

Site capacity assessment – Local Plan 2045

Site name	Nuffield Sites
Policy Ref:	SPCW7
Site size (ha)	Island Site (0.65ha) Worcester St Car Park and Public House (0.51ha) Land South of Frideswide Sq (0.26ha) Total site area 1.42ha

Site location



A) Site overview

Description of current context

- Three brownfield sites in the same ownership located close together within Oxford's West End of the city centre.
- Island site (070) - mix of uses including ground floor retail, cafes and bars. Employment uses also occupy part of the site (e.g., The Foundry, 3-5 Hythe Bridge Street), and a nightclub (The Bridge, 6-9 Hythe Bridge Street). On the upper floors uses include, smaller office units, language schools and there also a number of vacant units at the site. A hotel and local supermarket are also present.
- Worcester St Car Park (081) - majority of the site is a surface level car park.
- Land South of Frideswide Square (624) - mix of uses including ground floor retail, community space, restaurants, takeaway, etc.

Site photos:

070 Island site (viewed from New Road)



070 Island site (viewed from Frideswide Square)



081 view of Worcester College RPG from Worcester St Car Park



081 Worcester St Car Park (including view of Castle Motte) as viewed from Hythe Bridge St



081 Worcester St Car Park (view of Castle Motte) from Hythe Bridge St



624 1-5 Becket St (Land South of Frideswide Square) (viewed from Becket St)



624 Part of land South of Frideswide Square (viewed from Frideswide Square)



B) Open space, nature and flood risk

Description of current context

Green infrastructure

- None of the three sites that make up the “Nuffield Sites” include trees with TPOs (however trees with a trunk diameter greater than 75mm as measured at 1.5m above the ground, are protected within a conservation area). As sites 081 and 624 are within the Central (city and university) conservation area, any trees meeting these criteria are protected.
- UGF score 0.1 (approx.) as majority of site is built up.
- Limited on-site GI
- Middle Fisher Row Gardens (Core GI) is adjacent to the eastern edge of the Island Site.

Biodiversity and ecology

- No sites of recognised biodiversity status (local or national) in the vicinity
- Species potential limited to roosting bats in certain buildings (some more suitable than others) and nesting birds.

Blue Infrastructure

- The Wareham Stream (a branch from the Castle Mill Stream) forms the eastern boundary of the Island site (070). Currently a ‘hard bank’.
- Part of the Castle Mill Stream forms the western boundary to Worcester St Car Park (081). Currently a ‘hard bank’.
- **Island Site (070):** Site partially within FZ3b; Patches of surface water flood risk towards the western and northern parts of the site. Access/ egress (both from Hythe Bridge Street and Park End Street) lies within FZ2, with a small part within FZ3.
- **Worcester St Car Park (081):** Site partially within FZ3b (narrow strip along the western boundary, adjacent to Castle Mill Stream. Access/ Egress – initial part of the access route lies within FZ1 and remains in that flood zone to the east. However, if heading west (towards Botley Road), route lies within FZ2.
- **Land South of Frideswide Square (624):** Site wholly located within FZ2. Surface water flood risk present across majority of site. Land immediately surrounding the area along Becket Street and Park End Street lies within Flood Zone 2, and further west along Botley Road within Flood Zone 3.

Land Quality

- No known contamination issues however possible contamination on Island site (070) due to former on-site use (garage). Also, possible contamination at car park (081).

Analysis and urban design implications

- Previous EA advice suggests that opportunities exist for the creation of effective ecological buffer zones. Also, EA suggested opportunities exist for the removal of the existing hard-bank protection.
- SuDS should be incorporated into future developments – this could be through a reduction in hard surfacing (i.e., at the Worcester St Car Park – 081) and through the creation/ incorporation GI into redevelopment plans.
- Biodiversity enhancements should be encouraged along the waterfront. There is the potential to incorporate bank restoration (Wareham Stream). Habitat connectivity could be improved by the incorporation of green walls/ roofs.
- Wareham Stream and Castle Mill Stream are included with the LNRS Mapping that highlight potential measures that could be implemented when delivering biodiversity improvements (See County Council LNRS mapping tool for further details).

C) Historic environment, character and local context

Description of current context

Historic environment

Conservation areas

- Worcester St Car Park (081 and Land South of Frideswide Square are located within the Central (City and University) Conservation Area
- Island Site (070) is adjacent to the boundary of the Central (City and University) Conservation Area
- The Castle Mill Stream, which runs past the eastern edge of the Worcester St Car Park, is considered to be an aspect of significance, which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area. The Castle Mill Stream is described as a “tranquil green public space with a secretive quality quite different from the Isis and Cherwell.
- The Conservation Area Appraisal recognises that the post-war Worcester Str Car Park is an opportunity site *“which could be adapted to greater enhance the setting of adjacent listed buildings. Although not aesthetically pleasing... it allows views towards the Castle motte.”*

Listed Buildings

- No listed buildings on site itself
- Listed buildings near Worcester St Car Park:
 - Grade I Well House, Oxford Castle
 - Grade II Listed Nuffield College
 - Grade II Listed Boundary Wall on Worcester College
- Listed Buildings near the Land South of Frideswide Square
 - Grade II Listed Coopers Marmalade Factory, (frontage)- also near Island Site (070)
 - Grade II Listed St Thomas Vicarage (to the rear)
 - Grade II Listed Church of St Thomas the Martyr (Becket St)

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

- There are two SAMs close to the Nuffield sites:
- Rewley Abbey – predominantly below ground. Upstanding remains exist along Beesley Lane. Nearest part of the site is the Island site (070)
- Oxford Castle and earlier settlement remains (including Castle motte/ mound) - nearest part of the site is the Worcester St Car Park (081)

Registered Parks and Gardens

- There is one RPG close to the site - the southern boundary of Worcester College Grade II* RPG lies to the northern edge of Worcester St Car Park (081). However, this RPG is completely screened from Hythe Bridge Street by the Grade II Listed Worcester College boundary wall.

OHAR

- There is an adopted OHAR within the Island site (070) - “Royal Oxford Hotel, Hollybush Row”, and another adopted OHAR within the Land South of Frideswide Square (624) - “Former Castle Hotel, Park End Street”.
- On Hythe Bridge St (42a) is the former Boatman’s Chapel

Archaeology

- All three sites lie within the locally designated, City Centre Archaeological area
- The Worcester St Car Park contains fragments of industrial archaeology of considerable historic interest

Views

- Historic Core Area (all sites)
- View cones – Raleigh Park: Island site (070) - part; and Worcester Str Car Park (081) majority). Also, Boar’s Hill view cone
- According to the View Cones Study:
- *Raleigh Park provides both framed and open views of the City Centre as you move around it at a relatively close point to the historic high buildings (the viewpoint is approximately 2.3 kilometres from Carfax). Within the view the landscape is seen as a series of narrow layers each representing a different area of the city.*
- *From lower slopes in Raleigh Park a more open aspect allows views northward to the area surrounding Oxford Station including the stepped spire of the Said Business School and the Victorian power station next to the River Thames.*
- Views out from historic core area (e.g., from St George’s Tower and St. Mary’s tower)
- High Buildings TAN considers the West End and Osney Mead as a “dynamic area” providing an indication of heights at which potential “competition” with the existing built form can occur.
- Views out from St Mary’s: 15m
- Views in/ across from Boars Hill: 18m
- Views in/ across from Elsfield: 21m

Built environment

Land Uses (on site)

- Island site (070) - mix of uses including ground floor retail, cafes and bars. Employment uses also occupy part of the site (e.g., The Foundry, 3-5 Hythe Bridge Street), and a nightclub (The Bridge, 6-9 Hythe Bridge Street). On the upper floors uses include, smaller office units, language schools and there also in increasing number of vacant units at the site. A hotel and local supermarket are also present.
- Worcester St Car Park (081) - majority of the site is a surface level car park.
- Land South of Frideswide Square (624) - mix of uses including ground floor retail, community space, restaurants, takeaway, etc.

Land Uses (immediately surrounding)

- Island site (070)
 - To the west – Frideswide Square – mix of academic institutions, railway infrastructure, shops, community use, office, etc.
 - To the east – Wareham Stream and Middle Fisher Row Gardens and a Pub (The Oxford Retreat), the other side of which is the Castle Mill Stream
 - To the north – Hythe Bridge Street – Mix of uses including employment – (recent permission granted for Beaver House and 39-42 Hythe Bridge Street), restaurant, and retail uses.
 - To the south – Park End Street – Mix of uses including ground floor retail, education (teaching college) and office, bar. Upper floors – nightclub and predominantly office accommodation
- Worcester St Car Park (081)
 - To the west – Castle Mill Stream and Middle Fisher Row Gardens and Pub (The Oxford Retreat)
 - To the east – Worcester Street – includes Nuffield College (academic institutional), Ground floor restaurant (Nando’s), the western entrance to George Street and

office accommodation (both F1 and EG uses) form provide the western edge of Gloucester Green.

- To the North – Hythe Bridge Street - Worcester College RPG fully screened behind the listed Worcester College Wall. Also, the canal and towpath (including moorings)
- To the south – Tidmarsh Lane and to the south-west lies New Road which contains Scheduled Castle complex, leading up to the main shopping area
- Land South of Frideswide Square (624)
 - To the west - (Botley Road and the railway)
 - To the east - (Frideswide Square, Park End Street (including the Listed Cooper's Marmalade Factory)
 - To the South – (Becket Street) Listed St Thomas Vicarage, and Listed Church of St Thomas the Martyr, and Listed Combe House. Also, Becket St Car Park
 - To the North – (Frideswide Square) Railway station and associated infrastructure and Said Business School (academic institutional)

Scale and form of surrounding development

- Park End Street contains mainly three storey buildings, most of which have a varying roofline.
- The Park End Street numbering continues into Frideswide Square, where the majority of buildings are three-storeys, with the exception of the four-storey Listed Cooper's Marmalade Factory.
- Opposite, on Frideswide Square the Said Business School is another three-storey building, however it has a modern design that incorporates both historic elements and contemporary features.
- Hythe Bridge Street at present contains Beaver House (the former Blackwell's building) – a glass fronted four-five storey building, which has, along with numbers 39-42A Hythe Bridge Street, recently been granted permission to deliver R&D floorspace. 39-41 Hythe Bridge Street will be replaced as part of the consent. 42A Hythe Bridge St – the locally listed single storey, former Boatman's Chapel, is proposed to be retained and refurbished. The remainder of Hythe Bridge Street contains a row of three storey Victorian terraced properties.
- Between 42a and 43 Hythe Bridge Street, the Wareham Stream passes under the road and forms the eastern boundary of the Island site (070).
- The Castle Mill Stream passes beneath Hythe Bridge itself and then runs along the tree-lined western edge of the Worcester St Car Park (081).
- Continuing along Hythe Bridge St towards Worcester St, to the north is the Listed boundary wall at Worcester College, which, along with mature trees and two to three-storey modern academic buildings completely screens the Worcester College RPG from the hustle and bustle of the busy Hythe Bridge Street.
- As Hythe Bridge St transitions into Worcester St, and the western entrance to George St emerges,
- The four to five storey brick and stone fronted building on Worcester St was built in the 20th century and its frontage reflects the Victorian architecture on George Street.
- The frontage of Worcester Street to the east of the Worcester St Car Park (081) consists of a three storey Victorian style building, while further along Worcester St to travelling south is the two- to three storey Nuffield College.
- New Road contains a continuation of the frontage of Nuffield College, and opposite is the Scheduled Castle complex.
- As New Road descends into Park End Street, Macclesfield House - a former County Council departmental building mainly between four and five storeys constructed in the early 20th century is tucked away screened by mature trees facing the road and the Registry office on Tidmarsh Lane (also early 20th century).

Materials on and around the site

- Island site (070) mainly contains brick-fronted buildings (in a variety of painted and coloured styles and some frontage contains roller shutter doors (i.e., 1930s Art Deco

former Hartwells Garage). Former Warehouse (3-5 Hythe Bridge St) also uses painted and coloured bricks. The Royal Oxford Hotel is a Neo Georgian style using Temple Guilting stone – materials associated with the country houses of the Cotswolds.

- Worcester St Car Park (081) - Lighthouse Pub – redbrick, tiled roof and white render
- Land South of Frideswide Square (624) brick buildings in a variety of colours with concrete detailing around the windows
- Around the site – mainly brick buildings in a variety of colours associated with Victorian period of construction. Notable exceptions are the Royal Oxford Hotel (1935) and Nuffield College (Designed 1938 constructed 1948-58), both of which use Cotswold stone. The distinctive tower at Nuffield College is copper topped and stands 30.5m (100ft) high.

Re-use of existing buildings on site

- Potential for re-use at Land South of Frideswide Square, which includes locally listed property and is in very close proximity to several listed buildings and lies in the conservation area.
- Island site contains some buildings (of local interest), and whether there is potential to integrate these into future development should be considered (e.g., Royal Oxford Hotel and Former Hartwells Garage)

Character area

- The sites fall wholly within Area 2B (Historic Western Fringe) as set out in the Landscape Character Assessment. The Landscape Character Assessment 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.*
- *The late-Victorian commercial terrace on the south side of Frideswide Square, which is well preserved, including some original shopfronts, and has a lively roofline with a characterful central turret.*

Analysis and urban design implications

- Local views also need consideration (e.g., into/ out from Castle Mound)
- While the Worcester St Car Park is not aesthetically pleasing, it offers views of the Castle Mound.
- Development should consider the potential for local views to be preserved and enhanced which could include the creation of new views .
- Unlikely that Worcester College RPG will be impacted by development given its secluded location behind Grade II Listed wall, Mature Trees and 20th Century academic institutional buildings within Worcester College grounds.
- This site forms part of the western gateway to the city centre and given its prominent location within important views into (view cones) and out from the historic core to the surrounding hills, heights should be sensitively addressed and appropriately analysed.
- West End SPD highlights the opportunity for improvements to the station gateway area of the city resulting from this and other redevelopment proposals.
- Active frontages likely to be needed current site perimeters are on key pedestrian routes into and out from the city centre.

- The surrounding streets, while predominantly Victorian, also feature more modern piecemeal developments that peak around five storeys, however the majority of surrounding buildings are three- to four storeys.
- Potential for re-use at Land South of Frideswide Square, which includes locally listed property and is in very close proximity to several listed buildings and lies in the conservation area.
- Island site contains some buildings (of local interest), and whether there is potential to integrate these into future development should be considered (e.g., Royal Oxford Hotel and Former Hartwells Garage)
- Redevelopment should consider opportunities to re-naturalise the hard-banked Wareham Stream
- Legibility and permeability of the Island site (070) could be improved
- Opportunity to create access to the Castle Mill stream from Worcester St Car Park should be investigated
- WE Design Code considers: *With redevelopment of... the Nuffield sites... this provides a huge opportunity for improvements to the gateway of Oxford. Improvements to Frideswide Square and the relationship between adjoining sites undergoing change (scale, mass and public street/ space enclosure) will be particularly important.*
- The WE Spatial Framework considers: *The Nuffield sites will need to “work hard” at creating active ground floors as the site perimeters are all on key pedestrian routes into the city centre and to Oxpens – most significantly Hythe Bridge Street and Park End Street.*

D) Access, movement and layout

Description of current context

Access into the site

Current access and egress

- Pedestrian access exists to all sites from existing pavement network around each site
- Island site (070) and Worcester St Car Park (081) good pedestrian access around majority of the site.
- Land South of Frideswide Square (624) pedestrian access available from public realm on Park End and Becket Street
- Cycle access possible to all three sites from the current road network/ public realm on Frideswide Square.
- Good access via the existing road network
- Good public transport accessibility with frequent service bus stops located at New Road, Park End Street and Frideswide Square
- Railway Station is a short distance away from the sites.

Surrounding footpaths and other PROW

- The canal towpath is located to the north of Hythe Bridge Street. This follows the path of the canal north towards Jericho, Port Meadow and Wolvercote.
- Middle Fisher Row Gardens provide a peaceful pocket park and path between Hythe Bridge St and Park End St.
- Following the Wareham Stream south from Park End St, Lower Fisher Row crosses St Thomas' St at the Quaking Bridge as Lower Fisher Row transitions into Paradise St and the footpath rejoins the public realm.

Surrounding cycle networks

- Several footpaths and streets form part of the Cyclox cycle network including “Bikeability Level 2 standard route along Becket Street, Osney Lane, Woodin's Way etc.
- Also, the Car-free cycle route along the canal towpath “Canal Town – Wolvercote” provides cycle access to the north of the city.

Current parking provision

- Island site (070) appears to have limited car parking while with the Land South of Frideswide Square appears to have some unallocated spaces associated with the Becket St. Frontage and some garages to the rear of the properties fronting Frideswide Square. The Worcester St Car Park (081) provides 200 public parking space at surface level.
- All sites located within the city centre which has limited on-street parking

Public transport proximity/ proximity to transport hubs

- Numerous frequent service bus stops at various locations around the sites including Park End Street, New Road and Frideswide Square.
- Oxford Railway Station is less than 400m walk from parts of the site (e.g., Island site and Land South of Frideswide Square (624))

Layout of the site

- Island site (070)
 - Whole site is “street facing”. Not currently possible to move through the site (i.e., from Park End St to Hythe Bridge St).
 - No real “public” space at the site.
 - Site is one big block which is impermeable. Currently need to walk around the site rather than through/ within it.
- Worcester St Car Park (081)
 - As a surface level car park, site is only accessed by users. Layout is guided by vehicle movements within car park.
 - No public space at site
 - Although not inaccessible, the public realm at the site is limited to the pavement surrounding it. Currently need to walk around the site rather than through it (if not a car park user)
- Land around Frideswide Square (624)
 - Given the corner location of the site, limited opportunity and benefit of “opening” this site to the public given that half the site fronts onto Frideswide Square itself.

Connectivity to wider area

- Good connectivity to the wider road network via Botley Road (once NR works complete). Good access to the city centre, Westgate shopping centre. Very close to the railway station and to numerous bus stops serving other destinations in Oxford and elsewhere in the county.

Analysis and urban design implications

Addressing access into, through or to/ from the site

- All sites have good existing connectivity to bus routes; the railway station and existing footpaths and cycleways exist.
- The West End SPD (2022) provides a series of infrastructure interventions, some of which relate directly to the public realm in the immediate vicinity of the “Nuffield sites”. These can be summarised as follows:
 - Improvements to Hythe Bridge St and Park End St to create a better environment for walking/ cycling
 - Creation of a new active public space to help pedestrian and cycle movement
 - Appropriate tree planting
 - Introduction of safe, legible pedestrian crossings
 - Improvements to location of bus stops
- Where would access points be?
 - At the Island site (070), north/ south connectivity should be explored as improvements to the existing situation could be incorporated. This could lead through to a public or managed space.

- At Worcester St Car Park (081), it may be beneficial to explore how development might be framed around preserving existing “local views” to and from the site. There is the potential to enable access through the creation of an access point to the site from Hythe Bridge Street (subject to satisfactorily addressing a change in level (4m approx.).
- Land South of Frideswide Square (624) Given the site’s corner location, and the clear existing demarcation of public/ private space, there is limited opportunity to “open-up” this part of the site. Also, if residential uses are proposed here, clear public/ private space is required.
- Public space potential at the Island Site (070)
 - Public space at the Island site (070) could be designed to form a peaceful and relaxing “oasis” (using appropriate planting) for use during the day that could include cafe/ other flexible E class uses at ground floor level. This area could also be used to support the evening economy.
 - A sense of enclosure could be created at the public space by surrounding buildings.
- Site arrangement
 - Island site (070) should be read as a sequence of smaller blocks to aid with legibility, permeability etc. One block that fronts onto Frideswide Square i.e., a “landmark building” to create a “gateway” to the city which supports wayfinding etc
 - Moving away from Frideswide Square towards the city, the site widens and there is potential for additional blocks which could support circulation and movement through the site. Given the width of the site unlikely to be scope for more than two blocks north to south, but there is the potential for more running from east to west depending on their characteristics.
 - Worcester St Car Park (081) Consideration should be given to a block-based site layout, (and associated routes), where possible. Site arrangement should be designed to enable improved site permeability.
 - Land South of Frideswide Square (624) likely that any changes to the site layout would be small scale given the existing public/ private interface here.

E) Other considerations

Other considerations to include in allocations?

Amenity

- As a city centre location on a key route from the railway station to the historic city core likely to be some “amenity issues” e.g., noise (from night-time economy, bars, cafes, restaurants, etc), lighting (from street-lighting, and general night lights in the city) associated with location.
- Previous desk-based ecological assessment considered potential protected species constraints are likely to be limited to roosting bats in certain buildings (some are more suitable than others) and nesting birds. As such, a lighting strategy may be required.
- Whole city is AQMA, known hotspots now digitally mapped at <https://www.oxonair.uk/>
- There are five diffusion tubes near the site:

Diffusion Tube Location	NO2 level (µg/m3) (2023)	NO2 level (µg/m3) (2022)	NO2 level (µg/m3) (2021)
Becket Street	17	23	23
Royal Oxford Hotel	21	25	25
Hythe Bridge Street	18	23	23
Park End Street	24	27	27

Park End Street II	29	36	Park End II data not available
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Infrastructure needs

- TW planned upgrades to Oxford STW (located in neighbouring SODC) takes account of known planned development to 2041.
- TW previously considered water supply network infrastructure upgrades may be required.
- TW previously considered that the scale of development proposed doesn't materially affect the sewer network, however care needs to be taken when designing new networks to ensure they don't surcharge and cause flooding
- Nearest sub-station is located at Osney Mead (Electric Avenue)
- Planned electricity infrastructure upgrades from SSE ([press release 22 July 2025](#))

F) Landowner aspirations

Landowner has specified importance of the policy enabling flexibility to deliver student rooms
 Resi – 59 units (or equivalent number of student rooms) (Land South of Frideswide Square)
 Ground Floor – all sites – Flexible Use Class E (retail/ cafes/office entrances/workspaces etc.)
 Upper Floors – Island site (070) and Worcester St Car Park (081) Flexible Use Class E(g) - likely office

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

- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Level 2 SFRA
- HRA - this site, as it is located in the city's West End, is unlikely to increase recreational pressure at the SAC due to the presence of numerous alternative green spaces that surrounding the area – see HRA – Appropriate Assessment for more details

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

- Given city centre location a mix of uses are appropriate.
- Landowner intention is to bring forward a mixed-use scheme including employment and residential.
- The minimum housing number is very much dependent on landowner intention, as there are already a range of existing lawful uses appropriate to the city centre location.
- There are already some residential units on upper storeys at the Island Site and South of Frideswide Square however a number of these are not fit for purpose and have been vacant for a number of years.
- Landowner is proposing a minimum of 59 dwellings (net gain)