

Site capacity assessment – Local Plan 2045

Site name	Oxford Science Park
LP2045 Site Allocation	SPS12
Site size (ha)	27.33

Site location



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A) Site overview

Description of current context

The Oxford Science Park is an employment site of regional, national and global importance. It is one of the most influential science, technology, and business environments in Europe with 100 science and technology businesses employing some 3,200 people. These companies are often world leading and are having a significant impact on advanced science and research to improve human health.

The companies range in size from small start-ups to large international firms, and there is a mix of employment uses (mainly office and labs) as well as ancillary uses including decked car parking and a children's nursery.

There are no remaining undeveloped plots without planning permission, most of which are under construction: plot 27 has planning permission (August 2025), and plots 23-26, 18, and 16 (Iverson Building complete/ Legget Building) are under construction. These will provide for additional laboratories and offices, building on the city's key economic strengths in the field of science, technology and life science research.

Site photos



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B) Open space, nature and flood risk

Description of current context

Green infrastructure

- Multiple areas of trees and hedges around perimeters and areas of landscaping through the site. There are parcels of Core and of Supporting GI within the site.
- Trees along part of the northern boundary to the site are covered by a TPO woodland group area (which runs part of the way along the Littlemore Brook from the A4074).
- Based on preliminary assessment, site is likely to score above the minimum baseline for non-residential development.

Biodiversity and ecology

- Site contains trees, hedgerows and woodland, and two Oxford City Wildlife Sites (Littlemore Brook and Land Adjacent to Minchery Farm) are located within the site.
- Northern boundary and area on the east (generally following the watercourse) identified in LRNS as areas that have the potential to become important for biodiversity.

Blue Infrastructure

- Littlemore Brook runs along the northern boundary of the site, a buffer would be required.
- Some areas of Flood Zone 3b, generally following the line of the watercourse (brook) which runs broadly east-west along the northern portion of the site, also some Flood Zone 3a and Flood Zone 2 extending slightly further beyond.
- Level 2 SFRA needed and site-specific FRA at planning application stage, to demonstrate how the development will be safe and a sequential approach will need to be taken to direct development to lowest risk areas. As the highest risk area is along the Brook, then a buffer would need to be applied there anyway.

Land Quality

- Site is previously developed land.
- Some areas of potential contamination are present resulting from filled ground. Further site investigations will be required.
- There are records of peat deposits that follow the line of the Littlemore Brook, which runs through the northern part of the site and the potential for additional unrecorded deposits in the area which will need to be considered and avoided.

Analysis and urban design implications

- Care will need to be taken in terms of the site's proximity to the Brook (including in relation to potential need for buffers but also in terms of addressing flood risk arising from the watercourse); to nearby protected trees; and the potential for archaeology which may need investigation.
- Development should avoid any loss of Core GI area (to the east of the site) and if any Supporting GI is lost it should be replaced through upgrades elsewhere on the site.
- On-site landscaping should be appropriately managed to support/ create green corridors through the development which can create micro-habitats to support a range of species.
- Green walls and roofs should also be considered.
- Use of SuDS could help to ensure surface water is appropriately managed on site
- Development on any undeveloped parts of the Science Park should be located to avoid removing peat (200m buffer).
- The LNRS identifies opportunities to:
 - Restore river diversity and manage rivers and their riparian (riverside) habitats to achieve good ecological condition that supports species
 - Retain, manage, plant, and connect up Blackthorn hedgerows, trees, and scrub for Hairstreak butterflies
 - Create and/or manage greenspaces and habitats in urban areas to enhance their condition to benefit wildlife, improve connectivity, and provide wider benefits
 - Enhance existing woodlands to achieve a diverse structure and good ecological condition, suitable for the woodland type, age, and nearby species

C) Historic environment, character and local context

Description of current context

Historic environment

- Site adjoins the 15th Century (remodelled around 1600) Grade II* listed Minchery Farmhouse, so any development should be sympathetic to the setting of this heritage asset.
- The site is of archaeological interest as medieval and Roman remains have been recorded previously and there is high potential for further prehistoric, Roman and early Saxon archaeology.
- Site not within one of the city's conservation areas or on the RPG register.

Built environment

- The site is close to one of the new proposed passenger stations for Cowley Branch Line, and as such lies within an identified potential growth area in the city, where there is scope for intensification of use with more higher buildings.
- Previous assessments and modelling have determined a threshold height of 21 metres beyond which built form will have some level of impact on the skyline as viewed from the St Mary's Church vantage point, a key sensitive viewpoint in the city. While going beyond this threshold does not automatically preclude proposals from being acceptable, such schemes will be expected to strongly demonstrate that there has been an understanding of the context and the impact of the likely effects.
- The land to the south of Grenoble Road (within South Oxfordshire district) is a strategic site allocation in the SODC Local Plan as an extension to the Science Park and for housing (unmet housing need from Oxford). This will significantly change the character of the area and will need to be responded to both in the design of the new development at the Science Park, its connectivity and permeability and the links to future transport infrastructure provision.
- LCA defines the wider area within which the Science Park sits, as "20th century Fringe business, industry and retail". Architecture and built form is large scale, visually prominent modern developments including the Kassam stadium, science park and reuse of the Littlemore Hospital. Architectural forms include cantilevered stadium and modern business park, with glass walls and buff brick. Whilst the traditional Cotswold stone building at Minchery Farm (adjoining the site) is on the site of a small Benedictine nunnery (Littlemore Priory) founded in the 12th century. The wider area is characterised by large-scale, low-density developments. New distributor roads with sweeping curves and roundabouts.

- Development on parts of the Science Park dates from early 1990s so there is potential to modernise and intensify site further within the plan period. The LCA identifies that parts of the site appear dated (e.g., car parking and some of the older buildings and associated landscaping) however new builds are providing much improved environment. Most buildings are 1990s and 2000s construction. Although external appearance of these buildings may seem dated, a lot of them have been refurbished internally in recent years to modern standards which provide Grade A flexible lab/ office space. Scope for further intensification and modernisation.
- The LCA identifies threats to local character could arise as a result of: new built development that results in obstruction/diversion of public rights of way; encroachment of built development and fragmenting of the ecological networks of Littlemore and Northfield Brooks; loss of mature trees as a result of old age or new building works; encroachment of new built development on the setting of Minchery Farm; refuse dumping and general misuse of this fringe area.

Analysis and urban design implications

- It will be important to conserve the natural and historic features, integrating any redevelopment of plots sensitively.
- This could include: planting new trees, using existing native and parkland species of the area; retaining the ecological networks, notably the Littlemore and Northfield Brooks as linear green space running through development; retaining some of the hedgerow framework including retention of mature hedgerow trees; developing opportunities for connectivity e.g. through to Spindleberry Nature Park in Blackbird Leys; conserving the setting of Minchery Farm; maintaining a 'quiet' through route for cyclists and good access for pedestrians.

D) Access, movement and layout

Description of current context

Access into the site

- Vehicle and active travel connections already exist into the site. There are existing vehicular routes for all vehicles to the Oxford ring road (A4142) via Grenoble Road, Watlington Road and Garsington Road.
- There is access by foot and bike into Littlemore and Blackbird Leys, but active travel connections could be improved.

Layout of the site

- Reflecting the age of some of the buildings on site, there is reasonable level of green landscaping and open spaces across the site however large parts of the site are dominated by surface level car parks.

Connectivity to wider area

- There are some existing bus services through site.
- The opening up of the Cowley Branch Line to passengers has the potential to deliver a further sustainable transport option, which will help to support the Science Park and its opportunities for the future modernisation and intensification of this site. This will create better transport links to the city centre and wider area.
- Area to the south is mainly countryside but with the site South of Grenoble Road allocated for development, connections to and through this area will also need to be considered, to ensure connectivity for new residents into the Oxford urban area and communities.

Analysis and urban design implications

This site has a key role in facilitating public transport improvements in the area. Opportunities should be taken to support sustainable travel by contributing to improved public transport links and services, including the proposed re-opening of the Cowley Branch Line to passengers.

Active travel connections into Littlemore and Blackbird Leys could be improved, as well as considering connections to new communities in the proposed urban extension South of Grenoble Road.

Car parking on site should be reduced, particularly in light of the improved sustainable transport links afforded by the Cowley Branch Line station once that is fully operational.

E) Other considerations

Other considerations to include in allocations?

Amenity

- Oxford sewage treatment works is located on Grenoble Road to the South of the site. Proximity to the STW can mean that odours affect the external environment at some times of day.
- Site adjoins railway line which may cause noise.
- Residential properties in Littlemore are located to the North. A4074 is located to the west (noise) and to the east is the Kassam Stadium including the Ozone Leisure Park.

Infrastructure needs

- The new Cowley Branch Line station Oxford Littlemore is proposed to be located adjoining the site to the east, so active travel connections through the site to the station should be considered.

F) Landowner aspirations

Landowners both confirmed (2025) intention to retain/intensify use for employment. Aspirations to deliver an exemplary 'campus' with a focus on high quality designed buildings set within significant Green Infrastructure allowing businesses and their employees to work within a sustainable, attractive and collaborative working environment.

G) Any extra work needed to inform allocation?

SFRA level 2

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

N/A - site allocation for employment use only