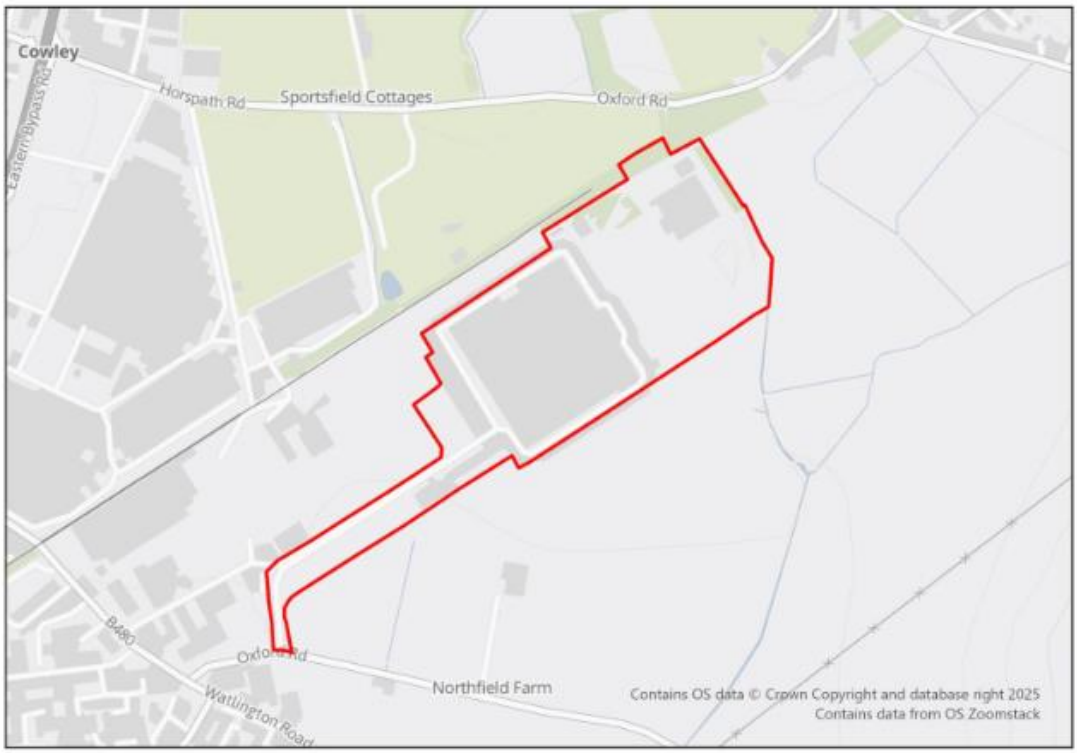
Site capacity assessment – Local Plan 2045

Site name	Unipart Site
LP2045 Site Allocation	SPS17
Site size (ha)	30.63ha

Site location



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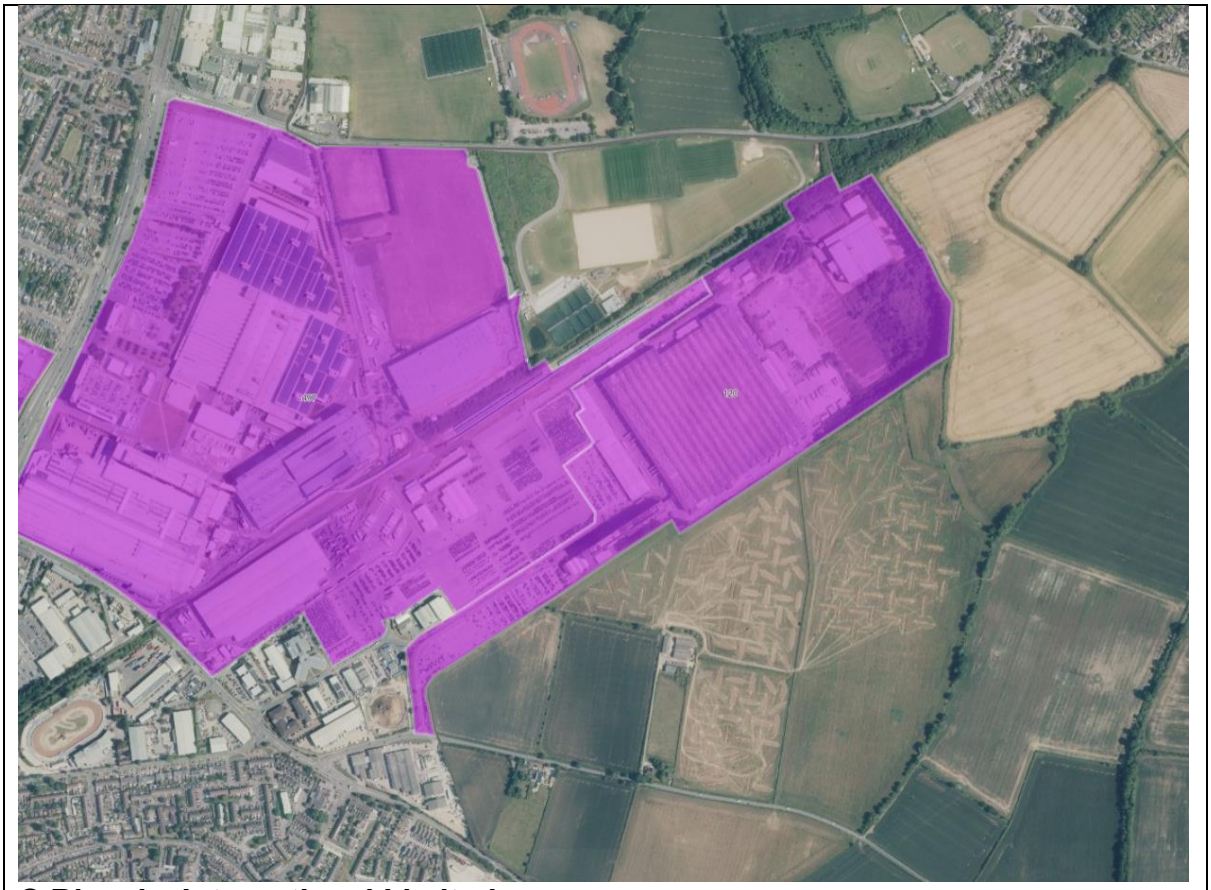
A) Site overview

Description of current context

- The site is elongated, aligned northeast to southwest, with a narrow spur extending out in a dog leg from the southwest corner and currently accommodated by industrial uses.
- The site is located in the southeast of the city, with agricultural fields to the south and east, and sports fields to the north. To the northwest, the site is bounded by a large expanse of car parking and the edge of the Cowley branch line runs adjacent to, but just outside of, the northern boundary and ends there. Beyond it is the extensive BMW Mini Oxford plant to the north west, and to the north east is the village of Horspath.
- Site is not within an area of significant deprivation (within the 50% least deprived areas in the country).
- Site is not within a city/district centre and is closest to Blackbird Leys District Centre (1km walk from the access point on Oxford Road, although closer to 1.5km from the middle of site).
- The site is directly north of a major development allocation which forms a part of South Oxfordshire's Local Plan (Northfield).

Site photos



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B) Open space, nature and flood risk

Description of current context

Green infrastructure

- Majority of the site is urbanised with limited green infrastructure features. The northeast end of the site is more natural in terms of surface cover than elsewhere including a broadly rectangular section of scrub and vegetation, adjacent to the recently demolished smaller former UYS Ltd warehouse unit. There are also some small linear areas of amenity grass at the access point where Transport Way meets Oxford Road.
- Where the site is separated from the surrounding fields, the boundaries include some broad hedgerows, as well as areas of larger more mature trees. Existing vegetation on the site's eastern and northeastern boundaries, including adjacent to the Oxford Road, screens much of the site from the village of Horspath.
- There are no TPOs on or near to the site.
- The Urban Greening Factor score for the site is likely to be below the policy target due to the limited green features on the site.

Biodiversity and ecology

- The habitats around the boundaries are likely to be of the greatest value ecologically, and consideration should be given as to whether Open Mosaic Habitat is present in the surrounding developed land.
- Potential protected species constraints potentially include breeding birds, foraging and commuting bats, reptiles, badgers, and water vole and otters (associated with Hollow Brook).

- The County's LNRS identifies some pockets of land as having potential to become important for biodiversity along railway line and also in a strip running north to south across part of site.

Blue Infrastructure

- Hollow Brook is a small waterway that runs down the eastern boundary of the site.
- The site is in Flood Zone 1, however, there are patches of surface water flood risk present throughout site.

Land Quality

- Industrial nature of the site may mean some potential for contamination which would need to be investigated.

Analysis and urban design implications

- As the site is, overall, highly urbanised with predominantly artificial/impermeable surface cover reflecting its industrial character, any attempt to incorporate natural features would serve to radically improve the quality of the landscape.
- The Landscape assessment previously identified a number of key areas to consider for change across the whole character area (Cowley Motorworks character area), and these are considered to be of relevance to this site specifically. These included:
    - planting native trees to screen or soften the industrial areas in views from surrounding high ground - oak, pine, silver and downy birch and holly may be appropriate species;
    - developing nature corridors along the railway and linking to open areas within the industrial zone;
    - leaving aside some areas of longer grass for less frequent mowing to provide wildlife habitats.
- Interventions could incorporate natural SuDS to reduce surface run off, particularly in hotspot areas and improve resilience to high heat events.
- Equally, the incorporation of nature corridors through the site could improve linkages to the fields nearby and to the rail corridor to the north. Such nature corridors could also be tied into measures to improve sustainable/active travel measures (greening of walking routes).
- Nature surveys may need to be sought to determine any species/habitats of value around the edges of the site and within the area of scrub to the north east in advance of any redevelopment – advice should be sought from an ecological expert.
- An appropriate amount of buffer will need to be provided to the Hollow Brook watercourse which runs close to the northeast boundary.

C) Historic environment, character and local context

Description of current context

Historic environment

- There are limited heritage considerations on the site- it is not within a conservation area, does not host or form the setting of any nearby listed buildings or other designated sites (national or local).
- This site is, however, of archaeological interest, as part of the access road is on the line of the Dorchester-Alchester Roman road and there is high potential for roadside settlement. There is also high potential for other prehistoric and Roman remains (sites are recorded to the north & south of the plot).
- Site does not lie within a view cone or other identified locally important views.

Built environment

- The site is predominantly taken up by a large square warehouse unit in the middle, with a smaller square warehouse in the northern corner, which has now been demolished (Ref: 24/00367/DEM), together with its associated service yards and parking areas. A visually prominent, narrow and elongated, 5-7 storey office

building extends along the spur to the south-west, from the centre of the site, with a cluster of shorter and broader buildings at its southern tip.

- As noted earlier, much of the surrounding area is undeveloped fields or sports pitches, with industrial uses to the west (e.g. BMW), which means the site currently sits between two quite different areas of scale and urbanisation. However, the land at Northfield, which lies along the full extent of the southern boundary of the site, is a large new primarily residential development site in South Oxfordshire, allocated in their Local Plan, which would significantly change the character of the immediate area.
- The site falls within the townscape area of the city that the landscape assessment identifies as *20th Century fringe business, retail and industry* and more specifically, the *Cowley Motor Works* character area. This area is identified as being one that typically tends to lack a sense of place or local distinctiveness as a result of mass produced building materials, standard layouts, styles and details. It is recorded as having low landscape value in terms of quality, biodiversity, historic integrity, intervisibility, and open space. There is low sensitivity to change despite visibility from ring road and residential areas nearby.

Analysis and urban design implications

- In terms of built environment, the site is peripheral to the city and currently sits between the open landscape of fields and the industrial nature so the impact of new development will need to be balanced in terms of height, scale, materials etc.
- Taking into account the current built form on the site, its redevelopment should seek to mediate development across the site so as to avoid creating a continuous hard edge to the southern and eastern boundaries, with densities and footprints of buildings varying across the site.
- The development allocation of the land at Northfield on the southern edge of the site will need to be responded to both in the design of the new development, with an appropriate landscape buffer provided, and the links to future transport infrastructure provision.
- There may be opportunities to incorporate sustainable and low/zero carbon heating cooling technologies, for example communal heat networks.
- Potential archaeological interest will require further investigation as part of any redevelopment.

D) Access, movement and layout

Description of current context

Access into the site

- The site is accessed in one way, from Oxford Road into Garsington Road to the southwest of the site, (and potentially Transport Way directly into the Garsington Road to the south west of the site) and is predominantly vehicle focused/car dominated.
- The road includes a cycle lane running either side of it, but there is no segregated/raised footpath, and it appears that pedestrians must use the cycle lane.
- Whilst access is flat and would not appear to pose any extraordinary physical challenges for those with disabilities, the lack of segregated pedestrian space and the fact that all road users are forced to share the same space could be harmful/threatening for those with more specific access needs such as the disabled.

Layout of the site

- As noted earlier, site is predominantly taken up by a large square warehouse unit in the middle, a narrow and elongated 5-7 storey building along the spur of land to the south-west, and a cluster of shorter and broader buildings at its southern tip.

- A large rectangular area of HGV parking sits between the large square warehouse and the recently demolished one, with other areas located to the west of the large square warehouse and around the now demolished warehouse. Car parking extends from the tip of the spur at the south-west of the site up to where the buildings begin about halfway along.
- The site is quite impenetrable for vehicles and pedestrians at the moment due to the large footprints of existing buildings and limited access points to the site.

Connectivity to wider area

- The nearest bus route appears to be on Oxford Road, which is a less than 100m walk from the southern tip of the site – though then pedestrians would need to walk a fair way into the middle of site.
- As noted earlier, it is at least 1km to the nearest district centre (Blackbird Leys).

Analysis and urban design implications

- The site layout and block arrangements will need to be guided by the types of employment uses proposed on the site and the need for access to parking and servicing areas. There is potential for intensifying uses on the site however and also incorporating smaller buildings/breaking up the current large buildings on the site.
- New layouts and block arrangements could help to improve circulation and permeability of the site, and opportunities might be able to be sought to create new pedestrian/cycle access points (e.g. along southern boundary into future development sites associated with South Oxfordshire, or potentially in northeast corner towards Oxford Road).
- Greater enhancement of active/sustainable travel options would enable on-site parking to be reduced and facilitate shifts to net zero living. Ample cycle parking and associated facilities should be incorporated as well as clear links to the available public transport options nearby.
- The peripheral nature of the site means that it is likely to need to accommodate some level of car parking, which will need to be appropriate and justified. Opportunities for car clubs/car sharing options could be considered.

E) Other considerations

Other considerations to include in allocations?

Amenity

- There are unlikely to be significant sensitivities on the site, although the relationship to the open landscape and the watercourse will need to be approached with some care – e.g. considering impacts of new lighting or noise activities on potential wildlife.

Infrastructure needs

- No particular needs identified for this site at present.

F) Landowner aspirations

What use(s) does landowner propose onsite – see Call for Sites, SHLAA, LP2040 reps.

- *if residential, have they specified student, post-grad, key worker etc*
- *If non-resi – have they specified use e.g healthcare, R&D, offices etc*

The site is currently in non-residential use and the landowner has confirmed continued intention to retain it for non-residential. Whilst flexibility is important, they are seeking a variety of uses for the site, including general industrial (class B2) and storage or distribution (class B8) with ancillary offices, research and industrial processes (class E(g)).

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) did not identify the potential need for mitigation in relation to any significant negative impacts (scored as --).

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 for employment use only