Site capacity assessment – Local Plan 2045

Site name	ARC Oxford
Policy Ref:	SPS2
Site size (ha)	35.4ha

Site location

A) Site overview

Description of current context

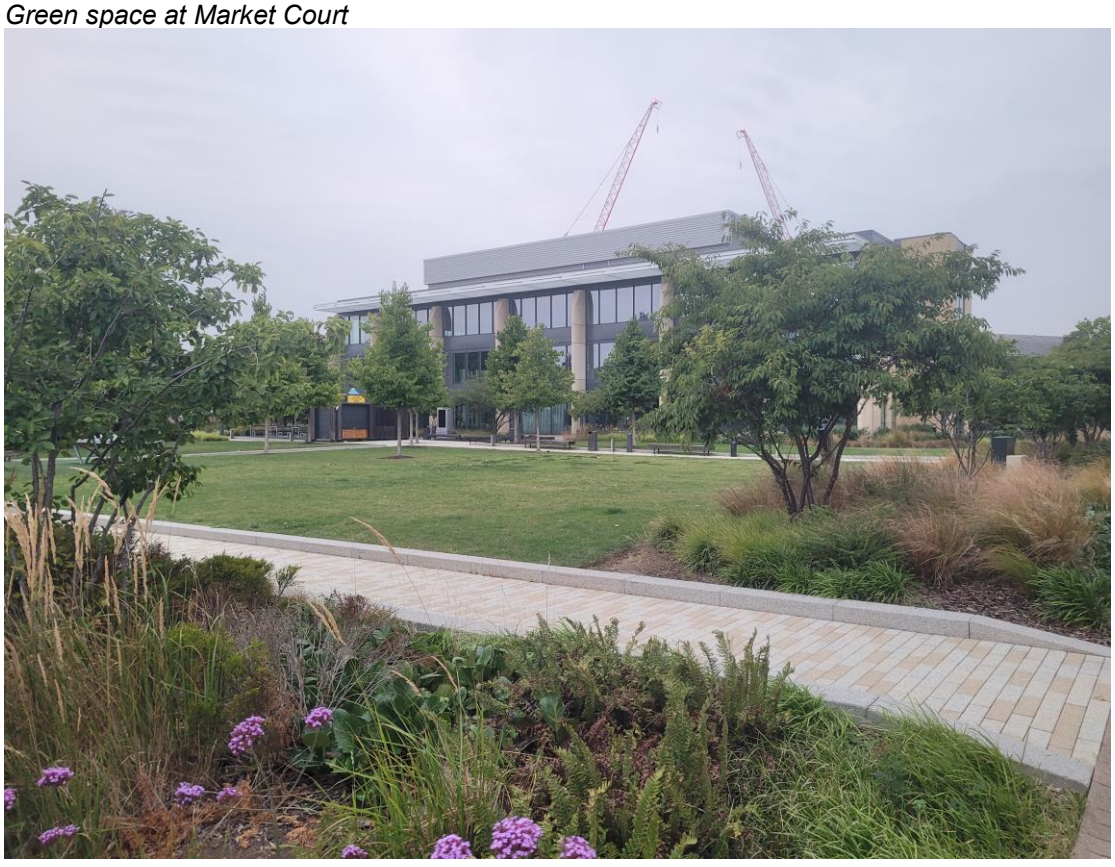
- Existing employment site located just inside the ring-road in the south-east of the city
- Consists of older (1990-2010s office accommodation) and more modern 2020s R&D
- Outside regeneration areas and city/ district centres
- Nearby (less than 1km) to the south-eastern boundary of the city, which adjoins South Oxfordshire District Council. Urban extension proposed to the city as part of the "Northfield" site allocation contained in the current SODC Local Plan 2035, and the emerging JLP 2041

[Continued Overleaf]

Site photos

View of underpass (looking towards ARC campus)

Green space at Market Court



View of Plot 5520 from footpath across Plot 3000

View of Trinity House and Parkway Court from corner of Plot 2000 on John Smith Drive

B) Open space, nature and flood risk
Description of current context

Green infrastructure

- Site contains no TPOs however numerous trees/ hedgerows present as part of site-wide landscaping
- UGF: Planting associated with landscaping and greenspace associated with vacant plots
- UGF score: likely to be below the threshold for non-residential sites.
- Site includes several vacant plots (circa 3.7ha - without planning permission)
- No Core or Supporting GI on site, however the undeveloped plots do appear to have naturally developed diverse habitats which is likely to support a range of different species.

Biodiversity and ecology

- Nearest designated site is Lye Valley LWS (approx. 500m to the north along built-up area of Hollow Way)
- Site lies outside the Lye Valley catchment area (which is predominantly focused to the North of Lye Valley SSSI

Blue Infrastructure

- Site contains two small ponds – appear to be landscaped/ possibly surface-water management related – given their location (adjacent to roundabout) most likely artificial/ man-made rather than naturally occurring.
- Site is wholly within Flood Zone 1
- Parts of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding
- No OFAS safeguarding required in this part of the city.

Land Quality

- No known peat reserves
- Possible contamination associated with former use (car manufacturing).

Analysis and urban design implications

- Redevelopment/ development at the site should ensure that opportunities are taken to overcome identified threats through LCA Update (2022), namely:
    - Enable/ support on-site landscaping to ensure any ageing, diseased and subsequent loss of any mature trees/ boundary vegetation is appropriately managed/ replaced
    - Ensure appropriate tree and shrub species planting for visual screening / boundary features that are aligned with local character

- 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 should be used to ensure surface water is appropriately managed on site
- Current draft LNRS considers that the two ponds on site are “areas that could become of particular importance to biodiversity”.
- Site would benefit from an overarching public realm and landscaping strategy

C) Historic environment, character and local context

Description of current context

Historic environment

- Temple Cowley Conservation Area boundary runs parallel to the north-western site boundary along Hollow Way (B4495). This part of the site is immediately adjacent to the conservation area.
- Listed Buildings – Site contains no listed buildings however the Grade II Listed Nuffield Press East Wing and Attached Former School House is close to the western boundary of the site (Hollow Way). The Listed Building is screened (to some extent) from by mature trees and hedgerows that form the western boundary of the site.
- No Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Registered Parks and Gardens near the site.
- No locally listed heritage assets within the immediate vicinity
- Site lies within a wider area of potential for Roman and pre-historic archaeology
- Site lies outside of the locally designated view cones

- High Buildings TAN identifies the South-Eastern suburbs (including ARC Oxford) as an area of "greater potential" for taller buildings. According to the TAN, within Character Area 8A, skylining occurs at 15m from St Mary's Tower and at 45m from Elsfield. The advice in the High Buildings TAN and in any other material relevant to this part of the city should be followed when developing plans for taller buildings.

Built environment

- Site in use as a business park but transitioning from traditional lower-rise office (2-3 storey) to larger floorplate R&D/ flexible lab-enabled office space (5 storeys +)
- Several vacant plots remaining (circa 3.7ha) while numerous plots are being redeveloped to deliver flexible R&D floorspace. Mainly late 20th or 21st century buildings.
- Southern boundary of the site is the Eastern bypass (A4142) the Garsington Road interchange. South of the Eastern bypass has a more industrial character and includes MINI Plant Oxford, some smaller light industrial units along Garsington Road (e.g., Chiltern Business Centre) and Oxford Retail Park, and a superstore.
- Residential development forms the northern, western and eastern boundaries to the site featuring predominantly two storey 19th (terraced) and 20th Century housing.
- Industrial area (including MINI Plant Oxford) contains some larger more bulky buildings and lower density light industrial units. Range of heights from single storey to five-/ six storey buildings fronting the Eastern by-pass at MINI Plant Oxford. Light industrial units along Garsington/ Watlington Road are low rise. Mainly 2-3 storeys. Predominantly mid- to late 20th Century industrial. However, some more modern properties (2020s) have been constructed recently further down Watlington Road. All industrial in character.
- Site contains a mix of late 20th Century offices and more modern 21st Century R&D space. Some recent applications have involved demolition and replacement of existing buildings, while others have renovated (re-used) existing buildings. Likely that this trend will continue.
- ARC Oxford (formerly the Oxford Business Park - OLP2036) lies entirely within character area 8A – Cowley Motor Works.
- The LCA 2022 Update considers that the "more recent business parks and retail areas have attempted to develop more attractive working and retail environment through the use of contemporary architecture, ornamental planting and designed landscaping.". However, the 2022 update was produced before the increased demand for flexible R&D floorspace that we are now seeing delivered at this site (and other employment sites across Oxford).

Analysis and urban design implications

- Potential for development at the western boundary of the site to impact the setting of the Temple Cowley Conservation Area and the Grade II Listed Nuffield Press East Wing and Attached Former School House
- The proximity of parts of the site to the existing residential areas needs to be sensitively managed to ensure that any buildings proposed are of a suitable scale, height and massing.
- Building heights should be informed by design guidance in the High Buildings TAN and the CBL Densification Study
- Appropriate visual analysis should be undertaken to ensure that development proposals do not detract from views idientified through the above studies.
- LCA (2022) Update highlights some threats to existing townscape/ landscape character:
    - New tall development that is highly visible, particularly on the urban edge and in the context of existing urban form
    - Extensions or alterations to existing buildings which are poorly designed and insensitive to the existing vernacular
    - Use of low-quality materials in built development and the streetscape
    - Ageing and deterioration of the built fabric and replacement with other/ uncharacteristic styles and materials
    - Incremental addition of streetscape details such as signs, lighting, bollards and paving materials that result in cluttering of the streetscape
    - Change of use of buildings that would alter the character of the townscape
    - Ageing, disease and subsequent loss of mature trees and boundary vegetation

D) Access, movement and layout

Description of current context

Access into the site

- There are several existing pedestrian access points at the site.
- There is gated pedestrian access at the south of the site via Boswell Road/ Barns Road which is well-served by public transport (700 from Thornhill; 1 and 5 from the city centre; and 100 from St Clements). Improvements to this route have been secured through recent planning permissions granted at the site.
- Pedestrian access to the north of the site from Hollow Way
- Pedestrians can also access the site to the north and south via several accesses at Garsington Road (which is well-served by public transport (500 from BMW Factory Gate to Oxford City Centre; 46 from Great Milton to Oxford city centre; 3A from Templars Square to Oxford City Centre; 600 from Redbridge to Thornhill via the Science Park and the Hospitals; and the 11 from Waltington to Oxford City Centre)
- Pedestrians can also access the site from a path which runs parallel to the A4142. This runs both to the north and south of the Garsington Interchange and links into the existing pavement at Garsington Road.
- Cycle access appears to offer the same options as the pedestrian accesses (via a non-segregated cycle path on Garsington Road and the path along the eastern by-pass.
- Vehicular access is via a roundabout on Garsington Road (to the west of the Garsington interchange on the A4142 – Eastern bypass). The north and south parts of the site can be accessed from the roundabout on Garsington Road. To the South is John Smith Drive and the north is Alex Issigonis Way.

Layout of the site

- Site layout is that of a 1990s business park.
- Each individual plot contains dedicated surface level car parking. This surface level car parking (in some cases) dominates individual plots and covers a considerable area of the site.
- Circulation through the site reflects its late 20th Century origins – original outline permission from 1992 set the road layout, parking etc. As such site circulation is car-focused/ dominated/ prioritised.
- Current pedestrian/ cycle environment at the site is less welcoming.

Connectivity to wider area

- Currently A4142 underpass provides a poor-quality entrance to the site for pedestrian/ cycle users.
- The re-opening of the Cowley Branch Line to passengers (and the creation of a new station near to the site) will enable improved rail connectivity and access to jobs across a wider area across the county.
- In conjunction with East-West Rail, the re-opening of the Cowley Branch Line to passengers also creates wider opportunities across the Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor.

Analysis and urban design implications

- Redevelopment at the site provides an opportunity to re-think how movement into, through and around the site are addressed.
- Reductions to surface level car-parking provides an opportunity to create an improved environment and public realm that encourages walking, cycling and other active modes and also enhance the GI offering (e.g., pocket parks)
- The introduction of shared surfaces and the re-prioritisation of existing on-site roads by using different materials could create an improved public realm
- Public art could be used as wayfinding and could link to both the industrial history of the site and to the site's archaeological potential for Roman remains due to its proximity to the Dorchester to Alchester Roman Road.
- Existing pedestrian and cycle access points could be improved. Particularly from Garsington Road/ Hollow Way.

- Site would benefit from an overall masterplan focused towards active and sustainable modes.
- Improvements to pedestrian/ cycle environment/ public realm are essential in supporting the re-opening of the Cowley Branch Line to passenger services.
- The underpass under the A4142 (Eastern Bypass) is to provide the primary pedestrian route to/from the new station. This will therefore become an important gateway for users of the site.

E) Other considerations

Other considerations to include in allocations?

Amenity

- Residential amenity of nearby properties
- Air quality: there are two diffusion tubes located near the site – at Hollow Way and Garsington Road.
    - 2023 readings for Holllow Way – 31µg/m3 (mid)
    - 2023 readings for Garsington Road – 17µg/m3 (low)

Infrastructure needs

- Proposals to upgrade the city's Oxford's electricity requirements were announced in July 2025 however longer-term solutions are still likely to be needed to meet the demands of potential high-energy uses such as R&D etc.
- Wastewater issues to be addressed by capacity upgrades from Thames Water which broadly align with the Local Plan period to 2042. Additional capacity upgrades will be required in the longer term.
- Water supply capacity is also potential issue

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*

- ARC (Advanced Research Clusters) is the majority landowner at the site.
- ARC proposes employment uses, particularly for labs/ R&D.

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

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

Minimum capacity for the site has been calculated with the following assumptions:

- n/a - landowner interest is for employment-related development only