

Site capacity assessment – Local Plan 2045

Site name	Mini Plant Oxford
LP2045 Site Allocation	SPS10
Site size (ha)	69.9ha

Site location



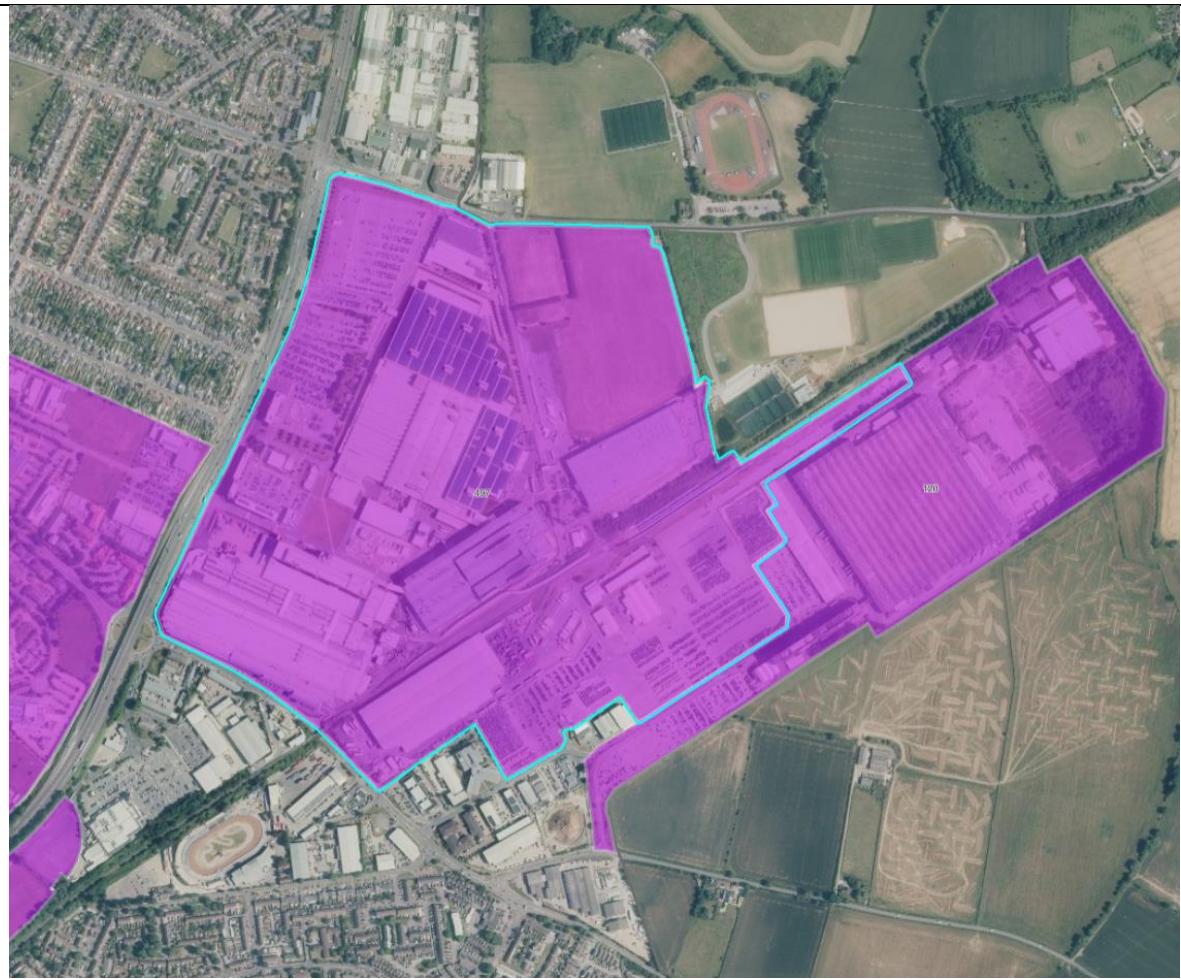
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A) Site overview

Description of current context

- The site is used for the Mini Plant Oxford production facilities and hosts industrial and office related uses associated with the business.
- The site is located in the southeast of the city on the corner of the eastern by-pass and the Garsington Road, in close proximity to a range of other commercial and/or industrial uses such as ARC Oxford business park and Unipart House.
- The location is not subject to significant deprivation (being within one of the 50% least deprived areas of the city).
- The site is not within a designated city/district centre, with the closest centre being either Temple Cowley or Blackbird Leys (both around a 2.3km walk from the site).
- The site is a significant local employer with over 3,000 employees and 120 apprentices and plays an important role in the wider regional and national economy.

Site photos



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B) Open space, nature and flood risk

Description of current context

Green infrastructure

- Much of the site is urbanised with limited green space, reflecting the operational nature of much of the site, although there is a fairly large area of former playing fields in the northeast of the site. The remainder of the site contains limited green space, other than a few areas of landscaping comprising mown grass and trees/hedges, including some strips at the northwest corner of the site where Horspath Road meets the Eastern Bypass.
- There are no TPOs recorded on the site, and tree cover is limited, although there are a few notable lines of trees which form part of the landscaping adjacent to car parks on the west of the site, as well as down Roman Way. There is also some mixed shrubbery/trees located around the railway line.

Biodiversity and ecology

- There are no ecological designations or other particularly notable biodiversity constraints on the site.
- The lack of habitat present on site suggests there will be limited species present, though there may be some potential species to be investigated on the undeveloped areas of green space in the northeast of the site, as well as amongst the vegetated areas around the railway line.
- The County's LNRS identifies some strips of land around boundaries of site as being areas that could become important for biodiversity, as well as a strip running north to south, and also along railway line running through site.

Blue Infrastructure

- The site is within Flood Zone 1, however, there are large patches of surface water flood risk present, particularly centrally and towards the western corner of site.
- There is a pond present offsite but close by towards the southeast.

Land Quality

- The industrial nature of the site is likely to mean some potential for contamination.

Analysis and urban design implications

- The site is likely to be below the Urban Greening Factor target for non-residential sites, thus future proposals for redevelopment will be expected to incorporate additional greening features to help attain this score. The industrial nature of the site and operational needs of the MINI Plant Oxford may require more innovative thinking about how best to incorporate greening.
- There may be opportunities to extend existing linear elements of greening in the site, such as the rows of trees, to enhance green corridors across the site, or introduce new lines ones, which could also double up as pleasant active travel routes for people. Elements of the existing green space to the northeast could also be enhanced, where this is not required for other uses.
- Potential for ecology on the site, including protected species and habitat should be investigated and responded to where found. There may be ways to enhance greening along the railway to join up green corridors that extend beyond the site boundary and help species move across the site, as well as opportunities to incorporate other ecological enhancements across the site through innovative uses of leftover or underutilised parts of the site.
- Opportunities to reduce hard surfacing and incorporate green SUDs features could help to reduce existing surface water flood risk on the site.
- Potential for contamination due to prior uses on the site would need to be investigated and appropriately addressed where necessary.

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).
- The site is of archaeological interest as the Dorchester- Alchester Roman Road runs through the site and there is potential for roadside settlement. Archaeological remains from the Bronze Age and Roman remains have also previously been recorded.

Built environment

- The site is made up of a number of larger buildings/plots which are of an industrial nature due to the operational needs of the plant. These are interspersed with areas used for storage and dispatch of new vehicles being produced there. The buildings are generally large and blocky, fairly homogenous in nature, with varying types of materials used.
- The boundaries of the site itself, including public realm, vary in quality, though this is generally reflective of particular operational and security requirements of the site. Access points along Horspath Road, as well as the gated entrance for employees off Garsington Road, are typically dominated by hard materials such as metal railings or old walls which extend along significant lengths of the site's peripheries.
- Nearby are a couple of large industrial estates as noted earlier, which are of a similar nature in terms of scale and style. To the west, over the by-pass, is a low rise, suburban residential 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 (reflective of the requirements at the time of their construction). 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

- Whilst many of the buildings are likely to remain in operation and will be retained for the foreseeable future, where redevelopment does come forward in future, this may offer the opportunity to incorporate design choices, such as variation to height, scale and massing, or choices of materials that could help to soften the appearance of these structures when viewed from beyond the site. This will need to be balanced with the operational needs of the development.
- The site is fairly large, and its peripheral areas, including the boundaries between it and the wider area, are the primary way that the public or visitors to the site will experience it (other than views of the buildings themselves). Whilst these boundaries need to provide particular operational and security functions for the site which may ultimately limit potential for change, a key opportunity to be explored where redevelopment comes forward would be to help improve the quality and experience of the buildings, including the interface with the public realm.
- The potential presence of sensitive archaeology on the site will need to be investigated and appropriately responded to.

D) Access, movement and layout

Description of current context

Access into the site

- There are multiple access points into the site, one for pedestrians/employees is via a turn gate off Garsington Road; as well as vehicular access at the northern end of the site via a couple of points: on Horspath Road and from Transport Way at the southern end of the site.
- There is also cycle and pedestrian access at the above access points.
- The quality of these access points is largely functional in purpose including meeting particular security requirements for the operation of the site.

Layout of the site

- The site is generally dominated by larger footprint industrial buildings which host a variety of production facilities for the plant. Car parking for staff and visitors is located on a plot to the north west of the site, whilst other areas of land are intrinsic to the operations of the site including for storage and dispatch of new vehicles being produced there. There is also a large area of open space to the northeast as noted earlier.
- The site is served by the Cowley Branch Line, the railway line that transports freight to and from the MINI Plant Oxford, this intersects the southern half of the site, running northeast to south-west.

Connectivity to wider area

- Nearest bus stop is Factory Gate (on Garsington Road) - less than 400m from site entrance. This is a frequent service bus stop. There is turn style access for workers directly onto the site.

Analysis and urban design implications

- Block arrangement will likely need to be guided by the types of employment uses proposed at the site and it is difficult to be more prescriptive at this stage.
- It would be positive for opportunities to be taken to enhance the quality of access points into the site and how they interface with wider public realm where these arise through redevelopment and would not conflict with the site's operational/security needs.

E) Other considerations

Other considerations to include in allocations?

Amenity

- There are potentially noise and air pollutant impacts arising from the Eastern bypass that runs along the western boundary, as well as the Cowley Branch line which runs through the site – although the operational uses of the site are unlikely to be too sensitive to these impacts.

Infrastructure needs

- There may be opportunities for additional sustainable/active transport improvements to support the operations of the site and better facilitate employees to get to and from it.

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 uses and landowner has confirmed intention for it to remain so. An appropriate mix of B2/ B8 and Class E(g) employment uses to enable on-going car manufacturing to remain in the city has been assumed.

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