

Site capacity assessment – Local Plan 2045

Site name	Thornhill Park (phase 2)
LP2045 Site Allocation	SPE16
Site size (ha)	3.39

Site location



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A) Site overview

Description of current context

- Site is in two parts, the former office buildings (038a1) has been converted to flats and the remainder is car parking and a sports ground.
- Site on eastern edge of city boundary with South Oxfordshire District Council.
- Not within a regeneration area.
- Quarry and Risinghurst Ward
- Sandhills and Risinghurst Character Area.
- A planning application (21/01695/FUL) was submitted in July 2021 for the erection of 402 apartments (Class C3), 133 bed hotel (Class C1) and employment provision in the form of offices, café and restaurant (Class E), which was approved in principle in December 2022 subject to a section 106 legal agreement.

Site photos



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B) Open space, nature and flood risk

Description of current context

Green infrastructure

- Site is part previously developed, part greenfield.
- Site contains significant existing trees around the boundaries and scattered within the site which are important to public amenity in the area and will provide valuable ecosystem services. All trees within the site are protected by the OCC - London Road (No.1) TPO, 1994.
- Existing trees contribute to the network of green space across the site and provide acoustic mitigation from A40.

Biodiversity and ecology

- Previous ecological assessments indicate the site is comprised of species-poor grassland, scattered trees, scrub, and developed land. It contains a medium population of great crested newt (GCN) and multiple bat roosts. Updated surveys would be required in support of any planning application; both GCN and bats are European Protected Species and therefore any consented development would only be able to proceed under licence from Natural England. Other potential protected species constraints include reptiles, nesting birds, and badgers.
- The site is not designated for its nature conservation value. However, it is located in close proximity to the CS Lewis Nature Reserve and any planning application should assess the potential for recreational impacts on this site and agree suitable mitigation measures for any impact.

Blue Infrastructure

- Watercourse/ditch running along eastern boundary of the site.
- Site is in Flood Zone 1
- There are some small patches of surface water flood risk to the north of the site close to the London Road and a couple of smaller patches further south.

Land Quality

- Contamination unlikely.

Analysis and urban design implications

- If existing trees are removed, new trees should be planted to fully mitigate the impact on tree canopy cover and green infrastructure in the area.
- Existing trees will influence developable area of site and its capacity.
- Opportunities exist to plant new trees to improve connectivity within GI network.

- Opportunities exist to reduce the overall amount of hard surfacing in favour of increased natural landscaping.

C) Historic environment, character and local context

Description of current context

Historic environment

- The site has been evaluated for the recent planning application and no significant archaeology was identified.
- Site outside conservation area.
- Site contains no listed building constraint however Grade II listed milestone located close to the site (in the central reservation of the A40).
- Site outside the locally designated view cones.
- Site lies outside the locally designated high buildings area.

Built environment

- Residential properties to the west are predominantly 2 storey semi-detached.
- Former 3 storey office block has been converted to flats. Large portion of site is greenfield land.
- Site adjacent to Thornhill Court flats and Thornhill Park and Ride.
- Greenfield to east and south boundaries.
- Site is almost entirely bordered by mature trees.
- Sandhills and Risinghurst Character Area is dominated by standard inter-war, semi-detached housing with front bays, finished in pebble-dash or render, set back from the roads with private front gardens and driveways.
- Clay roof tiles are predominant in the character area.
- The continuity of housing style, along with some distinctive landscape details including stone kerbs, low boundary wall and vernacular buildings, establish the local sense of place within this character area. The wooded ridge of Shotover Hill to the south and valley of Bayswater Brook to the north provide the rural context to this suburb, forming the eastern extent of the city of Oxford.

Analysis and urban design implications

- Limited historic environment constraints.
- Height that responds to the area adjacent and respects the amenity of neighbouring residential properties.
- Scope for higher development signalling entry to the city.
- Improve natural surveillance of the site.
- Opportunity to reduce car parking and improve the public realm as this is the first you see of the site.
- There is an opportunity for a more varied built environment, which improves on the current 'wall' of built form and allows a more varied roofscape, views between builds and moments of building popping above tree lines.
- Opportunity for depths of view on edges.

D) Access, movement and layout

Description of current context

Access into the site

- Existing vehicular access off the A40 to the north of the site.
- There is safe access/ egress from the site – area surrounding site is in Flood Zone 1.

Layout of the site

- The character area is carved in half by the A40 dual carriageway, an important eastern approach to Oxford, and there is little connectivity between the discrete areas.
- Green spaces within the character area tend to be school grounds and recreation grounds typical of the same period and often bear no relation to underlying landscape character.
- The lower density housing has allowed pockets of more recent infill, which have increased the density of the townscape in places.

- Allotments, substantial private gardens and a public park (adjacent to the southern boundary of the site) contribute to a more organic layout and less dense housing area in the south of the character area.

Connectivity to wider area

- Adjacent to Thornhill Park and Ride with frequent buses direct to Oxford City Centre and London.
- Continuous footpath along the A40 stretch from City Centre into the site.
- No public rights of way within or adjacent to the site.
- Surrounding residential roads are not within a controlled parking zone, primarily off-street parking.

Analysis and urban design implications

- Existing safe access does not limit development although would require a new controlled junction.
- Potential to improve active travel network, making it more continuous into the city centre and providing a safe route along the A40 to Wheatley.
- Reflect surrounding block arrangements of residential streets.
- Design sensitivity will be required, as development in the southern part of the site could have a visual impact on open countryside.
- Opportunity for footpath from existing residential to park and ride to enhance legibility and tie the neighbourhoods together.
- Split up car access so it isn't all onto A40 if possible – Less tension between existing and new residential.

E) Other consideration

Other considerations to include in allocations?

Amenity

- Some noise mitigation would likely be required on northern boundary adjacent to A40.
- There is the potential for land contamination on the site due to previous uses and as such proposals will need to be informed by appropriate assessment to identify risks and any required remediation.

Infrastructure needs

- The existing pavilion is 25 years old and at the end of its lifespan, unable to comfortably accommodate the needs. The loss is considered acceptable provided a contribution is made towards a replacement pavilion as set out in the previous planning permission.

F) Landowner aspirations

Landowner has set out intentions for development and proposed uses in planning application. This has been approved but is yet to be implemented (21/01695/FUL - Mixed use residential, hotel, car parking and sports grounds).

G) Any extra work needed to inform allocation?

- Recreational impacts on the CS Lewis Nature Reserve should be assessed and mitigation measures included, if necessary.
- Proposals for development will need to be informed by an updated ecological assessment to confirm previous findings in relation to biodiversity.

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:

- Figure carried over from previous site allocation, assuming at least 10% open space on larger site and excluding TPOs from developable area.

Site area	3.39ha
Ward	Quarry and Risinghurst
Landowner	Shaviram Group
Current Use(s)	Residential, car parking and a sports ground.
Flood zone	Watercourse running along eastern boundary of the site. Site is in Flood Zone 1, although there are some small patches of surface water flood risk to the north of the site close to the London Road and a couple of smaller patches further south. There is safe access/ egress from the site – area surrounding site is in Flood Zone 1.
Notable heritage assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site has been evaluated for the recent planning application and no significant archaeology was identified. • Site outside conservation area. • Site contains no listed building constraint however Grade II listed milestone located close to the site (in the central reservation of the A40). • Site outside the locally designated view cones. • Site lies outside the locally designated high buildings area. • The site has been evaluated and no significant archaeology identified.
Notable ecological features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous ecological assessments indicate the site is comprised of species-poor grassland, scattered trees, scrub, and developed land. It contains a medium population of great crested newt (GCN) and multiple bat roosts. Other potential protected species constraints include reptiles, nesting birds, and badgers. • The site is not designated for its nature conservation value. However, it is located in close proximity to the CS Lewis Nature Reserve. • Site contains significant existing trees around the boundaries and scattered within the site which are important to public amenity in the area and will provide valuable ecosystem services. All trees within the site are protected by the OCC - London Road (No.1) TPO, 1994. Existing trees will influence developable area of site and its capacity. • Southeast section of the site within LNRS.
Urban Greening Factor score	The site is likely to score above the Urban Greening Factor target for residential/non-residential development.

I) Conclusion – key policy requirements or principles for the site and capacity requirement

Proposed use(s):

Mixed use residential/hotel etc.

Minimum capacity - 402

Open space, nature, flood risk

- Proposals for development should be informed by an updated ecological assessment to confirm previous findings in relation to biodiversity and consider potential for known species of interest (great crested newts and bats) as well as other species including reptiles, nesting birds and badgers. Recreational impacts on the CS Lewis Nature Reserve should be assessed and mitigation measures included, if necessary.
- Opportunities exist to reduce the overall amount of hard surfacing in favour of increased natural landscaping. Existing mature trees should be retained where possible as with other high-quality GI in order to preserve the base line UGF score. Layout should incorporate a network of amenity spaces such as pocket parks, or other forms of GI that provide linear connections across the site particularly where this can assist with movement of wildlife.

- A minimum of 10% public open space will be required onsite (**Policy G2**).
- The existing pavilion is 25 years old and at the end of its lifespan, unable to comfortably accommodate the needs. The loss is considered acceptable provided a contribution is made towards a replacement pavilion as set out in the previous planning permission.
- There is the potential for land contamination on the site due to previous uses, and as a result proposals will be required to include an appropriate site contamination investigation and demonstrate how contamination issues will be resolved where relevant (**Policy R7**).
- Due to potential impacts of noise and other pollutants from the site's proximity to the A40, development proposals will need to demonstrate how layout of buildings and public spaces has been approached so as to minimise amenity impacts for users, including locating these away from these key pollution sources. This should also be informed by an acoustic design assessment that addresses the potential for significant environmental noise from these transport corridors (**Policy R4 and R8**).

Urban design & heritage

- Development proposals that exceed the height that the High Buildings TAN states may have an impact on the historic core will be required to provide extensive information so that the full impacts can be understood and assessed as listed in Policy HD9.
- New development should respect design sensitivities particularly in the southern part of the site which is likely to have a visual impact on the countryside (Policy HD1).

Movement & access

- Walking, cycling and wheeling should be promoted in this site and opportunities taken to improve connectivity from the site through to neighbouring areas.
- The site is in an air quality hot spot area. Development proposals should demonstrate compliance with policy R4 by ensuring that all necessary mitigation measures against poor air quality have been incorporated during the construction and operational phases and ensuring that any potential negative air quality impacts are adequately mitigated on an ongoing basis, within and surrounding the site.
- Extensive site investigation works have been completed over parts of the site already, however a contamination investigation would be required in other areas due to its previous use and potential contamination risks, and an application should demonstrate how contamination issues will be resolved (Policy R5).
- Development proposals should include an acoustic design statement in compliance with Policy R7 as this site is part of an area which is subject to significant environmental noise from the traffic on the A40.