle of the building for institutional and student accommodation use with a potential option to dispose for housing following a strategic review of its requirements.
- Irrespective of use, landowner preference is complete redevelopment of the site instead of reuse of existing buildings as they say modern accessibility standards and requirements are difficult to achieve in the current building.

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

- None

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:

- Internal quad excluded from developable area: 0.133ha
- Developable area for rest of site: 1.047 ha;
- Conservation Area typology density figure of 40 dph