

Site capacity assessment – Local Plan 2045

Site name	Oxford Railway Station and Becket St Car Park
LP2045 Site Allocation	SPCW9
Site size (ha)	2.56ha

Site location



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A) Site overview

Description of current context

- Railway Station and associated surface level car parking situated in the city centre within Oxford's West End.
- Railway station site bus stops, taxi rank, surface level parking, as well as rail-related infrastructure and buildings.
- Becket St Car Park is a surface level car park dedicated for rail users.
- Western side of the tracks is currently under construction for a new western entrance
- Site is not within a “regen area” (i.e., one of the 20% most deprived wards in Oxford)
- Entire site lies within land included within the East West Rail Safeguarding Direction (November 2025)

Site photos

Photo 1: Oxford Railway Station (main site) view from Frideswide Square



Photo 2: Oxford Station viewed from Botley Road Bridge



Photo 3: Current Cycle parking fronting Frideswide Square

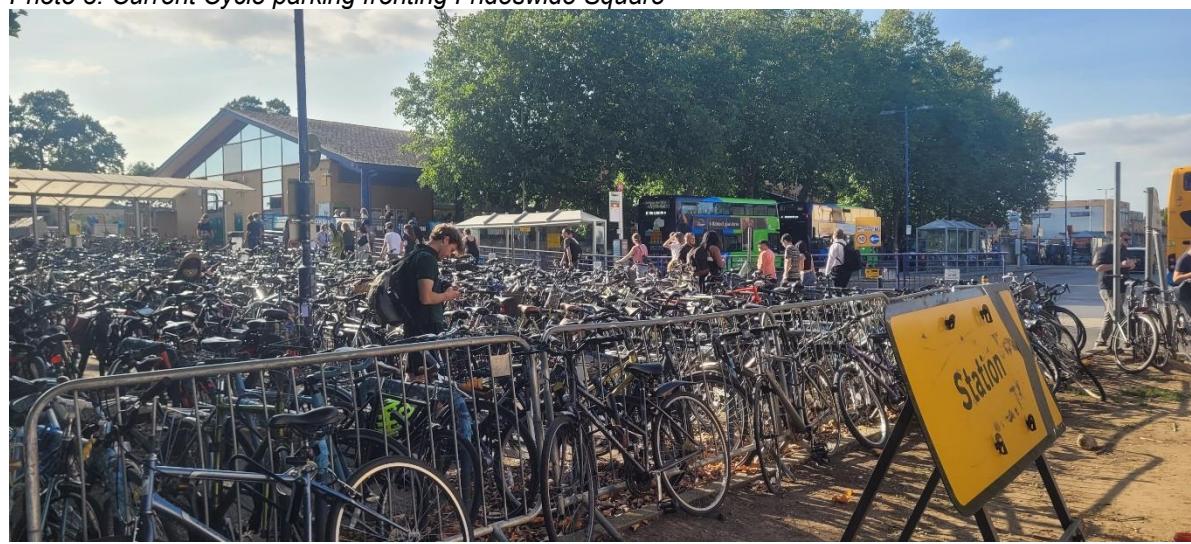


Photo 4: Secondary Station access (via pedestrian/ cycle route) from Rewley Road



Photo 5: Church of St Thomas the Martyr (as viewed from Becket St car park)



Photo 6: Becket St Car Park and Cemetery Bridge (as viewed from Becket St car park)



B) Open space, nature and flood risk

Description of current context

Green infrastructure

- One TPO Tree and one TPO group within the station site boundary (see map below). Two TPO groups located to the north of the site.
- Other mature trees form the southern boundary of the station site with Botley Road.
- Several other existing trees located along the eastern boundary of Becket Street Car Park



- UGF: Predominantly hardstanding – no green spaces at the site. Trees located to the north, and at the station itself. Trees and hedgerows form the eastern boundary of the Becket St Car Park
- Existing UGF score less than 0.3 (more likely even lower)
- No formal GI located at the site

Biodiversity and ecology

- Trees and hedgerows provide green links for biodiversity (e.g., birds, insects etc.)
- No ecological designations on or near the site
- No priority habitats on or near the site

Blue Infrastructure

- Northern boundary of site is just over 60m from Castle Mill Stream/ Sheepwash Channel
- Site partially in Flood Zone 2
- Patches of surface water flood risk present within the site. The largest areas are located around the station building (northern parcel) and inside part of the eastern perimeter of the southern parcel along Becket Street.
- Initial parts of current access route are within Flood Zone 2 (Botley Road and Becket Street) and then Flood Zone 3 if heading further west onto Botley Road.

Land Quality

- Site contains railway infrastructure which has the potential for contamination

Analysis and urban design implications

- TPO tree(s) and TPO group area(s) will need careful consideration when bringing forward development at the site.
- Opportunities should be used to incorporate SuDS into development. This could be through a reduction in the amount of hard surfacing such as car parks around the rear of the buildings and in the front gardens. Given surface water flooding issues, the use of SuDS

will be needed to ensure that surface water is properly managed and could be used to improve the existing situation.

- Should consider the use of green roofs and walls.
- Given the limited biodiversity on-site at present (other than a number of trees) there is clear opportunity to incorporate green infrastructure/ biodiversity into redevelopment plans.
- Becket St lies within Flood Zone 2, while the Becket St car park itself lies within Flood Zone 1. The Becket St car park, is accessed from Becket St and has been artificially raised above Becket St.

C) Historic Environment, Character and Local Context

Description of current context

Historic environment

Conservation areas

- Site does not lie within any of the city's conservation areas although the Becket Street Car Park is adjacent to the Osney Town Conservation Area (which is characterised mainly through two-storey Victorian terraced housing. The railway line acts as physical barrier separating the conservation area from the surface level car park at Becket St.
- Part of the Becket Street Car Park lies adjacent to a small part of the boundary of the Central (City and University) Conservation Area

Listed Buildings

- Several Listed Buildings in the vicinity of Becket St Car Park: Church of St Thomas the Martyr (Grade II) Listed Building. Several other Listed Buildings including Combe House (Grade II) and St Thomas Vicarage (Grade II). Also, Former Cooper's Marmalade Factory (Grade II) is located Park End St (Frideswide Square).

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

- Two Scheduled Ancient Monuments located at the site. Rewley Abbey (predominantly below ground). And the Swing Bridge at Sheepwash Channel.

OHAR

- Several OHAR local heritage assets near the site including the Former Castle Hotel (23 Park End Street), the Sheepwash Channel, and the Westgate Hotel (Botley Road)

Archaeology

- Within City Centre Archaeological Area
- Located within Historic Urban Character Area 3: Osney Island Transport and Business:
- Archaeological interest: the area contains part of the precinct of medieval Osney Abbey and the projected line of the Royalist Civil War defences (under Oxford Cherwell Valley College). A series of water channels crossed this area in the postmedieval to early modern period and may preserve water management features. Notable Railway infrastructure includes the former sites of the goods shed and GWR station and an extant scheduled 19th century swing bridge.
- The Urban Archaeological Database records twelve archaeological events in the character area, comparatively few given its size. Stray finds from the area include several fragments of tile, possibly of a Saxon date, were recovered from Osney Lane in the 19th century. The area includes part of the precinct of the medieval Osney Abbey, post-medieval water channels, the former site of the GWR station and Osney Goods shed, also the projected line of the Royalist Civil War defences. It therefore has significant archaeological potential. Built fabric of note includes the nationally important 19th century swing bridge and the early 20th century St Thomas' the Martyr School on Osney Lane which includes a red brick frontage and iron railings of local interest.

Built environment

Land uses on site and immediately around the site

- On site: Railway infrastructure, associated buildings and surface level parking

- Immediately around the site: Academic Institutional (Said Business School), Residential (the other side of the railway line to the west) both around Cripley Road, Mill Street, and on Osney Island. Also existing residential development to the north-west of the main station site.

Scale and form of surrounding development

- At Frideswide Square a mix of existing four storey units including the Grade II Listed Former Marmalade Factory, the Said Business School (academic institutional), the Island Site (mix of uses – plans to redevelop site in plan-period) and Beaver House (recent permission for R&D use granted to replace former Blackwells building).
- Along Becket St, the Grade II listed Church of St Thomas the Martyr as well as 3-4 Storey flats at Osney Lane and southern part of Becket St and some four storey properties towards the north end of Becket St

Materials on and around the site

- Becket St Car Park – surface level car park – tarmac
- Flats at Osney Lane/ Southern half of Becket St – Red Brick/ white render
- Grade II Listed Church of St Thomas the Martyr is stone
- 1-5 Becket St – mixed darker bricks/ light render
- Station – steel framed? Bricks with a part pitched/ part flat roof
- Other Railway building(s) – Brick and cladding (steel-framed?)
- Said Business School – light Bath Stone cladding with a black granite-clad entrance pavilion. The West Wing addition incorporates Rich Tea biscuit bricks and a stepped black granite frame around the entrance

Reuse of existing buildings onsite

- As buildings on site are railway infrastructure related, unlikely to be urban design-related reasons for their reuse. Where high quality sustainably designed buildings are located on-site, consideration should be given to their re-use on sustainability grounds.

Character area- refer to LUC landscape assessment

- The site falls wholly within Area 2B (Historic Western Fringe) as set out in the Landscape Character Assessment. The site lies outside the Central (University and City) Conservation Area however part of the Becket Street site lies adjacent a small part of its boundary.
- The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) identifies Area 2B as the Historic Western Fringe and states:
- The Western Fringe character area wraps around the western edge of the historic core of Oxford. The area accommodates diverse land uses and ages of development. It is dominated in parts by the busy Oxpens Road (A420) and key vehicular conduits into the centre such as Park End Street, as well as the railway station and bus station. Between these busy roads and nodes, lies a dense jumble of historic buildings, retail and service development, and residential and academic land uses.
- The LCA sets out that the incremental change seen over the years in this area, is sometimes poorly integrated into the older fabric and historic context of the city. The area has a confusing street and block pattern with poor legibility. It is not an easy area to get around by walking, cycling or by car and there is little open space and poor visibility/ connectivity with the watercourses that flow through this part of the city.
- This is an area dominated by busy roads, large modern buildings and piecemeal commercial and residential development, which strongly influence the perception of the western approach to the city.
- West End SPD considers that:
 - *Oxford station is the key gateway into Oxford through which the majority of visitors to the city initially arrive and depart. Improvements to Frideswide Square that have been delivered in recent years have helped create new places within the public realm in the area, however the station itself is still dominated by hard landscaping, parking and vehicles and which do not create a welcoming environment to the city.*

The redevelopment of the station presents the opportunity to change this, by creating a gateway befitting the status of Oxford as a global city.

Analysis and urban design implications

- Care and attention should be paid to nearby Scheduled Ancient Monuments (Swing Bridge to the north and site of Rewley Abbey to the East) which display above ground and below ground features. There is potential for medieval archaeological remains in this area given the proximity of the site to the Rewley Abbey precinct and industrial heritage (associated with the railway).
- Development proposals concerned with the redevelopment and regeneration of the station site should be delivered in accordance with an agreed masterplan with the City Council. In relation to the city's heritage assets, the masterplan should:
 - set out how the planned redevelopment of the site is informed by, and responds to, the city's above and below ground heritage;
 - be informed by above ground and below ground heritage assessments, the methodologies of which, should be agreed in writing with relevant City Council officers.
- Redevelopment of the site should reflect the distinctive local character and recognise the site's importance as a "gateway" into Oxford's historic city core.
- Improving legibility to guide passengers arriving to Oxford for the first time by rail, could include the use of public art as a wayfinding tool.
 - E.g., a statue of famous Victorian engineer, Robert Stephenson (the designer of the historic swing bridge) could simply point towards the city centre in an area of public realm a suitable location visible to passengers leaving the station.
- High Buildings TAN considers the West End and Botley Road area as a "dynamic area" and considers that dynamic areas are the areas of the city where growth, regeneration and/or significant change is
- Site lies within two view cones (partly within the Raleigh Park View Cone, and wholly with the Boar's Hill view cone) and wholly within the historic core area.
- Site-wide masterplan should set out how any areas of height proposed within the development have had regard to views into, across and out from the historic city core, as well as any local views (e.g., from Botley Road into the city centre).
- Important to establish (and confirm) which views should be looked at before assessment is carried out.
- The student flats in the former railway sidings at Roger Dudman way sparked controversy after the City Council approved them in February 2012. A petition in December 2012 expressing widespread concern about the environmental impacts of the development resulted in an independent review which looked at a number of issues including the visual impact of the scheme. This report (produced by Vincent Goodstadt) made several recommendations relating to how visual impact of schemes is assessed, including ensuring that planning committee members (as decision-makers) have access to sufficient information relating to the visual impact of schemes for them to make an informed decision on their outcome. As the station site is in close proximity to the student flats at Roger Dudman way, it is important to ensure that where heights are proposed, appropriate local views are also provided in order that decision-makers (i.e., the councillors on planning committees) are able to come to an informed decision based on all relevant information. The proposed scheme at Roger Dudman Way was not assessed in relation to specific local views from Port Meadow or on the residences at William Lucy Way. These local views were specific to the proposed development at Roger Dudman Way. However, development proposed in the vicinity of the Roger Dudman Way scheme should consider whether these, or other appropriately locally contextual views (which should be agreed with relevant City Council officers) should be assessed in relation to how the site.
- How the development responds and interacts with local views is also a very important aspect of the decision-making process.
- *The methodology for analysing views relating to development proposals associated with the masterplan for the station site (including which views should be looked at), should be agreed in writing with relevant City Council officers prior to any analysis being undertaken.*

- *Development should not be of such scale, form and massing so as to obstruct or compete with views to, from and across the historic city core.*
- Materials used in the immediate vicinity of the site include brick sometimes with cement detailing (a variety of different coloured bricks are used in the majority of the Victorian buildings) and stone (Cotswold stone features at the Royal Oxford Hotel, and Nuffield College; whereas Bath stone features at the Said Business School).
- The car park at Becket St forms part of the setting of the Grade II Listed Church of St Thomas the Martyr. The Listed Church forms the southern boundary of the Central (City and University) Conservation Area on Becket Street. Frideswide Square forms the northern boundary of the Central Conservation Area on Becket St. As such, the masterplan (for this part of the site) should set out how any development proposed in this location responds to and addresses any heritage impacts that relate both to the setting of the Central Conservation Area, and to the Grade II Listed Church that lies within it.
- Development should deliver high quality public realm to create a strong sense that enables the station to become a gateway to the city.

D) Access, movement and layout

Description of current context

Access into the site

- The main access to the main station site is from Frideswide Square. Currently pedestrians, cyclists, bus-users, taxis and private car users all enter the main station site this principal entrance.
- While Frideswide Square is presented as a shared space, the main station access reverts quickly to one which is vehicle dominated.
- There is a single pedestrian access via a zebra crossing which bisects the road space, from what appears, architecturally to be the back of the Said Business School from a Bronze Ox to the main station building itself.
- The “station forecourt” is dominated by buses and taxis, with five bus stops located to the “front” of the station building. Bus layover (including for tourist coaches) also takes place in this area. A taxi rank is also present at this part of the site although located at the “island” closest to the Ox outside the blank facade of the Said Business School, in presumably what was an attempt to encourage “bus priority” for station users.
- A ramp leads up to an area of surface level parking for staff (circa 65 spaces) and DDA/ accessible station users (8 spaces). This surface level car parking area includes a larger circulation area (especially to the north of the site).
- The front of the site, under the cover of a number of large mature trees is dominated by a large area of surface level cycle parking. While functional, the current location of the cycle parking detracts from city gateway and adds does not support wayfinding or legibility at the site.
- A secondary (somewhat convoluted) access to the station is available for pedestrians and cyclists around the abrupt corner at the Thatcher Business Education Centre. The Rewley Road and/ or Stable Close route links the station to the Canal Towpath via a walkway over the Castle Mill stream and the Isis Lock Footbridge. From the towpath, Jericho can be accessed via a footbridge over the canal to and then the route continues onto Wolvercote to the north. The city centre is accessible via Hythe Bridge Street to the South.
- Access to the Becket St car park site is via several entrances on Becket St. The Becket St site is raised above street level, and this may have flood risk implications.
- Cemetery bridge also provides a stepped access the railway from Osney Lane on Osney Island, to Osney Lane towards the city centre. It is not gated however and only supports pedestrian users. There is no support for cyclists, and the bridge is not DDA compliant. However, a sign states: Highways Act 1980. Network Rail hereby gives notice that this way is not dedicated to the public.

Layout of the site

- Both sites are dominated by hardstanding either car parking or vehicular circulation. Becket St car park is raised slightly above Becket St itself (which lies within Flood Zone 2).

- The main station site incorporates a multi-modal interchange and there is a large area dedicated for surface level cycle parking at the entrance to the site.
- The northern-most part of the station site is raised and includes surface level operational car parking and operational buildings.
- Railway infrastructure (track) forms a hard western boundary to the whole site. The Said Business School forms a hard eastern boundary to the main station site – secondary access to the station from Rewley Road and surrounding residential streets is available for pedestrians and cyclists.

Connectivity to wider area

- The site's location within the West End of the city centre means that it has good connectivity to the wider area. Located at the point where Frideswide Square joins the Botley Road, the site will have good connectivity with the wider road network once the Botley Road bridge re-opens in 2026.
- Public transport connections to the wider area are accessed at Frideswide Square, Park End St, Botley Road and the Station itself provides bus stops, layover and a taxi rank.
- The majority of passengers enter via the primary station access at Frideswide Square, while secondary pedestrian/ cycle entrance exists offering active travel connectivity to Jericho/ Wolvercote via the Canal Towpath, and to Rewley Road, however this route is not well-signed and was not well-let outside of the station itself.
- The Becket St Car Park has in the past been used as a rail replacement bus hub when planned engineering works in and around Oxford Station. This provides important connectivity to rail passengers wishing to continue their journeys.

Analysis and urban design implications

- The eastern station access should be enhanced and support the improved multi-modal hub offering.
- Opportunities to improve priority for pedestrians and cyclists at the main station entrance should be investigated and delivered as part of a wider masterplan for the site.
- Opportunities to improve the visibility and usability of the secondary pedestrian/ cycle entrance to the station should be investigated and delivered, again as part of a wider masterplan for the site.
- Legible access from Becket St car park to the eastern station site should be provided. The existing pedestrian bridge should be improved to deliver a safe and enhanced crossing over the Botley Road.
- An element of cycle parking should be located at the eastern station site otherwise some cyclists may choose to lock their bikes to street furniture rather than using official cycle storage facilities further away.
- How pedestrians and cyclists enter and leave the station should be considered. Wayfinding, improvements to the public realm and public art could be used to increase the active travel movements associated with the secondary site entrance. This could be enhanced to create an alternative route into the city centre via Rewley Road, which could in turn create opportunities associated with increased footfall in this part of the city centre.
- Opportunities to enhance the setting of the Listed Church on Becket St should be considered.
- Cemetry Bridge (not a public right of way), is required for operational purposes by Network Rail. However, if possible, improvements that enhance its appearance and support a wider range of users would be welcomed.
- Additional pedestrian/ cycle access at the Becket St car park site could be created via Osney Lane (at the southern end of the site) as this could provide an alternate route to the railway station from/ to the Westgate shopping centre (via Oxpens).
- Any pedestrian/ cycle route through the Becket St car park site should be safe, secure and legible. Routes through the whole length of the Becket St site that run parallel to the western site boundary (i.e., the railway line) should be avoided.
- Any north south routes through the Becket St car park site should include active frontages at ground floor level, provide a sense of enclosure, while also creating a safe, secure environment for daytime and night-time users.
- Buses and taxis currently use the area in front of the station to collect passengers (bus stops and taxi rank). It is also used as an area of bus layover. Frideswide Square contains

two bus stops that will continue to provide users with access to the redeveloped station gateway area.

- East West Rail land-take requirements for additional track and platform capacity (circa 0.5ha) will reduce the developable area at the site. This will reduce the available space for bus stops; taxi drop off and pick up (and feeder rank); and bus layover at the eastern station site.
- The masterplan should show how bus and taxi provision (including layover and feeder ranks) is to be provided. Where bus and taxi provision (and associated infrastructure – i.e., bus stops) are proposed outside of the redline site boundary (for the station masterplan area – i.e., the east and west station sites) this should be agreed in writing with the City Council.
- The redevelopment of the bus/ taxi zone in front of the eastern station building (see photo 1 above) creates an opportunity to transform this area into an active public space (subject to the satisfactory relocation of the existing bus and taxi provision and subject to any existing access rights).
- The station area masterplan should consider how improvements to the public realm in this location (i.e., the eastern bus/ taxi zone) can be delivered that support pedestrian and cycle priority.
- The Becket St car park seems to serve a secondary operational function (in addition to providing surface level car parking for rail users). It has previously been used as a rail replacement bus service area where rail replacement buses pick-up and set-down passengers, and for rail replacement bus service layover.
- Photographs RR1-3 below were taken in April 2023.
- These photos were taken when the 10-week emergency viaduct repairs at Nuneham were being carried out (between April and June 2023). These emergency repairs resulted in the closure of the railway line between Oxford and Didcot Parkway. As such, Becket St car park was used for rail replacement bus services. Photographs RR1-3 below (taken in April 2023) show the extent of the car park used when the Oxford-Didcot line was closed for to address the emergency viaduct works at Nuneham.
- A subsequent full closure of Oxford Station took place later in 2023 for nine days in July/ August as planned engineering works were carried out. While more extensive rail replacement bus service provision is likely to be needed to address a full closure than a partial closure, neither are representative of a “typical planned” closure.
- Although it is acknowledged that the photographs taken in April 2023 do not necessarily represent a typical closure.
- As can be seen from the images, when rail replacement buses are required at Oxford station, rail user car parking was limited to the northern part of the site (only). Access to the car park was via the northern-most entrance on Becket St. The rail replacement bus area was to the south of the site with buses parking to the north and south of Cemetery Bridge. The rail replacement bus service zone used more than half the site (0.57ha approx.).
- The masterplan for the site will need to show how rail replacement bus services have been considered. Any proposed solutions involving the use of land for rail replacement buses that is outside the redline boundary of the station area masterplan will need to be agreed in writing with the relevant landowner and/ or local authority.

Photo RR1 – Southern part of the site (view from Cemetery bridge)



Photo RR2 – northern part of the site (view from Cemetery Bridge – western site boundary)



Photo RR3 – northern part of the site (view from Cemetery Bridge – eastern site boundary)



E) Other considerations

Other considerations to include in allocations?
Amenity

- Given the proximity of the site to the railway station and existing railway infrastructure, there are likely to be existing noise issues associated with the site.
- Any public realm improvements to the wider area involving additional lighting that take place near existing watercourses (e.g., Sheepwash Channel/ Castle Mill Stream/ Oxford Canal) are likely to require a lighting strategy as bats often use river corridors as foraging habitats.

Infrastructure needs

- The main (eastern) station site will need to provide circa 0.5ha for platform and track improvements associated with East West Rail.

F) Landowner aspirations

Landowner proposing a mix of uses in addition to a new station including residential, employment uses, hotel and replacement car parking.

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

- Heritage impact assessment
- SFRA Level 2 – Becket St in Flood Zone 2. If development proposals at Becket St car park involve level changes that align the site levels with the current level at Becket St, site may also fall within Flood Zone 2. Site specific FRA likely to be needed anyway as whole site is more than 1ha (requirements for FRA for sites in Flood Zone 1)

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

- While this site is unlikely to represent a residential-led masterplan, nonetheless it is important to provide an estimate of potential minimum residential capacity at the site.
- At the main eastern station site, the single access vehicular access from Frideswide Square is for pedestrians, cyclists, and wheelers, buses, taxis, blue badge holders and network rail staff parking. Locating residential development at the eastern station site is not without challenge as additional vehicle movements for waste collections, deliveries, removals etc. would all need to be factored into the design. As such, we assume no residential will be located at the main eastern station site.
- As such, the capacity calculation is based on an assumption that that homes are delivered on the Becket St car park only.
- As the site is located within the city centre boundary, a mix of use can be delivered at the site. As such, the capacity calculation is based on an assumption that 50% of the site area is delivered as residential.
- The trees/ soft landscaping which screen the car park from Becket St are not included within the capacity calculation area.
- The total area for residential development within the developable area of the site is 0.52ha.
- As the site is within the city centre, we have assumed 100dph.
- At 100dph a site area of 0.52ha would mean that the site capacity is 52 dwellings.

