

Draft Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

2020 - 2026

Regulation 14 Consultation Draft | June 2020



Overview Information

This draft Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and is published for public consultation.

Together with its associated documentation this draft Neighbourhood Plan is to be used for its intended purpose only, which is to gather comments and feedback on this draft document.

This is an opportunity to let us know what you think we've got right in the draft, and if there is anything we haven't got right or have missed.

Information on how to comment on this draft Plan can be found on the website : melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org and within this document.

Questions and further information can also be directed at Melksham Without Parish Council or Melksham Town Council

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Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) for advice and guidance material (Notably, Neighbourhood planning in a climate emergency. 3rd Edition - February 2020)

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Foreword



When I moved to Melksham in 1972 to teach at George Ward, Melksham was a very industrial town, dominated by the Avon, Unigate Dairy, GEC in Beanacre Road, the feather factory, and, where Sainsburys now stands, Hurn Brothers making fencing and other wood products. Wiltshire Farmers shop was on Bath Road and their feed mill behind on the Waitrose site and most of the population worked in town. Over the years the importance of Bowerhill industrial estate increased, and the factories, with the exception of the Avon, left the town centre, and more and more people had to travel out of town for work.

Recently major companies like Herman Miller and Knorr Bremse have moved in and the industrial estate is bursting at the seams. The same period saw a gradual increase in population, a trend which has accelerated greatly in recent times. The purpose of this Neighbourhood Plan is to recognise Melksham as a place of work opportunities and to create a framework for the future, which will make Melksham a great place to live, to work, to play and to visit.

It will promote employment, ensure only appropriate residential development and that the infrastructure for transport, education, health and recreation is all in place to cope with a rapidly increasing population, while retaining and enhancing our existing green infrastructure.

When our work is completed the Neighbourhood Plan will have a place in planning law and should help to prevent unwelcome development while encouraging changes.

Richard Wood, Chair, Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

1 Introduction



1.1 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

The Localism Act 2011 provided local communities with the power to produce their own Neighbourhood Plan which will guide future development in their area.

Neighbourhood Plans are focused on shaping the future use and development of land, and can:

- Identify a shared vision and common goals for a neighbourhood
- Define where new homes should be built and what community benefits should be delivered with the development
- Set out what key green spaces and networks of green infrastructure should be protected and enhanced

Once it has passed through a number of required stages (this draft Neighbourhood Plan for consultation is one such stage), the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (also referred to as the 'Plan') can become part of the Development Plan for Wiltshire to be used to guide both those proposing development, and those who consider and decide upon planning applications at Wiltshire Council.

It is important to note that the legislation does not allow Neighbourhood Plans to prevent development. A Neighbourhood Plan cannot say no to any more houses built when there is a national and regional shortage of housing. Instead, the Plan will help to shape new development, ensuring that local needs and

aspirations are taken into account.

Neighbourhood Plans also cannot require that new facilities or infrastructure are built. However, the provision of infrastructure is highlighted as vital to support development and ensure that this area grows in a sustainable way.

People are attracted to live in Melksham with its good transport connections, historic town centre, green open spaces and many natural features such as the River Avon. Consequently, a lot of development has taken place recently in both the town and surrounding villages.

This draft Plan has been drawn up with the aim of ensuring that the growth of Melksham, and that the opportunities that this provides, are balanced with a clear understanding of the community's aims and aspirations for the future.



What is Sustainable Development?

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of 'sustainable development', which is defined as **'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'**.

1.2 What area does this Neighbourhood Plan cover?

The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan area was formally designated by Wiltshire Council on 14th July 2014 (amended 8th November 2017).

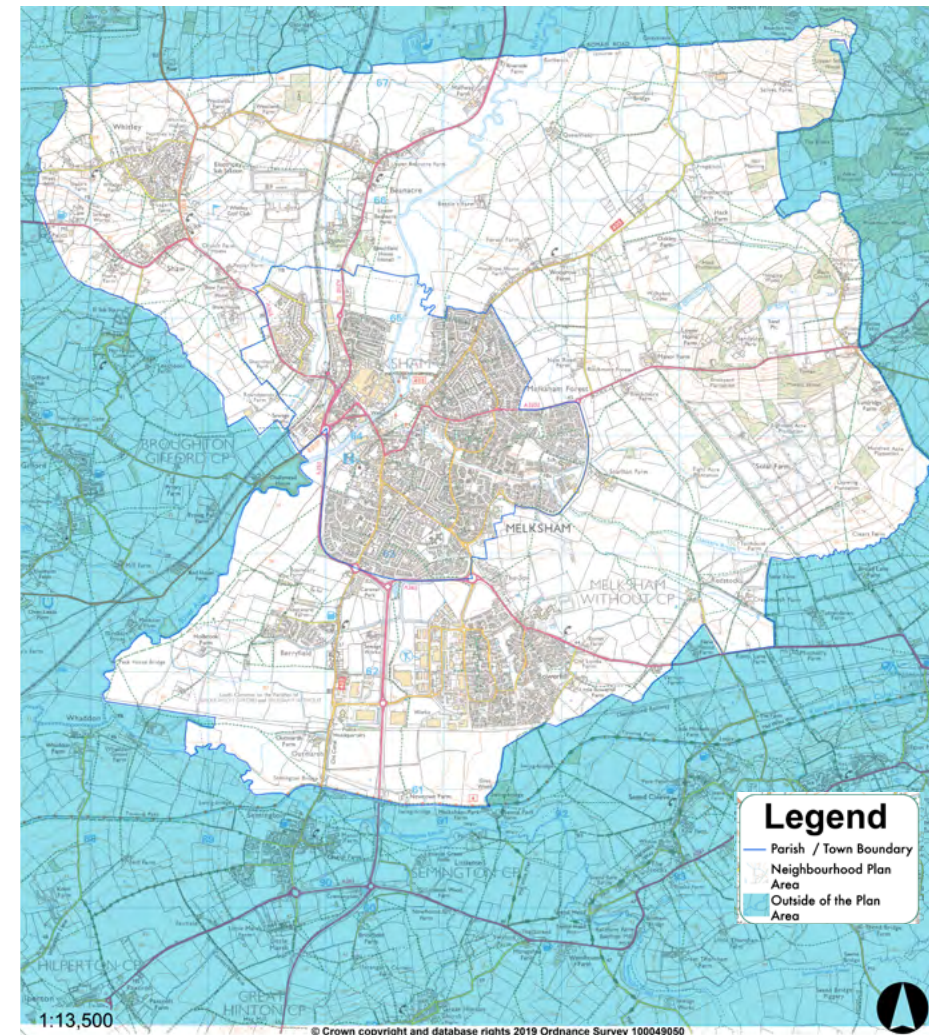
The Neighbourhood Plan is a joint one prepared by Melksham Town and Melksham Without Parish. The Plan area totals approximately 3,360 hectares (c.8,300 acres) and includes an estimated 24,052 people (2018 figure), which represents 4.83% of the total Wiltshire Council population of 498,064.

1.3 Who has prepared the draft Melksham Neighbourhood Plan?

Where there is a Town or Parish Council, they will always be the 'Qualifying Body' that will take forward a Neighbourhood Plan. In this case, Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council are the Qualifying Bodies.

The process of preparing the Plan has been driven by a Steering Group of representatives from the Town and Parish as well as the wider community, with support and guidance from Wiltshire Council and plan consultants.

Figure 1: Joint Plan Area



1.4 How will the Neighbourhood Plan represent the community's views?

Over the last few years, the Neighbourhood Plan has been through an extensive community engagement process which is detailed in the draft Consultation Statement which can be found on the Plan website (www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org).

Through our Neighbourhood Plan, we can set out what the community expects from any new development. And, importantly, what we want protected or need more of.

The Plan will be a living document, and will be used, reviewed and monitored to see how it is being used by applicants and Wiltshire in relation to planning matters. It will be updated and amended to respond to future challenges and opportunities.

This document is the first opportunity for people to see the whole draft Plan. It has been prepared for consultation (known as Regulation 14) and comment by people who live, work and carry out business in the Plan area, as well as statutory consultees such as Wiltshire Council and Historic England. The responses and comments about this draft will help to shape the final version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The decision to proceed with this consultation has been carefully considered given the current situation with Covid-19. Consultation can go ahead during the outbreak of coronavirus, so long as

guidelines are adhered to and the health of our communities is protected. Though we are not able to hold public events, people are invited to call or email with any questions or for support to access the plan and/or the comments form.

Once you have read the draft Plan, please provide your comments; let us know what we have got right, what we have got wrong and what has been omitted. This is your opportunity to shape your community's Neighbourhood Plan and inform how the area develops in the future.

Following consultation, a final version of the Plan will be drafted, taking account of comments received, and submitted to Wiltshire Council for the next stage in the process. Wiltshire Council will appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced person to carry out an independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The examiner will issue a report to Wiltshire Council confirming whether or not the Plan meets the required 'basic conditions'. If the basic conditions are met the examiner will recommend that the Plan proceeds to referendum stage. That will be your opportunity to vote on the Plan and if successful, the Plan will become part of the overall development plan for Wiltshire to guide developers and planning officers when considering planning applications in the Plan area.

The consultation on this draft Plan will run for a minimum of 6 weeks between Monday 1st June - Monday 13th July.

We will be making sure that people who live, work or carry out business in the area, are aware of the consultation through the following ways:

Email... we will be emailing those who have expressed an interest in being kept informed as well as the Statutory Bodies we must consult.

Online... the draft Plan, evidence base reports and comments forms will be available to download from the dedicated website: www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org

Hard Copies... you can view paper copies at the Town Hall and Parish Council offices by prior appointment

By Phone....for queries or to request a hard copy or comments form please contact:

Melksham Town Council: townhall@melkshamtown.co.uk
T: 01225 704187

Melksham Without Parish Council: clerk@melkshamwithout.co.uk
T: 01225 705700

1.5 How can you make comments?

We have prepared a comments form that can be downloaded from the website or emailed or posted to you. If you would like to make comments, please reference policy numbers or page numbers and be as specific as possible.

Electronic responses (by email or online) would be appreciated, helping us to speed the process of recording, analysing and responding. The comments form will be available to download from the dedicated website:

melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org

To make comments please download the comments form from the website, or ring/email to request a hard copy and send by email: mnpseg@mail.com or by post to:

Melksham Without Parish
Council
Sports Pavilion
Westinghouse Way
Melksham
Wiltshire, SN12 6TL

Melksham Town Council
Town Hall
Market Place
Melksham
Wiltshire, SN12 6ES

1.6 Navigating the draft Plan

After this introduction, the Plan continues with information that sets the scene for our area today and future challenges.

Planning policies form the main focus of the Plan.

The **Planning Policies** (page 27 onwards), are in five overall sections, related to our plan objectives. We have colour coded each section with the aim of making it easier to follow:

- > **A section that addresses some of the challenges of climate change at the very local level is in red**
- > **A section that addresses future housing and infrastructure needs is in orange**
- > **A section that addresses the Town Centre, employment and travel is in green**
- > **A section that addresses our open spaces and community facilities is in blue**
- > **A section that addresses our built and natural environment is in purple**

For each policy there is one or more objective, then the policy itself is presented within a box and written in **bold**, and then we set out the key reasons behind the policy.

The policies must be right for Melksham and also strong enough to shape responsive and appropriate developments for our area.

Priority Statements (pages 81 onwards) are also included to illustrate the commitment of the two Councils to bringing their influence to bear on things we can't address in this Plan, but which are important issues to our local community.

We suggest a quick skip through all the policies, then come back to look in detail at those that are of most interest to you. And don't feel you have to comment on everything; just focus on what's most important to you.

There are a number of separate evidence base reports which underpin the Plan and its policies. They set out detailed information which links to our planning policies and priority statements. The evidence base reports can be found on the Neighbourhood Plan website:

melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org

Please also comment on the evidence reports should you wish to do so.

A glossary of key terms is included at the end of the Plan.

2 Setting the Agenda



2.1 Why a Joint Melksham Town and Melksham Without Parish Neighbourhood Plan?

Early consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan as well as the current Wiltshire Core Strategy highlighted the following key issues faced by the two parishes:

- High level of inter-dependency between the town and parish
- Limited employment and training opportunities
- Recent and future job losses
- Traffic congestion
- Pressure for more housing development
- A need to protect the heritage – particularly the Spa and the Conservation Area in the town
- A need to improve the retail offer in Melksham
- Climate change and the need to be locally resilient
- Insufficient facilities to meet the needs of the growing population (particularly school provision and health care)
- The need for affordable houses and a mix of development types
- The loss of greenfield sites and the need to prioritise brownfield land where possible

These issues could not be addressed successfully through independent plans. At its simplest, the whole area operates as a classic market town and catchment area.

This interdependence is further highlighted by the likelihood of future housing growth, much of which is likely to take place in

Melksham Without. A single, joint Plan increases the value for the communities of both Town and Parish.

This Neighbourhood Plan has been created to give the residents of Melksham and Melksham Without positive input into, and some control over, the key issues and future development in the Plan area.

The Neighbourhood Plan sets out its ambitions and aspirations for future development through a vision, objectives and policies that will guide development on a range of matters. The Plan also operates as an informal community strategy, setting out a number of 'priorities' and projects which illustrate the commitment of both councils to use their influence to bear on matters outside the scope of this Plan.

2.2 Key facts about the Plan area

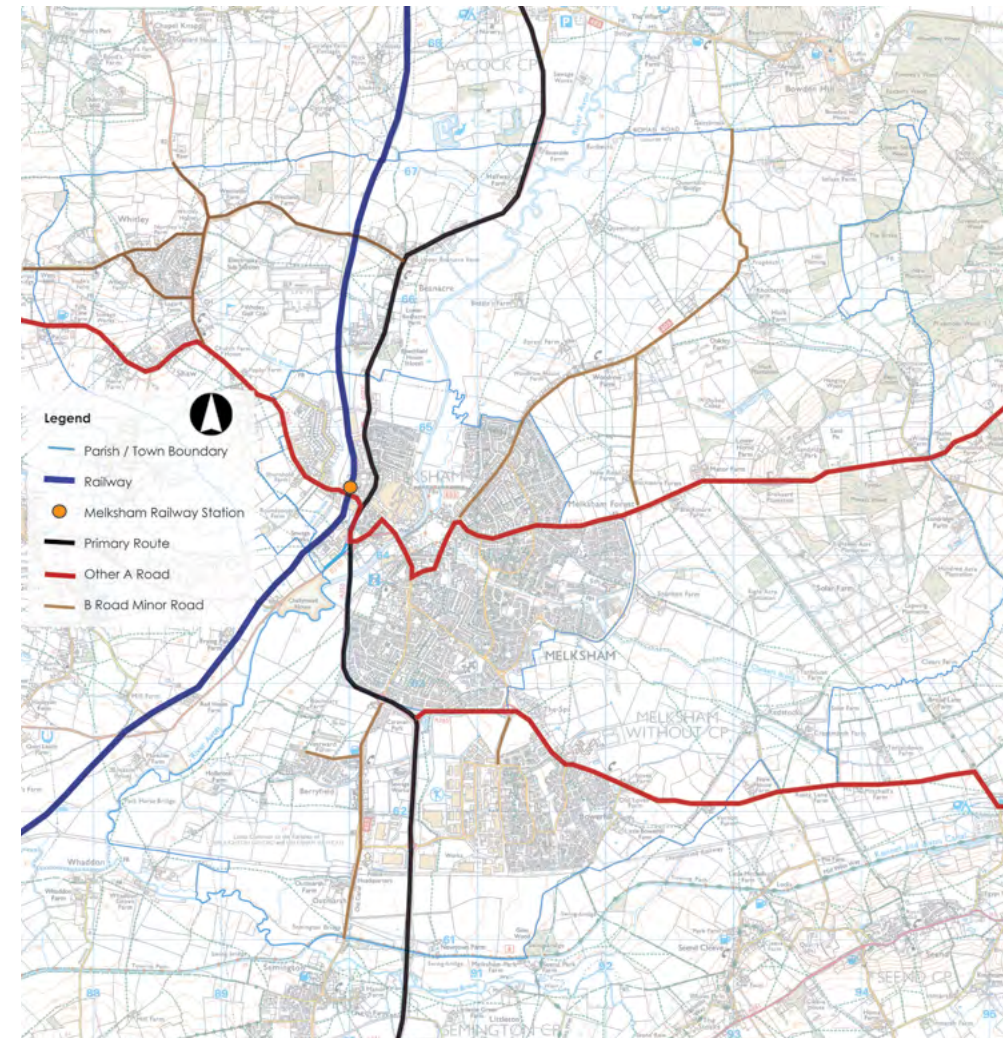
The facts, figures and studies that make up the Plan evidence base have helped to build up a picture of the Plan area today, the pressures it faces, how it has been changing, what its current needs are and what may be needed in the future.

- The total resident population of the Plan area (Melksham Town and Melksham Without) in 2018 was estimated to be 24,052¹ an increase of 9.58% since 2011 when the population was 21,907. The population increase already exceeds Wiltshire's population growth forecast in the period up to 2026.

- 2,749 households in the Neighbourhood Plan area have dependent children of all ages - just over 30% of all households.
- The predominant age band in 2017, with 1,897 people (12.67%), was 'all persons aged 50 to 54' and our population is ageing².
- The Employment Land Review noted that total jobs have grown by 16.6% since 2009³ with a high concentration of jobs in manufacturing.
- We have a well qualified resident workforce, however, there are differences between average earnings by workplace and average earnings by residence in Wiltshire, suggesting that Wiltshire's higher skilled resident workers commute outside of the county for work⁴.
- We have a railway station, but public transport generally is limited in the area.



Figure 2: Rail and Key Roads Routes



2.3 The wider context

National

Neighbourhood Plans must be consistent with the principles and policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019. The NPPF covers most forms of development and sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social priorities for planning in England. The NPPF provides guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers, both in drawing up plans and making decisions about planning applications.

Neighbourhood Plans are required to operate within the context set by the NPPF and the latest national Planning Policy Guidance, and must also be in 'general conformity' with all higher level planning policy.

Wiltshire

The Wiltshire Core Strategy was adopted in January 2015. The Core Strategy includes policies and principles regarding the county's development through to 2026.

The Core Strategy defines the spatial vision for the Plan area, includes a number of objectives to achieve the vision and sets out the development strategy to meet these objectives. The document includes strategic planning policies to guide and control the overall scale, type and location of development. The Core Strategy breaks

Wiltshire down into Community Areas. The Melksham Community Area (shown on Figure 3) covers 11 parishes in total, and Melksham Town is the main settlement (the Melksham Community Area will change from May 2021).

The Core Strategy prescribes the number of homes to be built in the Melksham Community Area by 2026: 2,240 for Melksham (Town and Bowerhill) and 130 for the remainder of the Community Area. Development over the plan period to date has exceeded the housing numbers set out in the Core Strategy meaning that the housing requirement in Melksham (Town) and the remainder of the Community Area is now zero. There is therefore no specific requirement for this Plan to allocate sites for housing (see Wiltshire Council Housing Land Supply Statement dated April 2018).

Wiltshire Council is currently reviewing the Core Strategy which will be renamed the Wiltshire Local Plan. A review is required because the Government encourages local planning authorities to revisit their Local Plans every five years. At the time of writing the expectation is that Wiltshire Council will be consulting informally on the Wiltshire Local Plan during 2020, with formal consultation taking place during 2021, meaning that the new Local Plan could be expected to be in place in 2022.

Wiltshire is required by Central Government to establish, through the next Local Plan, the requirement and delivery plans for new houses and jobs in the period up to 2036.

Figure 3: Melksham Community Area



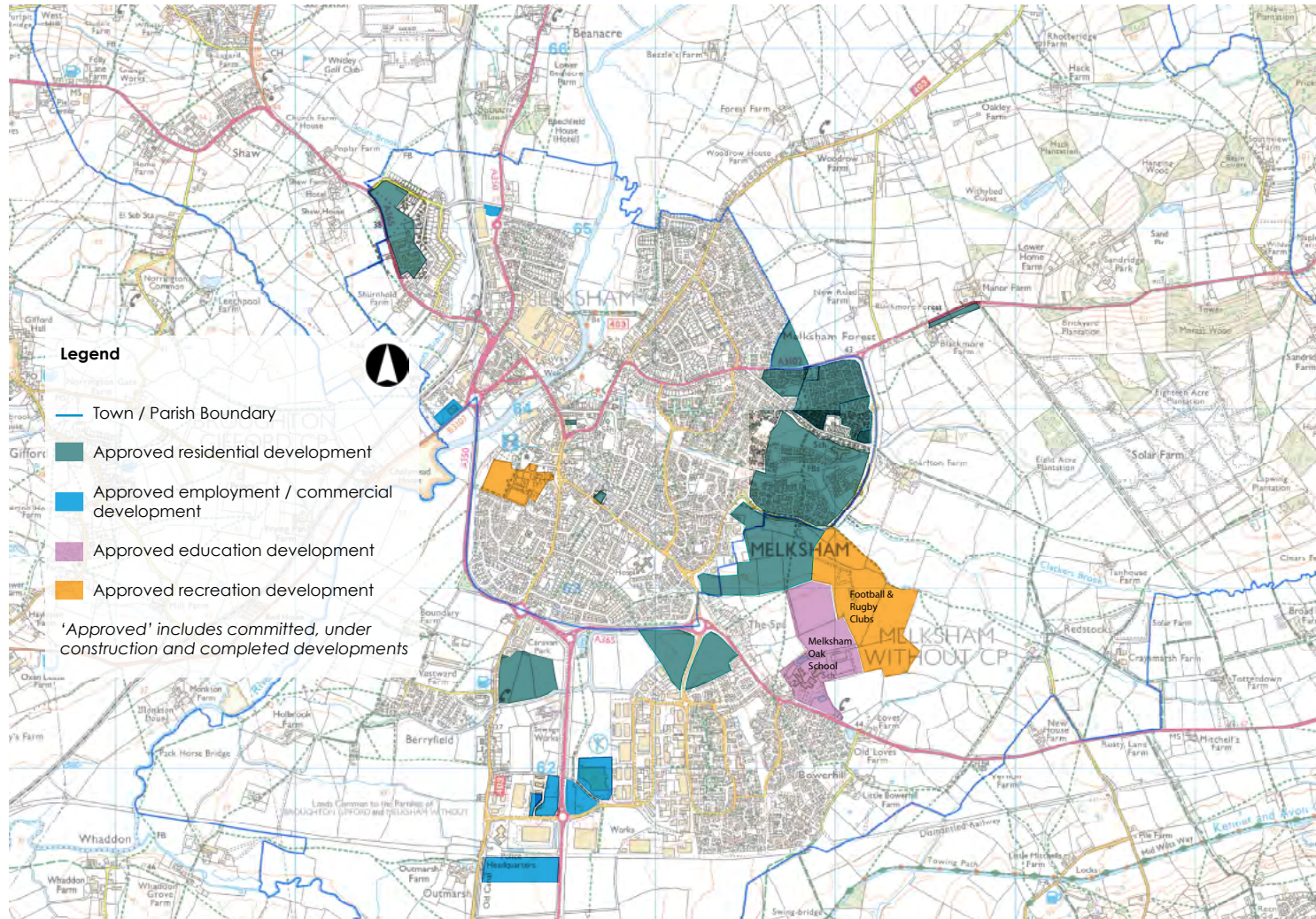
2.4 The approach to the Neighbourhood Plan

“The local planning authority should take a proactive and positive approach, working collaboratively with a qualifying body particularly sharing evidence and seeking to resolve any issues to ensure the draft neighbourhood plan has the greatest chance of success at independent examination.” (Neighbourhood Planning Practice Guidance paragraph 009)

This is particularly relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan because Wiltshire Council is likely to allocate some development to Melksham in their Local Plan review. Working in partnership with Wiltshire Council has been essential in the formulation of the Plan. This will be borne out in a Statement of Common Ground that will be agreed between the Parish and Town Council and Wiltshire Council. This will include strategic priorities for both Plans, such as those listed below; priorities that can only be addressed successfully where there is synchronicity between the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan:

- Climate change and Wiltshire Council’s commitment for the county to be carbon neutral by 2030
- Town centre regeneration
- Employment
- Transport infrastructure
- Levels of growth (related to appropriate facilities)
- Schools
- Wilts & Berks canal restoration

Figure 4: Major planning permissions granted during the current Wiltshire Core Strategy period



Although there is no requirement to allocate housing in this Neighbourhood Plan, there is ongoing development pressure in the area. The Steering Group therefore felt it important to consider and review potential development sites in the Plan area with a particular focus on what community benefit development could offer. Landowners submitted potential land for development through a local call for sites and the Wiltshire Council Strategic Housing Land Assessment process; more than 60 sites were assessed in total. 26 of these sites could be considered to be potential extensions to the current built area of Melksham (both Town and Without). All have been independently assessed, some emerging as suitable, some as potentially suitable, some as unsuitable (see the Housing Evidence Base Report in the Evidence Folder).

Wiltshire Council is likely to allocate land for development in Melksham through the Local Plan Review process, and given that no final decision has yet been made on the precise scale or location of any allocation, it was agreed that this Neighbourhood Plan should not reach decisions on, or move to allocate, any of the 26 submitted edge of town sites. Sites in the rural areas of Melksham Without Parish were further assessed in relation to possible community benefit as a result of allocation.

Given the overlapping timetables of this Plan and the Local Plan review, a carefully sequenced approach to both has been agreed with Wiltshire Council as follows:

1. This Plan – it might be termed Neighbourhood Plan 1 – focuses on a number of key policy areas relevant to the Plan area as a whole which can also be used to inform the final details of any potential strategic site allocations for development made by Wiltshire Council in the Local Plan Review.
2. The Local Plan Review will draw from the contents of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan when deciding on the scale and location of any potential strategic site allocations. Strategic allocations are, therefore, likely to be strengthened by the inclusion of more detailed, locally-generated principles and criteria than would otherwise have been the case.
3. Once the draft Local Plan Review is adopted, or has reached an appropriately advanced stage, this Neighbourhood Plan will be reviewed – it might be termed Neighbourhood Plan 2. At this point it will be possible to determine whether any of the other submitted potential sites on the edge of the main built area are even necessary and, if so, which could be allocated for development. This reviewed Neighbourhood Plan will also pick up on a number of other more detailed issues such as the potential designation of Local Green Spaces.

2.5 Melksham Town Introduction

The market town of Melksham is about 7km (c.4.5 miles) northeast of Trowbridge and 10km (c.6 miles) south of Chippenham. It is Wiltshire's fifth-largest settlement after Swindon, Salisbury, Chippenham and Trowbridge. It occupies a strategic location on the north-south A350 road from the M4 motorway, junction 17 near Chippenham to Poole on the south coast; by rail it is directly linked to Trowbridge & Westbury and Chippenham & Swindon where connections to the rest of the rail network are possible.

Melksham was first recorded as 'Melchesa' in the 1086 Domesday Survey, the name is assumed to derive from the Old English words 'meolc' (milk) and 'ham' (village). The settlement was based around a ford across the river Avon and the naming infers that milk was always an important part of the settlement's economy.

Melksham is a true market town, having a Royal Charter awarded in 1219. The granting of a charter was seen as a royal prerogative and only granted if the proposed new market town was at least a day's travelling distance from the nearest market town.

The streets around the river Avon and up to the Market Place were the sites of small industries. Independent weavers worked at home in their cottages. Other local trades and crafts typical of a small market town, including tanners, blacksmiths and millers, occupied small workshops and legacies of the town's industrial past can be seen in the weavers' cottages in Canon Square and the two round houses, originally used for drying cloth.

The Market Place has recently been refurbished to return it to the open area as it once was. It once hosted the town pump which provided drinking water for passing travellers. The newly paved and developed Market Place commemorates the location of the well.

In 1889 the Avon Rubber Company moved to Melksham, occupying a disused cloth mill. Originally to provide materials for the railway industry, by the end of the 19th century, Avon Rubber was focused on pneumatic tyres, as well as milking machine tubes. Rapidly expanding during the 50's and 60's it changed to an international group of companies. In 1997 Avon Tyres was sold to Cooper Tires but other divisions of Avon are still in Melksham.

Melksham has an abundance of historical buildings including many Grade II listed buildings with some unique architecture, reflecting the town's historical past. The town centre is within an identified Conservation Area.

Melksham continues to serve as an employment, facilities, service and retail hub for the greater Melksham community.

Melksham has a very strong sense of community and boasts numerous community groups run by dedicated volunteers all working hard to improve the quality of life for residents. This strong sense of community contributes positively to the health and well-being of local people.



1844 - 1888	1898 - 1939	2017
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Figure 5: Melksham Town Map Regression Analysis

PHOTOS of MTC and MWPC to come

2.6 Melksham Without Introduction

The parish of Melksham Without was created under the Local Government Act of 1894, which divided the ancient parish of Melksham into Melksham Within (the town or urban district council area) and the rural Melksham Without. Parts of Melksham Without, adjacent to the town, were subsequently transferred to Melksham Within in 1895, 1914 and 1934, in the 1960s, 1991 and 2017.

Melksham Without surrounds the town of Melksham on three sides – the northern, eastern and southern. In the past, the three villages in the north - Beanacre, Shaw and Whitley - were ancient centres of population. Whitley is mentioned in the Domesday book. The eastern parts of the parish, bounded by the Avon to the west and the Semington Brook to the south, were part of the royal forest of Melksham whose bounds were first set in 1228. The borders of the forest changed over the centuries. For example, Rotteridge Wood was in the Forest in 1228 but just outside it in 1300.

In the south are two areas that were devoted to farming but were given over to military purposes in the 20th century. From 1940 until 1964 Royal Air Force Melksham was based at Bowerhill, with housing for the base being built at Bowerhill and Berryfield. In 1970 Bradford and Melksham Rural District Council purchased land (151.3 acres) at Bowerhill from the MOD and, from 1971 onwards, Bowerhill developed into a large residential village with a thriving industrial estate. Berryfield too has become a separate village community.

Figure 6: Plan Area Settlements and Neighbourhoods

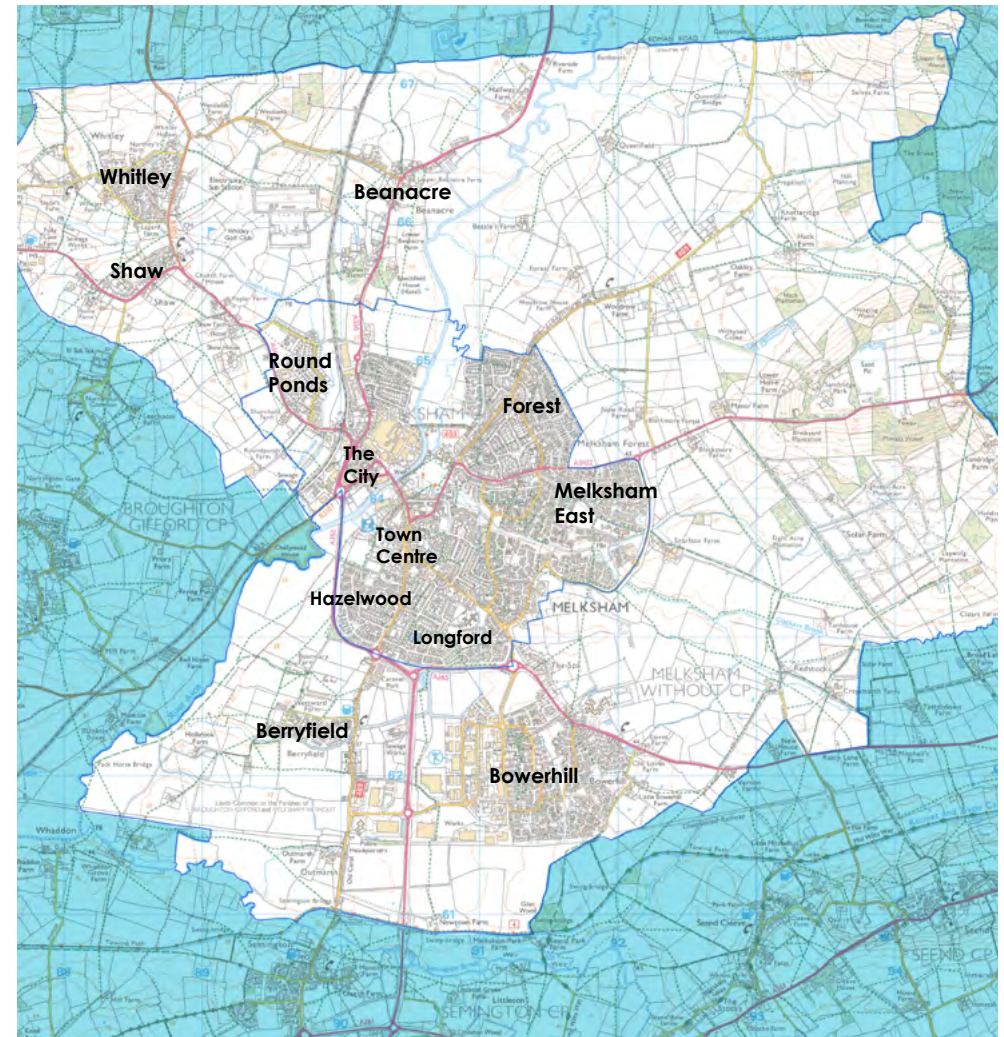




Figure 7: Bowerhill and Berryfield Map Regression Analysis

2.7 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

Land use planning is recognised as having the potential to make a valuable contribution to sustainable development and to helping to address climate change. Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan was being drafted, the urgency of addressing climate change became even clearer with the latest scientific understanding of climate change.

The scientific evidence of climate change is overwhelming and recent reports⁵ illustrate how urgent it is that action is taken. Extreme weather events have been seen around the world, most recently in England with flooding, and there is mounting evidence that human activity is raising the risk of some types of extreme weather, especially those linked to heat.

The UK Government is beginning to take more ambitious action to address climate change. In the summer of 2019, the 2008 Climate Change Act was amended, committing the UK to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. As a result, it is likely that changes or additions to national planning policy linked to climate change will come on stream in the near future. For example, the Conservative party manifesto for the December 2019 elections, won by that party, stated the following:

“We will support the creation of new kinds of homes that have low energy bills and which support our environmental targets and will expect new streets to be lined with trees.”

The Government is also planning to bring forward the Future Homes Standard by 2025, which will reform energy regulations for new development to require increased energy efficiency.

In July 2019, Wiltshire Council made a commitment to make the county carbon neutral by 2030. Wiltshire Council’s Environment Select Committee has established a task group of councillors and officers to look at some of the main issues, including planning. It is anticipated that the forthcoming Local Plan will pick up on, add to and strengthen its approach to both sustainable development and climate change.

Melksham Town Council is committed to creating a more resilient, productive and healthy environment for present and future generations and has acknowledged the very real issue that is ‘climate change’. It has pledged to overhaul its working practices; to raise awareness in the community through climate change events; to lead by example and support the community to mitigate the effects of climate change; embraced the refill scheme; brought in a paperless committee system; replacing vehicles with electric ones.

As part of its effort to support Wiltshire Council’s resolution to be Carbon Neutral by 2030, Melksham Without Parish Council have decided to install drinking water fountains in various public open spaces within the parish, such as Bowerhill and Shaw Playing Fields, to help reduce the single use of water bottles. With climate change and more regular periods of hot weather this will provide

somewhere for people to get fresh drinking water.

The Parish Council are currently applying for funding from the Rural Community Energy Fund to investigate the feasibility of renewable energy schemes for community buildings within the parish. The Parish Council also encourage, where appropriate, the planting of trees to combat climate change and help reduce CO2 in the atmosphere, by signing up to the Tree Charter (www.treecharter.uk). They have also worked with volunteers to plant hundreds of trees supplied by the Woodland Trust

It is important to consider in what ways Melksham and the surrounding rural communities are vulnerable to climate change and the appropriate responses.

All the objectives and policies in the Plan support sustainable development and a number of specific objectives and policies regarding this topic are highlighted in their own section. However, the Plan includes a number of other policies that specifically address the challenge of climate change including:

- Promoting green, environmentally sustainable building standards – **draft Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction**
- Supporting the installation of electric (or other ultra-low emission) vehicle charging points – **draft Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicles**
- Supporting a vibrant town centre so that people can shop

locally - **draft Policy 9: Town Centre**

- Supporting local employment opportunities – **draft Policy 10 Employment Sites**
- Giving proper consideration to routes for buses, cyclists, footpaths and green infrastructure in our housing developments – **draft Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel**
- Protecting or promoting a network of biodiverse green spaces and green corridors, conserving established trees and hedgerows – **draft Policy 12: Green Infrastructure and draft Policy 16: Trees and Hedgerows**



3 The Vision and Objectives



3.1 The Vision

The vision of the Neighbourhood Plan is to make the town of Melksham and the Parish of Melksham Without great places to live, to work, to play and to visit; attractive, healthy, convenient and environmentally sustainable, with access to employment, education, shops and services via walking, cycling and public transport.

Through this Plan we aim to balance the needs of today with the challenges of the future. The Neighbourhood Plan will provide the foundations for Melksham to grow sustainably for the benefit of those that live and work here, and will promote Melksham as an attractive place for businesses to locate and for people to work. Improvement and expansion of the variety of retail provision and other facilities in the town will be promoted.

Through this Plan the benefit of being located within the A350 employment growth area will be enhanced by the attractive offer of a high quality built and natural environment.

As well as the necessary housing and employment growth, we want to see infrastructure provision keep pace with the needs and aspirations of our communities.

A sustainable transport network will be promoted, so that options such as walking and cycling to work, the town centre or local facilities will be a choice open to as many of our residents as possible, and we will make full use of a key local asset, the Melksham railway station.

Our network of environmental assets, such as the river Avon and Clackers Brook, together with the extensive network of open spaces, will be protected and enhanced.

Early and positive engagement on any development proposals with our communities will be key to realising our vision.

3.2 Objectives

Looking to the future we want to use the Plan to help shape:

A 21st century community ... meeting the challenges of sustainable development and climate change through:

1. Reducing carbon emissions with the aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.
2. Planning for new development that addresses the impact of climate change.
3. Encouraging and promoting the use of sustainable technologies.

Great places to live ... where our housing and infrastructure needs are balanced with global and regional issues through:

4. Enabling and promoting the importance of early community engagement in change and development.
5. Supporting sustainable development of new housing and associated facilities as appropriate within or adjacent to existing settlements.
6. Promoting the delivery of infrastructure to address the needs of the population.

Looking to the future we want to use the Plan to help shape:

Great places for shopping, working and getting around through:

7. Protecting and enhancing the vitality of the town centre.
8. The retention, regeneration and intensification of previously developed employment land.
9. Supporting improved transport infrastructure for the increasing Melksham population.
10. Encouraging journeys by rail together with improving cycle and walking routes, thus reducing the need to travel by car.

Places where community well-being and open spaces are protected and enhanced by:

11. Preserving and increasing our network of green spaces.
12. Promoting opportunities for people to lead healthier lifestyles with a greater sense of well-being.
13. Protecting, improving and expanding existing services and facilities to promote health, education and social needs.

A locally distinctive and high quality built and natural environment through:

14. Conserving and enhancing the quality of the natural landscape.
15. Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to our built heritage and the character of the area, with high standards of design.

PHOTO HERE

4 Planning Policies

There are 19 *draft* planning policies in five overall sections, related to the Plan objectives. For each policy there is one or more objective, then the policy itself in coloured boxes, and then the key reasons behind the policy.

As outlined earlier, the policies must be right for Melksham and clearly direct future growth. The Steering Group need your input to this draft Neighbourhood Plan to inform how the area develops in the future.

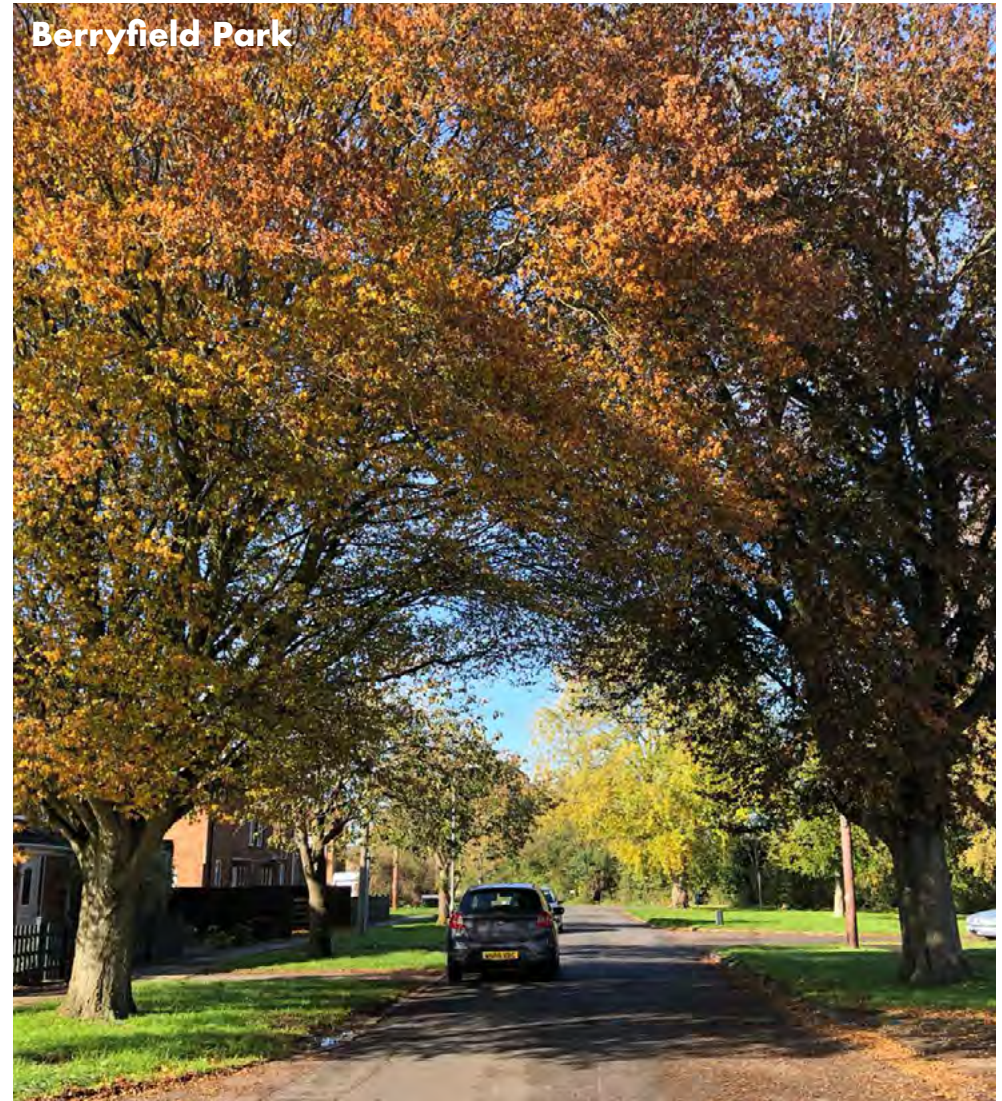
The policies are key, so do let us know what you think we've got right, and if there is anything we haven't got right or have missed.



What is a Planning Policy?

The planning policies included in the Plan will be used to help determine planning applications within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Government guidance sets out that a policy in Neighbourhood Plans should be: *"clear and unambiguous... It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence. It should be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared"* (Neighbourhood Planning Practice Guidance 2019).

Berryfield Park



4.1 Index of policies

A 21st century community ... meeting the challenges of sustainable development and climate change

- Draft Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Draft Policy 2: Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management
- Draft Policy 3: Local Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation
- Draft Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Charging

Great places to live ... where housing and infrastructure needs are balanced with global and regional issues

- Draft Policy 5: Pre-application Community Engagement
- Draft Policy 6: Housing in Defined Settlements
- Draft Policy 7: Allocation of land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley
- Draft Policy 8: Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities

Great places for shopping, working and getting around

- Draft Policy 9: Town Centre
- Draft Policy 10: Employment Sites
- Draft Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

Places where community well-being and open spaces are protected and enhanced

- Draft Policy 12: Green Infrastructure
- Draft Policy 13: Biodiversity
- Draft Policy 14: Open Spaces
- Draft Policy 15: Community Facilities

A locally distinctive and high quality built and natural environment

- Draft Policy 16: Trees and Hedgerows
- Draft Policy 17: Landscape Character
- Draft Policy 18: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design
- Draft Policy 19: Local Heritage



Sustainable Development and Climate Change



“The Neighbourhood Plan will encourage renewable energy production in ways that will deliver community benefits”

Policies in this section:

Draft Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction

Draft Policy 2: Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management

Draft Policy 3: Decentralised Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation

Draft Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Charging

4.2.1 Sustainable Design and Construction

This policy helps meet objective 1: Reducing carbon emissions with the aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

...and objective 2: Planning for new development that addresses the impact of climate change.

Draft Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction

We will support development and infrastructure proposals that contribute to the Wiltshire wide target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. To support this target all new development should be:

- i. designed to maximise green infrastructure to sequester carbon;**
- ii. located where the proximity to services and facilities, or the mix of uses in the development, minimises the need to travel by private vehicle;**
- iii. designed and laid out to harness opportunities to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the effects of a changing climate.**

- iv. designed and constructed in accordance with the Energy Hierarchy principle of reducing energy demand (e.g. through materials with high thermal capacity and good insulation), producing, supplying and using energy efficiently and cleanly, as well as generating energy through zero or low carbon means and use on-site or nearby wherever feasible.**

Applicants are encouraged to use appropriate sustainability assessment tools such as the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), Home Quality Mark for residential development and/or CEEQUAL (or equivalents) for infrastructure development.

The reason for the policy

Whilst it is recognised that we can anticipate new regulations and standards as a result of the urgency of addressing climate change, this policy seeks to reinforce the Wiltshire commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 through the Neighbourhood Plan.

In their report, 'UK Housing: Fit for the Future?' the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) warns: *"We will not meet our targets for emissions reduction without near complete decarbonisation of the housing stock. Energy use in homes accounts for about 14% of UK greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions need to fall by at least 24% by 2030 from 1990 levels, but are currently off track... The technology exists to deliver homes that are low-carbon, energy efficient and climate-resilient... The costs are not prohibitive, and getting design right from the outset is vastly cheaper and more feasible than having to retrofit later."*

Interim regulations for the Future Homes Standard (FHS) will be introduced in 2020, and the Government is introducing the full FSH from 2025 requiring up to 80% lower carbon emissions for all new homes. Through the FHS the Government is aiming for an environmental revolution for home building – tackling climate change while keeping household bills low. If carbon reduction targets are to be met, and the key associated issue of fuel poverty is to be tackled, it is essential that we also improve the energy efficiency of buildings.

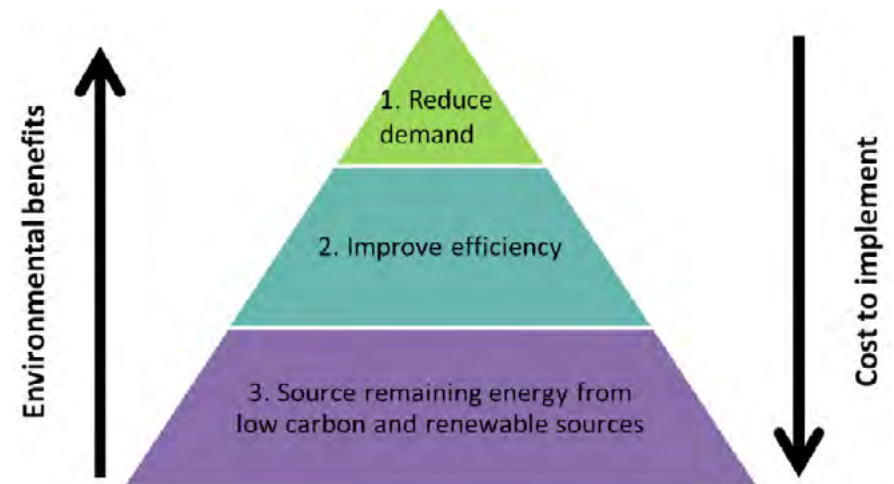


Green infrastructure to sequester carbon

Green infrastructure is a term that includes a wide range of environments and features such as parks, playing fields, woodland, street trees, rights of way, allotments, canal towpaths etc. It has a wide range of benefits, including sequestering carbon.

Carbon sequestration is the process by which trees lock-up and store carbon from the atmosphere.

Below: Energy hierarchy diagram (based upon McLeod et al 2012 & WMRA 2009)



4.2.2 Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management

This policy helps meet objective 2: Planning for new development that addresses the impact of climate change.

Draft Policy 2: Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management

All new development will be expected to include measures to reduce the rate of rainwater run-off in order to mitigate flood risk. Development proposals will be supported where they:

- i. demonstrate how surface water and associated run-off can be drawn into the ground in a sustainable way for surface treatments in residential, commercial and public parking areas;**
- ii. demonstrate, where applicable, that existing land drainage and ditches are safeguarded to ensure that any sustainable surface water outfalls are not lost, and**
- iii. include water re-use measures, unless not reasonably practicable.**

As part of a Natural Flood Management feature, all major development proposals must include provision

of Green Infrastructure such as informal spaces for outdoor recreation and wildlife.

The reason for the policy

The risk of flooding must not be increased by new development. Community consultations raised concerns over development in high flood risk areas, and the need to protect existing properties from flood damage.

The National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance together with the Wiltshire Core Strategy (Core Policy 67) highlight the importance of development taking place in areas at least risk of flooding where possible, as well as the need to manage the flow of surface rainwater. These higher level strategies provide a clear context for the Neighbourhood Plan's policies in relation to reducing flood risk and dealing with the dual pressures of climate change and increased amounts of housing in the Plan area.

One of the major impacts of a changing climate is an increased risk of flooding and this is a significant issue for parts of the north west and south east of Melksham. The UK's winter floods of 2013-14⁷ severely affected parts of the Plan area. There were also two additional incidents of 1 in 150 year storms, in August 2012 and September 2014.

Since 2014 there have been further flooding incidents, most

recently in the early months of 2020. A local response to the issue of flooding is to recruit and train local residents as flood wardens for ongoing monitoring and immediate response.

The UK Met Office predicts that in a business-as-usual (high emission) scenario, Britain could experience a decrease in summer rainfall by up to 47% by 2070, while there could be up to 35% more precipitation in winter.

There is, therefore, a need to increase resilience to the impact of more frequent and serious surface water flooding which can have devastating effects.

Any development has the potential to worsen surface water flooding. Environmental design can help alleviate this through sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), for example permeable paving, green roofs and retention ponds, or green space that serves as both a floodplain and a recreational area for the local community. Sustainable drainage and water management linked to site hydrology should be integrated into existing and proposed networks of the Green Infrastructure network of the Plan area.

Ensuring mitigation measures such as SuDS also lowers the risk of foul sewers becoming overwhelmed and causing flooding.

4.2.3 Local Energy Generation

This policy helps meet objective 1: Reducing carbon emissions with the aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

...and objective 2: Planning for new development that addresses the impact of climate change.

Draft Policy 3: Local Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation

Renewable and low carbon energy generation projects that are led by or benefit local communities will be supported subject to the following criteria:

- i. the siting and scale of the proposal is appropriate to its setting;**
- ii. the proposal does not create an unacceptable impact on the amenities of local residents, and**
- iii. the proposal does not have an unacceptable degree of impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance.**

Schemes where the energy produced can be used on or near the generation site/where energy storage is incorporated will be strongly supported.

The reason for the policy

As part of moving towards a low carbon future in a changing climate, this Plan supports generation of zero or low carbon energy at the local level from sources such as hydro-electricity from the River Avon, geothermal, biomass or solar energy, particularly where it enables communities to take a more active role in the production of local energy.

The NPPF states that local planning authorities “*should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy*” (NPPF paragraph 152), and our through this Plan updated national policy can be reflected.



Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

Renewable energy is energy that is collected from renewable resources, which are naturally replenished on a human timescale, such as sunlight and wind as well as plant and animal matter.

Low carbon energy still has carbon emissions associated with it, though much smaller than fossil fuel burning technologies. Heat pumps are an example : the heat from the ground, air or river is renewable, but it requires an electric pump to operate the system.

4.2.4 Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Charging

This policy helps us meet objective 3: Encouraging and promoting the use of sustainable technologies.

Draft Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Charging

All new houses with on-plot parking spaces and/or garages should provide appropriately located charging technology for charging low emission vehicles, such as an electric car charging point. Where shared or off-plot parking spaces are provided, provision must be made for charging vehicles in locations that do not create unsafe pedestrian movement.

Planning applications that propose new employment, leisure or retail developments are also encouraged to provide charging facilities for staff and / or other users.

The reason for the policy

The need to drive private vehicles is acknowledged, enabling residents to carry out their everyday business. However, facilitating an increase in low, or zero emission vehicles is an important driver in the reduction of emissions that contribute to climate change at a local level. An increase in the availability of charging technology would put Melksham at the forefront of a national drive towards Ultra Low Emission Vehicles⁸.

The UK will end the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040⁹. The government's Road to Zero Strategy (2018)¹⁰ outlines a number of ambitious measures including:

- a push for charge points to be installed in newly built homes, where appropriate, and new lampposts to include charging points, potentially providing a massive expansion of the plug-in network, and
- an ambition for at least 50% – and as many as 70% – of new car sales to be ultra low emission by 2030, alongside up to 40% of new van sales.

Hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles are also considered to have the potential to play a significant role in decarbonising road transport, transitioning to vehicles that produce no harmful tailpipe emissions.



Ultra Low Emission Vehicles

Ultra low emission vehicle (ULEV) is the term used to describe any vehicle that:

- uses low carbon technologies
- emits less than 75g of CO₂/km from the tailpipe
- is capable of operating in zero tailpipe emission mode for a range of at least ten miles.

Photo to come

Housing and Infrastructure



"It's vital that the Neighbourhood Plan supports diverse development that suits the needs of the community...which delivers real benefits for the local area"

Policies in this section:

Draft Policy 5: Pre-application Community Engagement

Draft Policy 6: Housing in Defined Settlements

Draft Policy 7: Allocation at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley

Draft Policy 8: Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities

4.3.1 Pre-application Community Engagement

This policy helps meet objective 4: Enabling and promoting the importance of early community engagement in change and development.

Draft Policy 5: Pre-application Community Engagement

Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community will be looked on more favourably than applications that have not.

Potential applicants bringing forward development proposals are strongly encouraged to follow the Pre-application Community Engagement Protocol as included in Appendix 1 of this Neighbourhood Plan, and as adopted by Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council.

The reason for the policy

The importance and benefit of community engagement is strongly endorsed in national planning policy and guidance as key to shaping high quality places to live. The National Planning Policy Framework stresses that *“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community”*. (NPPF paragraph 39)

The use of open discussion with potential applicants in the Neighbourhood Plan area from the earliest stages of the planning proposal will inform how a planning application is considered. *“Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.”* (NPPF paragraph 128).

The Planning Practice Guidance Note on Design (October 2019) emphasises the importance of community engagement:

“Engagement activities offer an opportunity to work collaboratively with communities to shape better places for local people....It is important that local planning authorities or applicants demonstrate how all views are listened to and considered”.

The above policy and Pre-application Community Engagement Protocol (see Appendix 1) are intended to facilitate a structured approach to enable effective involvement of the local community in development applications addressing all aspects of a proposal, from design and layout to issues on climate change and energy generation.

Although applicants cannot be required, only encouraged, to undertake early stage community involvement, putting in place a coherent and consistent approach, in the form of the Protocol is a key way to deliver this mutual benefit.

When introduced at an early stage, community involvement can change the form and nature of a development for the better – it affects land use.

Photo to come

4.3.2 Housing Development

This policy helps meet objective 5: Supporting sustainable development of new housing and associated facilities as appropriate within or adjacent to existing settlements.

Draft Policy 6: Housing in Defined Settlements

We will support proposals for small ‘windfall’ housing development within the settlements of the Plan area, where they conform with the policies of the Development Plan and where they:

- i. accord with the limits of development provisions of Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 2;**
- ii. include a suitable mix of house types, sizes and tenures informed by and addressing the current and demonstrable needs for the area within which the site is located in accordance with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 45 (Meeting Wiltshire’s Housing Needs), and**
- iii. have regard to the character and quality of the surrounding area.**

In accordance with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 2, development will not be permitted outside the

settlement boundaries other than in circumstances as permitted by other policies within the Core Strategy. At the small villages, development will be limited to infill within the existing built area, or where appropriate outside the built area, but well connected to it, as a rural exception site to provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs.

The reason for the policy

The Wiltshire Core Strategy covers the period 2006-2026. The indicative requirement for housing over the period for Melksham Town and the remainder was 2,370 homes. Completions between 2006-2018 totalled 1,707 and 'developable commitments' 2018-2026 total 1,064. The total of 2,773 shows that the housing actually delivered/committed was 17% over the indicative housing requirements set out by the Core Strategy¹¹.

Area	Indicative requirement 2006-2026	Completions 2006-2018	Developable commitments 2018-2026	Indicative remaining requirement
Melksham and <u>Bowerhill</u>	2,240	1,582	1,010	0(-352)
Melksham CA remainder	130	125	54	0(-49)

(‘CA’ above stands for ‘Community Area’)

Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy support in principle proposals for sustainable development within the existing settlement boundaries.

Given that the Melksham Community area has already exceeded the indicative housing requirements set out for it by the Wiltshire



Settlement Boundaries

Settlement boundaries are a policy tool used to indicate on a map where particular policies in the local plan that permit development within settlements or restrict development outside settlements apply. As such they prevent unplanned expansion. Market Towns and Large Villages have Settlement boundaries; in our case, Whitley and Shaw and Melksham and Bowerhill.

Core Strategy Policies 1 and 15 define the settlements of the Plan area as:

- Market Towns: Melksham and Bowerhill village
- Large Villages: Shaw / Whitley
- Small Villages: Beanacre, Berryfield

Core Strategy, the Neighbourhood Plan supports small scale, windfall development within settlements that has regard to the scale and character of the local community, and helps to meet local housing need.

Windfall development is any residential development that is granted consent on land not previously allocated for development in any plan.

4.3.3 Allocation of Land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley

This policy also helps meet objective 5: Supporting sustainable development of new housing and associated facilities as appropriate within or adjacent to existing settlements.

Draft Policy 7: Allocation of Land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley

Land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley is allocated for development of approximately 18 (eighteen) dwellings.

Proposals will be expected to conform with the criteria below and relevant policies within the Development Plan.

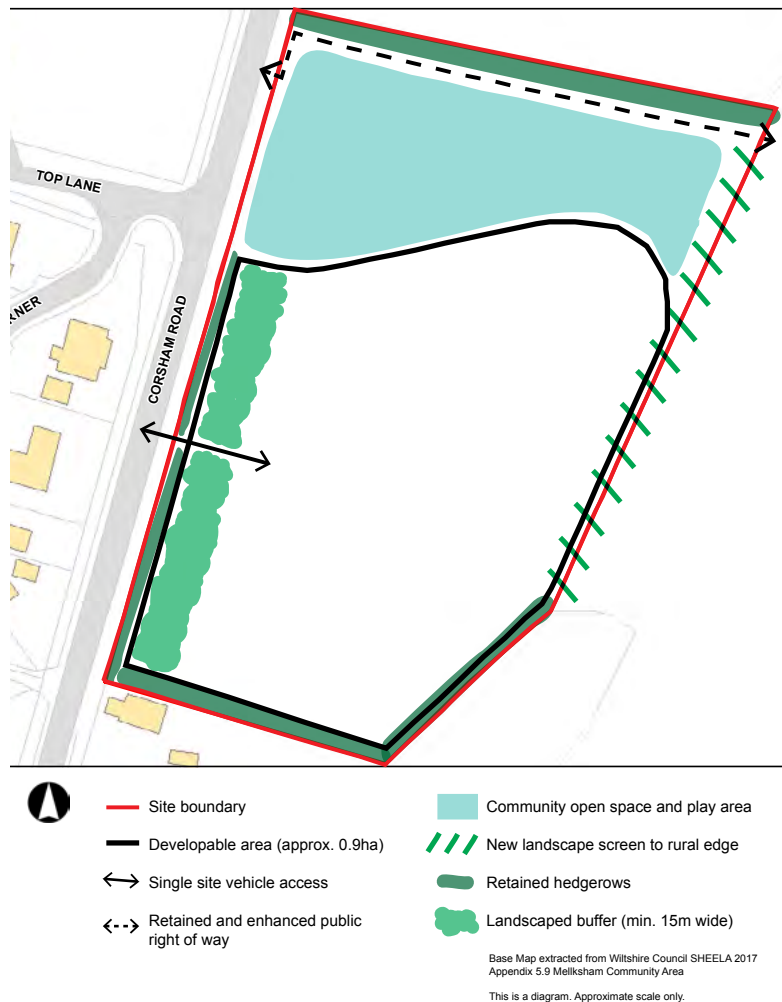
Site requirements:

- i. incorporate a Local Equipped Area for Play**
- ii. incorporate habitat creation that achieves an overall net enhancement to biodiversity on site;**
- iii. be accompanied by an approved landscape conservation scheme that retains and secures the sustained management of existing hedgerow boundaries, provides new hedgerow and tree planting on the eastern and northern boundary of the site, and provides a 15m minimum landscaped buffer along the western boundary**

- iv. of the site, south of Top Lane; be of an appropriate layout, form, appearance and materials that protects the amenity of existing neighbouring residents, reinforces and enhances the historic form and character of Whitley and conserves the rural setting of the site;**
- v. provide a single vehicle access to Corsham Road to an adoptable standard;**
- vi. include appropriate mitigation measures to prevent an increase in flood risk within the site or elsewhere.**
- vii. retain and enhance the existing public right of way along the site northern boundary, and**
- viii. incorporate accessible public green space to the north of the site, north of Top Lane.**

Applicants bringing forward development proposals for this site are strongly encouraged to follow the Pre-application Community Engagement Protocol as in Policy 5 and included in Appendix 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Figure 8: Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley, Melksham Without Site Allocation Diagram



The reason for the policy

Whilst there is no remaining housing requirement for the Melksham Area Neighbourhood Plan in the Plan period to 2026, consultation revealed that almost half of those who responded to the consultation (47%) supported more housing growth if the quantity, location and community benefits could be locally defined through the Neighbourhood Plan, with a further 34% answering “it depends”.

Consultation also recognised that the pressure for new development in the area appears certain to continue and the Neighbourhood Plan should therefore review the evidence on available sites. Consequently, potential sites for future development were assessed for allocation.

In line with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 43, development of approximately 18 dwellings on this site would be expected to include approximately 5 affordable homes.

Taking into account the potential large scale housing requirement for the neighbourhood area through the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, the decision was taken to give no further consideration in this plan to those sites adjacent to the settlement boundary of Melksham. These will be considered in a future review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.3.4 Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities

This policy helps meet objective 6: Promoting the delivery of infrastructure to address the needs of the population.

Draft Policy 8: Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities

To ensure the sustainability of housing development, proposals must consider, assess and address their necessary infrastructure requirements and plan any related programmes of work in parallel with the housing to ensure that infrastructure keeps pace with the needs of the community.

Infrastructure requirements in proportion to their scale and in accordance with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 3 and the Wiltshire Planning Obligations SPD will be charged through the Community Infrastructure Levy (in addition to those to be delivered through planning conditions or section 106 agreements).

All Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts passed to either Melksham Town Council or Melksham Without Parish Council will be used to address the increased demands that new development places on the civic infrastructure, for the benefit of the Joint Neighbourhood Plan area, focusing on the facilities /

infrastructure and communities most impacted by the new development.

A Joint Plan area Statement of Infrastructure Priorities for infrastructure needs and improvements will be reviewed annually and agreed jointly between the Town and Parish Councils. The broad infrastructure categories are:

- **Social infrastructure: e.g. Community Facilities**
- **Physical infrastructure: e.g. sustainable transport link and town centre regeneration**
- **Green infrastructure: e.g. continued investment in the Riverside Millennium Walk / Shurnhold Fields etc.**
- **Other project areas: e.g. community energy**

The reason for the policy

The issues raised by the community echo the elements considered important for Melksham in the Wiltshire Core Strategy (paragraph 5.83) which states that, “residential growth in Melksham should help address the shortfall in affordable housing and contribute towards delivering improved infrastructure”.

During preparation of the Plan, residents made it clear that they felt it important that new housing developments should be delivered in Melksham alongside of the necessary services and facilities, such as healthcare, education, green spaces and transport infrastructure.

Financial contributions are required as appropriate from developers for the associated infrastructure cost implications of that development. In Wiltshire this includes Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions and S106 contributions from legal agreements on development. The Local Planning Authority is required to publish a document known as the Regulation 123 List¹⁴, which identifies the categories of infrastructure which are capable of receiving CIL receipts.

75% of CIL money is retained by Wiltshire Council and 25% will be allocated to the Parish or Town Council where the development takes place once the Neighbourhood Plan passes examination, is voted through at referendum and is adopted (or ‘made’) by Wiltshire. Note, CIL may not be payable on strategic housing

allocations in the Local Plan (usually larger allocations made by the Local Authority).

A Neighbourhood Plan document can highlight the infrastructure that it believes should be prioritised, but it cannot commit CIL receipts from a particular development to be spent on specific items in a particular area.

As highlighted earlier in this Plan, Melksham Town and Melksham Without are interdependent. This interdependence can therefore follow through into the appropriate distribution of CIL monies to address infrastructure needs and improvements needed as a result of new development.

Memorandum of Agreement

A Memorandum of Agreement will be put in place between Melksham Without Parish Council and Melksham Town Council defining the process by which local priorities for infrastructure needs are identified and agreed across the Joint Plan area.

Shopping, Working and Getting Around



“The Neighbourhood Plan aims to create a positive environment to encourage retail investment into Melksham delivering diversity and choice and making the town more self reliant”

Policies in this section:

- Draft Policy 9:** Town Centre
- Draft Policy 10:** Employment Sites
- Draft Policy 11:** Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

4.4.1 Town Centre

This policy helps meet objective 7: Protecting and enhancing the vitality of Melksham Town Centre.

Draft Policy 9: Town Centre

Development proposals within the Town Centre Commercial Area as defined in Wiltshire Core Strategy (see figure 9) will be supported provided the use:

- i. will sustain or enhance the range or quality of shopping provision and does not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre;**
- ii. is in keeping with the scale and character of the centre and conserves or enhances the Conservation Area**

Proposals for development or change of use of ground floor frontages within the defined town centre primary frontages (see figure 9) will be supported where they retain or enhance the continuity of active ground floor shop front uses.

Proposals that make greater use of upper floors of town centre premises, including for offices, small businesses and residential use with independent access, will be supported where they sustain or enhance the vitality of Melksham town centre and enhance the quality of the host building.

Development proposals will be supported where they make a positive contribution to conserving and enhancing the appearance and quality of primary frontages and waymarked town centre routes.

Edge of Centre Development

Proposals for retail development within or adjacent to edge of centre locations (defined as being 300m from the Commercial Area Boundary) will be supported when:

- i. the proposal would not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre's shopping role;**
- ii. there are no suitable and viable sites available within Primary Retail Frontages;**
- iii. the development is easily accessible by foot or bicycle on waymarked routes from the town centre, and**
- iv. the development makes adequate provision for car parking and access.**

Proposals which fail the sequential test or are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the Town Centre will not be supported. (cont...)

Figure 9: Principal Employment Areas and Town Centre Commercial Area

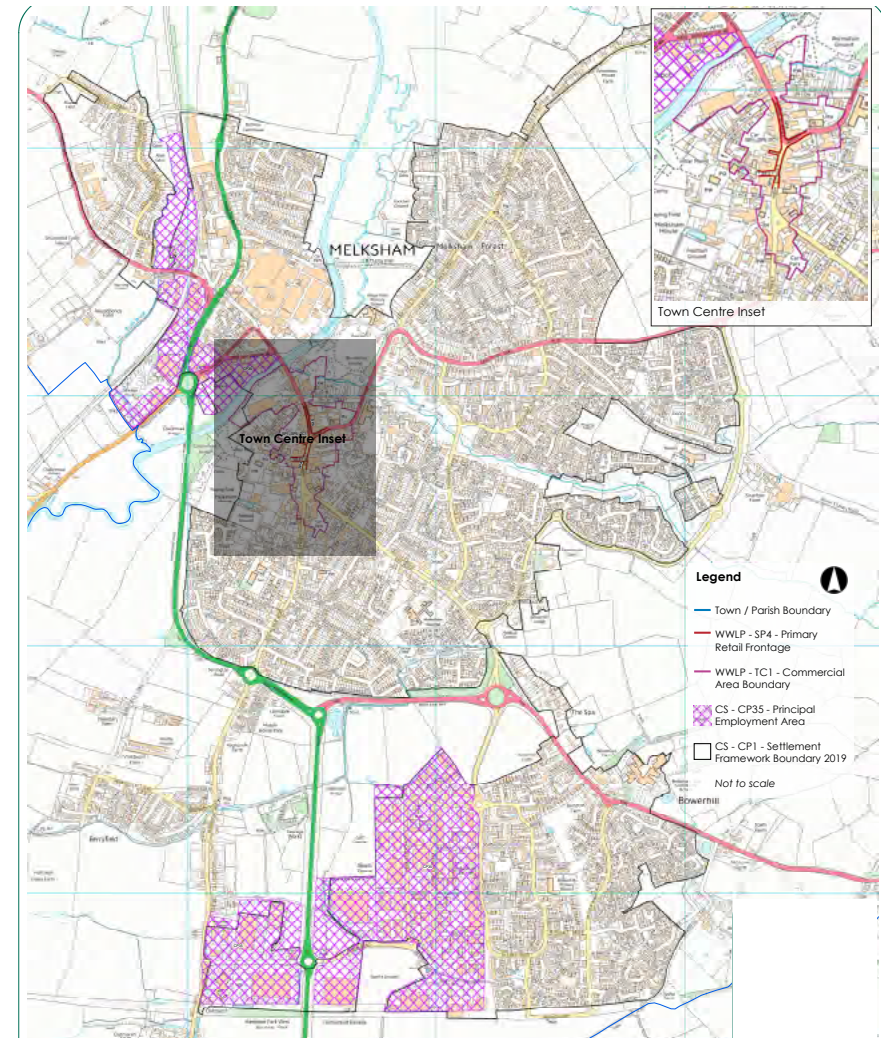
Draft Policy 9: Town Centre (...cont.)

Town Centre Expansion

Proposals for the redevelopment of existing employment uses within edge of centre locations must be considered on the basis of their relationship to the existing town centre and the potential to expand the town centre.

Town Centre Master Plan

Melksham Town Council will produce a Town Centre Masterplan to guide and inform future town centre development. Once published, proposals within the town centre and within 300m of the existing boundary should demonstrate how they contribute to the delivery of the town centre vision and objectives.



The reason for the policy

In the rapidly changing national and local context for high streets and market towns, we want to enable our town to change and evolve in response to challenges, changes and opportunities. Town centres are under pressure and, currently, those which can offer enhanced customer experiences and leisure uses to accompany high service retail are in the best position to meet customer needs.

Melksham's priority must be to hold onto, and maintain, the core town centre offer in order to retain the important sense of place and arrival that this confers.

In July 2019, the Government published an update to its practice guidance on planning for retail and other town centre uses. The guidance highlights the need to think creatively about town centres: "...a wide range of complementary uses can, if suitable located, help to support the vitality of town centres, including residential, employment, office, commercial, leisure/entertainment, healthcare and educational development".

There are around 155 businesses operating in the town centre and a good number of shops comprising a mix of independent traders, supermarkets and national retail brands. The prime shopping area around the intersection of Church Street and High Street is busy but

activity declines down Bank Street toward the river. Consultation feedback linked to the town centre highlighted that people were concerned about the poor retail offer, unattractive 1960's buildings and heavy traffic flows were all issues perceived to detract from the shopping experience.

The Melksham Town 2020 - 2036 Scoping Report (2019) reviewed the opportunities, challenges and drivers facing Melksham Town over the period of the next Local Plan. This report highlights that though the climate for retail and customer-facing business in the town is seen as relatively good, in the nine years since Wiltshire Council's 2011 Town Centre and Retail Study noted "...a continued need for further town centre regeneration" there has been improvement to the area in front of the Town Hall but no other recent improvement work.

Competition from other centres and changing retail trends means it is important that the town's vitality and viability is maintained and, where possible improved. It is also important that Melksham town centre remains at the heart of the community of the Plan area, including its wider rural hinterland, as a destination not just for shopping, but also where current and future residents want to work, socialise and live.

As part of the commitment to maintaining and enhancing the town

centre, the Town Council will prepare a masterplan for the town centre, including areas for potential expansion that will inform future development opportunities. Expansion of the town centre is something that the Town Council will be actively considering, particularly in terms of the future of commercial sites on the edge of the town centre, such as Cooper Tires. See page 82 and Draft Priority Statement JNP2: Town Centre Regeneration for more information.

4.4.2 Employment Sites

This policy helps meet objective 8: The retention, regeneration and intensification of previously developed employment land.

Draft Policy 10: Employment Sites

Proposals for employment development within Melksham and Melksham Without will be supported subject to compliance with all relevant development plan policies. Proposals for the retention, regeneration and intensification of previously developed employment land are particularly encouraged. Two main areas of employment land in the Plan area are:

a) Business Parks

The appropriate redevelopment of brownfield sites within the business park areas (shown as the Principal Employment Areas on figure 9) for employment uses falling within Classes B1, B2, and B8 of the Use Classes Order will be supported where the proposed development will generate the same number, or more, permanent full time equivalent jobs than could be expected from the existing, or any potential employment use.

b) Town Centre

The appropriate redevelopment of brownfield sites within the town centre areas (shown as the Commercial Area Boundary on figure 9) involving change of use to retail, commercial and other main town centre uses falling within Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, B1, D1, and D2 of the Use Classes Order will be supported where the proposed development will generate the same number, or more, permanent full time equivalent jobs than could be expected from the existing, or any potential employment use, subject to road safety, parking and environmental considerations.

Proposals for start-up and small businesses are particularly encouraged to enable the growth of a range of new employment opportunities.

The reason for the policy

Melksham is located between Chippenham and Trowbridge meaning that it serves a mainly local catchment area for top-up shopping and for leisure and other services. The 2016 Joint Strategic Assessment notes that the two largest employment sectors in the Melksham Community Area are manufacturing and wholesale/retail. The employment profile of the Neighbourhood Plan area has moved in recent years from an industrial economy, dominated by one large international employer, to a mixture of industrial, service and retail businesses.

The level of out-commuting to neighbouring towns and to jobs along the M4 corridor is high, and community engagement confirms that people want to work closer to their homes.

Wiltshire Core Strategy Policies 35 (Existing Employment Sites) and 36 (Economic Regeneration) require that sites which are existing employment uses within Market Towns are only redeveloped if meeting certain criteria. The area within the black boundary on figure 9 is covered by Core Policy 35 which allows for the redevelopment of employment uses (use classes B1, B2 and B8) only where:

- it would generate the same number of jobs or more;

- employment land is re-designated elsewhere in the Plan area;
- the redevelopment would allow an increase in jobs on a part of the site, maintaining or increasing the total number of jobs provided;
- the current use negatively impacts the area;
- the site is no longer (demonstrably) viable for employment use, and
- the development would allow a business to relocate within the local area.

Through Core Policy 34 (Additional employment land), Wiltshire Council sets out support for proposals for employment development (use classes B1, B2 or B8) within the Principal Settlements, Market Towns and Local Service Centres. In addition to the employment land allocated in the Core Strategy, a number of sites within Melksham were assessed within the Wiltshire Employment Land and Workspace Review 2017¹⁵.

4.4.3 Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

This policy helps meet objective 9: Supporting improved transport infrastructure for the increasing Melksham population.

...and objective 10: Encouraging journeys by rail together with improving cycle and walking routes thus reducing the need to travel by car.

Draft Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

All developments must be planned in line with the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy. Applications for major development must demonstrate through an effective travel plan how sustainable transport modes in the Plan area are maximised and that safe and suitable access can be achieved for all people.

Further improvements to the accessibility and to the quality of Melksham Railway Station environment, as a key element in our sustainable transport network, will be strongly supported.

The reason for the policy

We want to see more opportunities to get around the town and the Parish without using a private vehicle. Accessible, safe and attractive infrastructure that promotes and enables walking, cycling and public transport choices for local journeys through the town and Parish to key locations such as schools, health and community facilities, green spaces and employment provision are important.

Following unprecedented levels of walking and cycling across the UK during the pandemic, in May the government announced a £2 billion package to create new era for cycling and walking. Vouchers will be issued for cycle repairs, to encourage people to get their old bikes out of the shed, and plans are being developed for greater provision of bike fixing facilities, and it is hoped that many more will take up the Cycle to Work scheme, which gives employees a discount on a new bike.

Extensive networks of high quality routes that enable people to walk and cycle safely and conveniently should reflect five core design principles¹⁶ of:

- coherence



TransWilts Rail Group

Melksham railway station was closed and demolished in 1966 after 118 years, but the line, although made single track, remained open for freight and diverted passenger trains. It was reopened in 1985.

In 2013 an improved service was introduced which quickly became the fastest growing of GWR's routes. In 2018 the platform was lengthened to allow longer trains to call. A successful campaign by the Melksham-based Trans Wilts Community Rail Partnership has resulted in a recent improvement in local rail services with an increase to eight trains in each direction daily. Residents expressed a desire for further improvements to rail services, including upgrades to the station and easier ongoing connections, which it was felt would help encourage investment in Melksham and allow for more sustainable travel.

The community rail service in Wiltshire has received permanent status from the government after a successful trial. The TransWilts line links Westbury, Trowbridge, Melksham and Chippenham with Swindon. The TransWilts Community Rail Partnership comprises local organisations, train operators, Wiltshire Council, rail users and other interest groups. TransWilts have been in the process of acquiring the lease from Wiltshire Council for the former Reed's site, adjacent to Melksham station, to allow redevelopment of a community hub and café. Funding has been provided in 2019/20 towards a Business Case and pledged for 2020/21 for seating and tables for both inside the Hub and outside on the Piazza by Melksham Town Council, Melksham Without Parish Council and Wiltshire Council's Melksham Area Board which demonstrates the local support for this project.

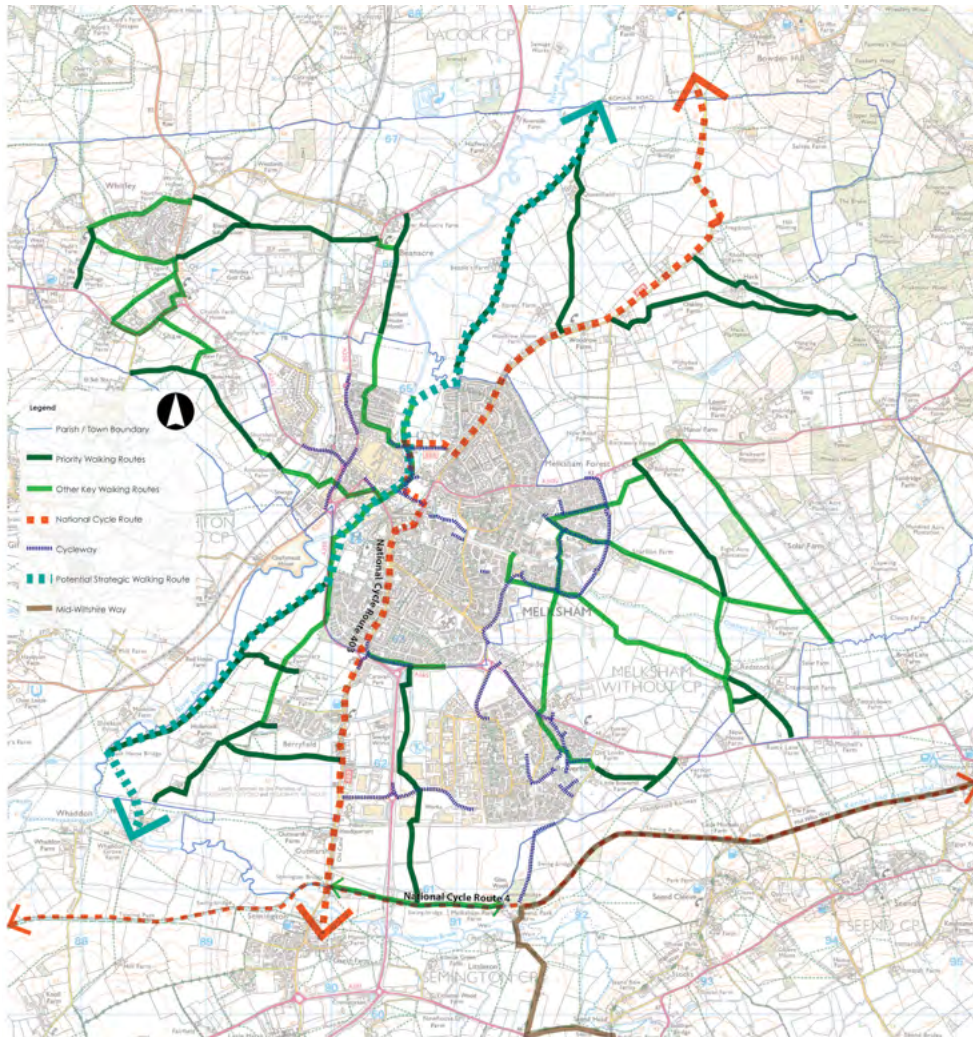
- directness
- safety
- comfort
- attractiveness.

Key routes are shown on figure 10, and detailed in the Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report.

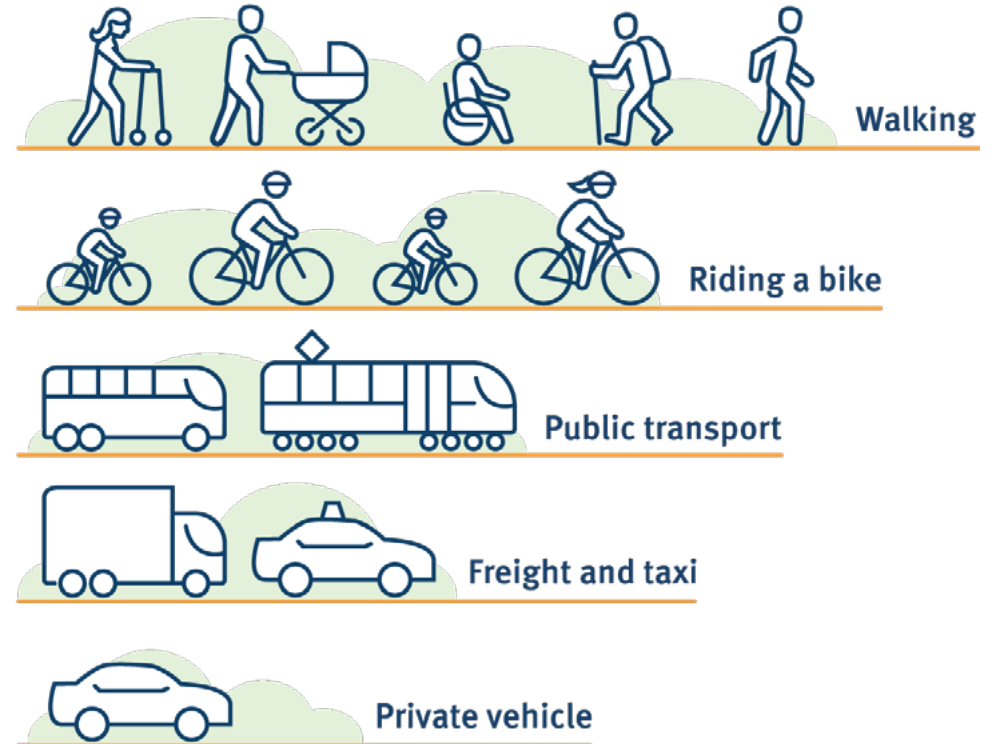
Melksham railway station, located in the north west of the town, is on the Transwilts Line which runs between Swindon and Southampton Central. Trains from the station run approximately every hour each way between Westbury and Swindon.

The railway line is an important sustainable transport link that enables residents and visitors to make sustainable transport choices and promotes an alternative to the private car. The railway station has car and cycle parking, but is currently poorly served by local bus routes. Additional funding for local bus routes was announced in March 2020 and the Melksham Rail User Group have put forward proposals for improvement to bus services in the Plan area.

Figure 10: Key Routes for Walking and Cycling



Sustainable transport hierarchy



Community Well-being and Nature



"I like wild areas - they are great for playing hide and seek in. I also enjoy playing with my brother and friends since none of us have big enough gardens to play in."

Policies in this section:

<i>Draft Policy 12:</i>	Green Infrastructure
<i>Draft Policy 13:</i>	Biodiversity
<i>Draft Policy 14:</i>	Open Spaces
<i>Draft Policy 15:</i>	Community Facilities

4.5.1 Green Infrastructure

This policy helps meet objective 11: Preserving and increasing our network of green spaces.

...and objective 12: Promoting opportunities for people to lead healthier lifestyles with a greater sense of well-being.

Draft Policy 12: Green Infrastructure

Development that will result in the creation of new Green Infrastructure (GI) and/or contribute to the protection, management, enhancement and connecting of existing GI and individual GI assets and priorities as shown on figure 11 will be supported.

Proposals for major developments must be accompanied by:

- i. a plan of the existing GI within and around the development site, and**
- ii. information demonstrating how GI has been incorporated into the scheme in order to increase function and improve connectivity of GI through the site and beyond to identified priorities and assets.**

The reason for the policy

The aim of this policy is to protect, enhance and manage the integrity, multi-functionality, quality and connectivity of the Green Infrastructure (GI) network in our Plan area.

GI is a network of multifunctional green spaces, bodies of water and routeways, urban and rural, that is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities and biodiversity.

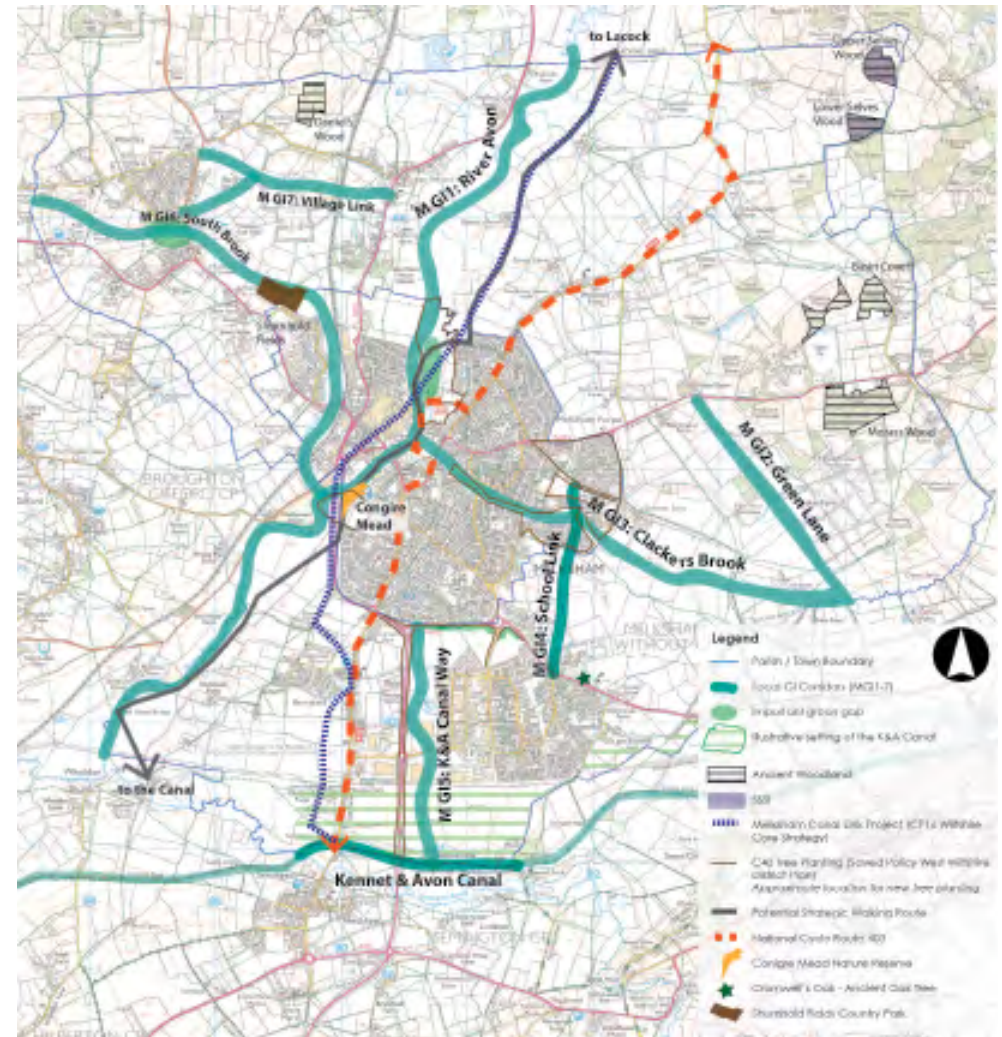
Figure 11 illustrates identified key assets and priorities for GI throughout the Plan area based on the GI Evidence Base Report. The report identifies local elements of GI with aim of linking local sites and delivering connectivity of assets between and within different parts of the Plan area.

The GI network has many and varied benefits for the environment, biodiversity and residents; it can contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities and local wildlife, and is an important part of our distinct local identity and part of what makes Melksham a good place to live.

Figure 11: Green Infrastructure Key Assets and Priorities: Strategy Diagram

As GI is a priority, particularly as part of a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, the Parish and Town Councils encourage developers to seek to achieve a Building with Nature accreditation.

Building with Nature is a new framework of standards for delivering GI. It is divided into three core themes: wellbeing, water and wildlife. The aim is to enable the delivery of high quality green infrastructure at each stage of the development process, from planning and design, through to long-term management and maintenance.



4.5.2 Biodiversity

This policy also helps meet objective 11: Preserving and increasing our network of green spaces.

... and objective 12: Promoting opportunities for people to lead healthier lifestyles with a greater sense of well-being.

Draft Policy 13: Biodiversity

Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate the provision of a net gain in biodiversity through enhancement and creation of ecological networks within and, where appropriate, beyond the site through measures that should include:

- i. maximising opportunities to enhance and create links between ecological networks and habitats of principal importance;**
- ii. the creation of links both on-site and, where possible, with nearby features;**
- iii. improvements to the quality of existing GI, including local networks and corridors, specifically to increase their attractiveness as a recreation opportunity and their value as a habitat for biodiversity, and**
- iv. protection and improvement to access to and connectivity between existing and planned GI in the Plan area to develop a continuous and integrated ecological network.**

The reason for the policy

The Neighbourhood Area is host to a range of wildlife sites and features which support the overall wildlife network and contribute to the well-being of wildlife and residents alike.

A full record of habitats and biodiversity information has been obtained from Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre, assembled using a mixture of field survey data and aerial photographic interpretation to compile a habitat inventory. This is available in full in the evidence base, and is summarised in the Green Infrastructure Report, which adds Neighbourhood Plan level information to the biodiversity data. Figure 12 on page 61 is a map of key local sites for biodiversity.

This policy seeks to reflect at the Plan level, the NPPF (paragraph 174) and revised legislation in the forthcoming Environment Bill which looks set to include a duty for developers to include 10% net biodiversity gain in new schemes.

Net gain is an approach that uses the planning process to leave biodiversity in a better state than it was before the development started, securing wider benefits for people and the environment.



Melksham Canal Link Project

A key priority for the Plan area G.I is the Melksham Link Project. The Wiltshire Core Strategy safeguards the route of the Melksham Link Canal in Core Policy 16. This policy safeguards the identified route (see Figure 11) for developing a canal link to the south west of Melksham town between the Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Avon, and to the north east of Melksham town between the River Avon and the historic alignment of the Wilts & Berks Canal.

The project is an opportunity to improve the GI network both within the Plan area and the wider Melksham Community Area with associated benefits such as increased walking and cycling routes and linked to this is the opportunity to promote tourism within the town, and to generate renewable energy harnessing energy from the river.

In 2012, a planning application for the Melksham link was submitted, but this has not yet been determined, due to continued objections by the Environment Agency.

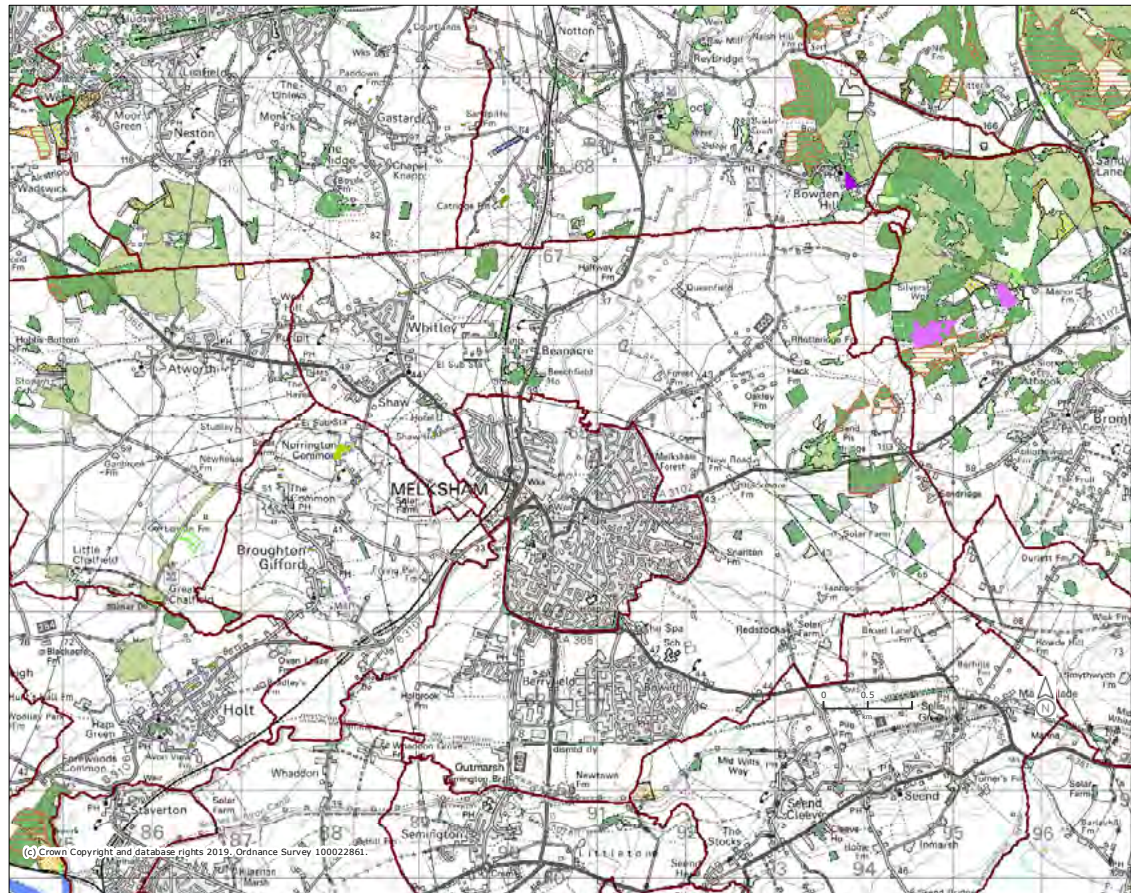
The scheme comprises: A junction with the Kennet & Avon canal at Semington | Around 3km of new canal to the west of Semington Rd, through Berryfield, with a lock and an aqueduct

over Berryfield Brook. | New access roads and bridges at Berryfield. | Two further locks dropping down to a junction with the River Avon just west of the A350 Challymead road bridge. | A new weir across the River just downstream of this junction. | Re-profiling the river bed from this junction upstream under the Town Bridge to Melksham Gate weir. | A lock on ground adjacent to the weir with a hydro-electric generator on the island formed between the weir and the lock. | Towpath and footbridges to maintain existing footpaths and provide new pedestrian/cycle connection from the Kennet & Avon to the town and from the northern end to Lacock. | Mooring facilities for canal boats along the new canal and on the river near Town Bridge. The project will need to be financed largely by new housing alongside the new canal link, which does not form part of the present planning application.

Figure 12: Key Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats
 UK BAP Priority Habitats are a range of semi-natural habitat types that are identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action.

MAGiC

Melksham BAP Habitats



Legend

- Parishes (GB)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Calaminarian Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Good quality semi-improved grassland (Non Priority) (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Calcareous Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Dry Acid Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Meadows (England)

Projection = OSGB36
 xmin = 384400
 ymin = 161400
 xmax = 397100
 ymax = 168200
 Map produced by MAGiC on 11 September, 2019.
 Copyright resides with the data suppliers and the map must not be reproduced without their permission. Some information in MAGiC is a snapshot of the information that is being maintained or continually updated by the originating organisation. Please refer to the metadata for details as information may be illustrative or representative rather than definitive at this stage.

4.5.3 Open Spaces

This policy also helps meet objective 12: Preserving and increasing our network of green spaces.

... and objective 13: Protecting, improving and expanding existing services and facilities to promote health, education and social needs.

Draft Policy 14: Open Spaces

We will only support development proposals involving the whole or partial loss of existing open space as shown on figure 13 and detailed in the Green Infrastructure Report where:

- i. an assessment of open space provision, using the quantity and access standards for open space as set out by Wiltshire Council, has identified a surplus in the catchment area to meet both current and future needs, and full consideration has been given to all functions that open space can perform, and**
- ii. any replacement facility (or enhancement of the remainder of the existing site) provides a net benefit to the community in terms of the quality and accessibility of the open space by walking or cycling.**

The reason for the policy

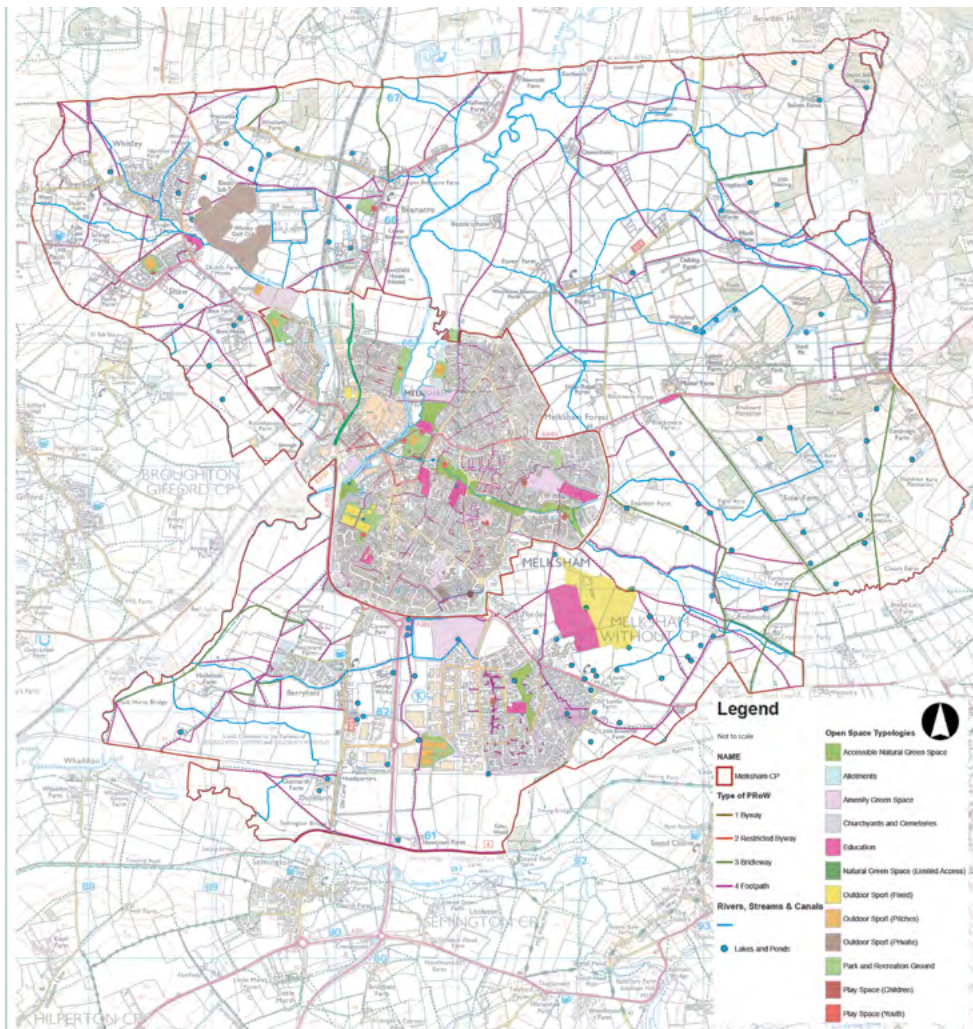
The open space in the Plan area is defined as green spaces which have recreational value and are freely accessible to the community. (Allotments and school playing fields, which are generally not freely accessible, but are important components of open space provision, are the exceptions to this.)

A distinctive characteristic of the town is the open spaces which frequently punctuate the built environment, meaning that most residents are within walking distance of some open space. This key positive feature contributes to community well-being.

There is generally a good standard of open space provision across the area including King George V Park, Conigre Mead Nature Area and many other parks, recreation grounds and play areas.

There are however, shortfalls in places in certain types of open spaces (for example allotments), and access (for children and youth).

Figure 13: Green Infrastructure Key Assets and Priorities: Open Spaces



Open space is significant for the health and wellbeing of our residents and it encourages informal outdoor recreation and social interaction with places for large community social gatherings and festivals, such as Party in the Park and the Food and River Festival. It is also an opportunity to encourage biodiversity and to provide linkages with the wider countryside.

The creation and preservation of Melksham’s attractive environment is highly important to residents, recognising that the setting of the town and its surrounding countryside makes the area a desirable place to live, work and visit.

Note: Wiltshire Council are currently working on a Green Infrastructure and Open Space Study as evidence for the Local Plan Review. The work done by both the Steering Group and Wiltshire Council on open space and GI will be used to inform both the Neighbourhood Plan and the Local Plan.

4.5.4 Community Facilities

This policy also helps meet objective 13: Protecting, improving and expanding existing services and facilities to promote health, education and social needs.

Draft Policy 15: Community Facilities

Proposals involving the loss of community facilities as identified in the Community Facilities Report will not be supported unless it is clearly demonstrated that:

- i. alternative provision is made elsewhere in the Plan area; or**
- ii. there is no longer a need to retain the use; or**
- iii. where a primary function is commercial but the use performs a social or community role, the use is no longer economically viable.**

Proposals for new community facilities in the Plan area will be supported where the applicant can demonstrate the need and benefits of the proposed facility, or where replacement or enhanced facilities are proposed as mitigation against the loss of any of any community facilities within the Plan area.

New community facilities should be located where there is a choice of travel options and should be accessible to all members of the community.

The reason for the policy

Wiltshire Core Policy 49 (Protection of rural services and community facilities) seeks to protect and encourage the development of rural services and facilities in Wiltshire to ensure *“that settlements can still meet some of the day to day needs of the people who live in them”*. This Wiltshire Core Policy does not apply however to Melksham and Bowerhill Village and to their services and community facilities as they are larger and non rural settlements of Wiltshire¹⁷.

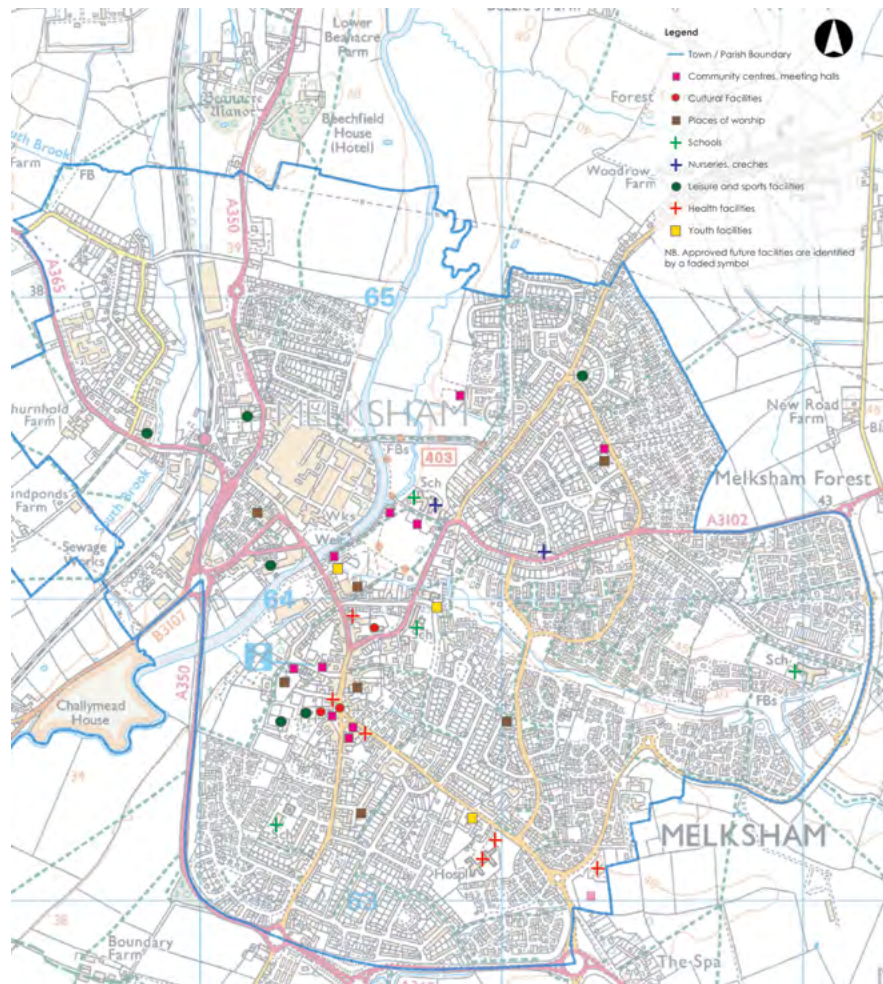
The community facilities in the Plan area cover both rural and town areas. The existing community facilities in the Plan area as detailed in the Community Facilities Report compiled by the Plan Steering Group are wide-ranging and can include community centres and childcare facilities, cultural centres and venues, places of worship, education establishments and training centres, health and social care facilities, sport and recreation facilities and civic and administrative facilities.

The primary function of some facilities is commercial (including pubs) but they also perform a clear role for the community in terms of sport, recreation or leisure provision.

This policy supplements the Wiltshire Core Strategy by identifying

photo to come

Figure 14a: Melksham Town Community Facilities



the key local facilities and services, with the aim of retaining them unless it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need to retain the use or where alternative provision is made. In practice there are sometimes permitted development rights that allow changes of use without planning permission, however, this policy applies where planning permission is needed.

Community, health and leisure facilities are important for the health and wellbeing of the people of Melksham and its wider community. Community engagement with residents showed strong support for those that already exist.

The Community Facilities Evidence Base Report sets out in detail the facilities in the Plan area. It will be important that facilities for people of all ages are made available to support a diverse and healthy local population, and that these facilities are accessible to residents, as far as possible using sustainable modes of transport.

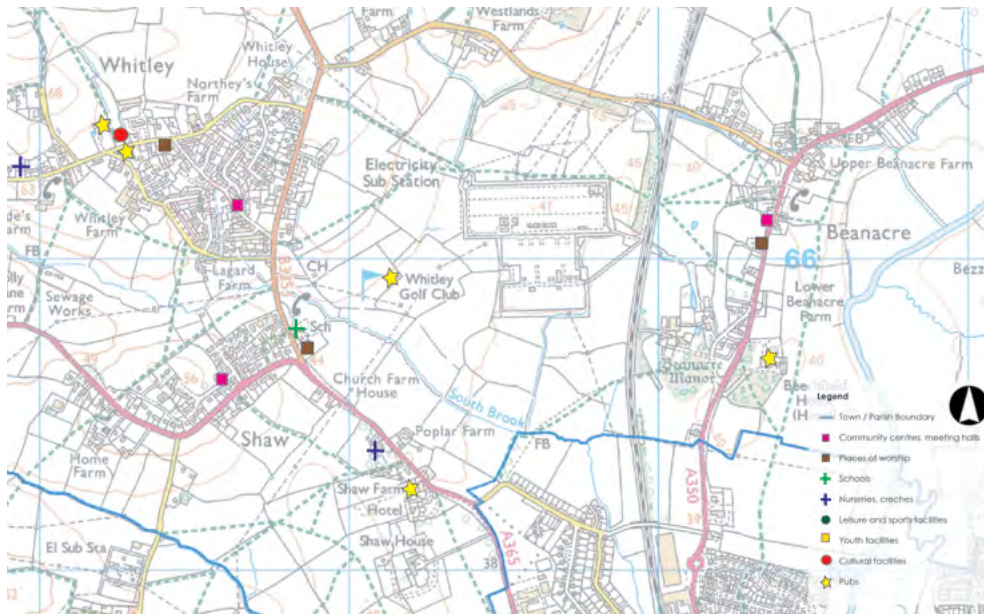


Figure 14b: Whitley, Shaw and Beanacre Community Facilities

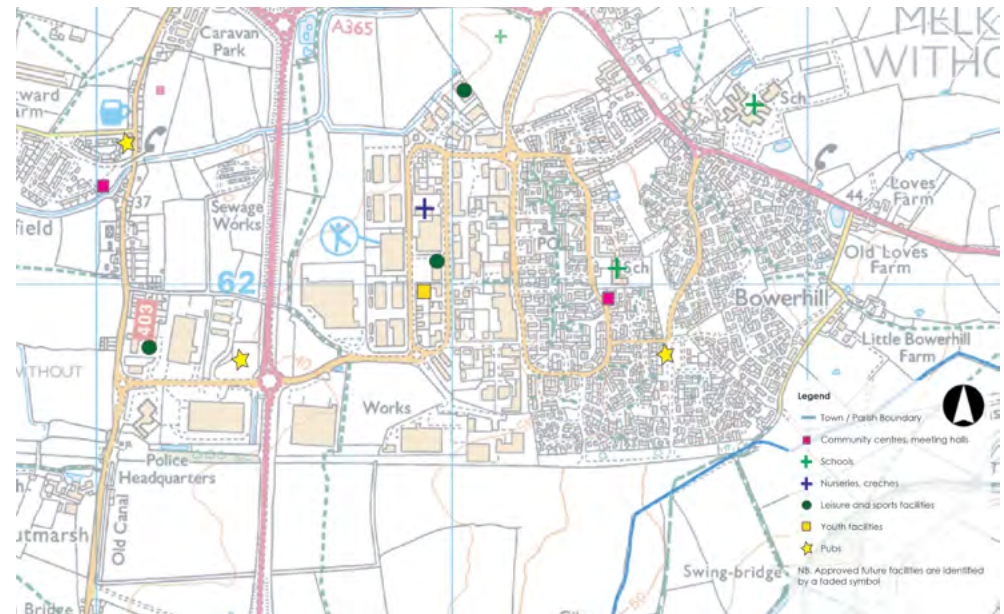


Figure 14c: Bowerhill and Berryfield Community Facilities

Figures 14a, 14b and 14c not to scale, please refer to Community Facilities Report for further information on facilities

Natural and Built Environment



"We have the beautiful river Avon, meandering through the town with its riverside walks, stretching along fields through George V park and onto the wildlife reserve at Conigre Mead"

Policies in this section:

- Draft Policy 16:** Trees and Hedgerows
- Draft Policy 17:** Landscape Character
- Draft Policy 18:** Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design
- Draft Policy 19:** Local Heritage

4.6.1 Trees and Hedgerows

This policy helps meet objective 14: Conserving and enhancing the quality of the natural landscape.

Draft Policy 16: Trees and Hedgerows

Ancient and Veteran Trees:

Development resulting in loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats of ancient woodlands (as shown in figure 11) and ancient or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, will not normally be permitted, unless the need for and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

Other Existing Trees and Hedgerows:

Development that damages or results in the loss of trees of good arboricultural and amenity value will not normally be permitted. Existing trees and hedgerows on development sites should be retained where possible and incorporated as placemaking features in new development. Where there is an unavoidable loss of trees on site, the number and type of replacement trees should be informed by the quality and size of trees lost. Integration of existing hedgerows into private curtilage must be avoided where possible.

New Trees:

New tree planting in development proposals and across the Plan area will be supported.

The reason for the policy

As set out in the Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report, trees are a key asset of the Plan area and there is an ambition to increase tree coverage across the community. There are a number of areas of ancient woodland across the Plan area, including Daniel's Wood, Basin Covert and Morass Wood. This is significant as ancient woodlands now cover just 2.4%¹⁸ of the UK.

Both greenfield and previously developed sites are likely to contain trees and hedgerows that, if retained, can make a positive contribution to the character of new development. Retaining key trees can influence both the design and layout of the development, and arrangements for their protection should be made during the construction phase.

The design should also take account of the long term setting for important trees and how they will relate to the use of the area in the future¹⁹. It is important to note here that a Neighbourhood Plan in itself cannot protect a tree from being felled, unless it is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or is within a Conservation Area.

Hedgerows, like trees, can make an important contribution to the character and can also be important historically as indications of



The Importance of Trees

Key facts from the Forestry Commission

- Trees naturally absorb CO₂, a key greenhouse gas removing 4 million tonnes of it from the atmosphere every year.
- The presence of trees often encourages people to exercise, thereby reducing the incidence of heart attacks and Type 2 Diabetes.
- Local air quality is improved as trees cut the level of airborne particulates and absorb nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone
- Nearby trees and greenspaces can increase property value of 15 - 18%. The larger the trees the greater their proportional value.

land use and previous ownership. They also contribute significantly to biodiversity and amenity value of the natural and, in places, built environment. Trees will also help with adaptation to the effects of climate change.

Where tree loss is unavoidable, the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard should be used as a methodology to inform the number of replacement trees, as set out in the Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report. There is an aspiration to increase tree cover in the Plan area as part of a local response to climate change, place making and achieving local distinctiveness. It is, however, appreciated that a particular site or design approach to trees may inform the number and approach to tree planting.

Below: Bristol Tree Replacement Standard Methodology

Trunk Diameter of Tree lost to development (cm measured at 1.5 metres above ground level)	Number of Replacement Trees
Less than 15	0 - 1
15 - 19.9	1
20 - 29.9	2
30 - 39.9	3
40 - 49.9	4
50 - 59.9	5
60 - 69.9	6
70 - 79.9	7
80 +	8



4.6.2 Landscape Character

This policy helps meet objective 14: Conserving and enhancing the quality of the natural landscape.

Draft Policy 17: Landscape Character

We will support development that:

- i. integrates natural features such as trees, hedgerows and the local river systems that contribute to both the landscape character and setting of the development;**
- ii. demonstrates that the whole scheme, including hard landscape and planting proposals, draws on local landscape characteristics and features through reference to relevant existing landscape assessments, supplemented by any additional site specific assessments, and**
- iii. responds sensitively to the transition between settlement edge and countryside and maintains the separate identity of the settlements in the Plan area.**

The reason for the policy

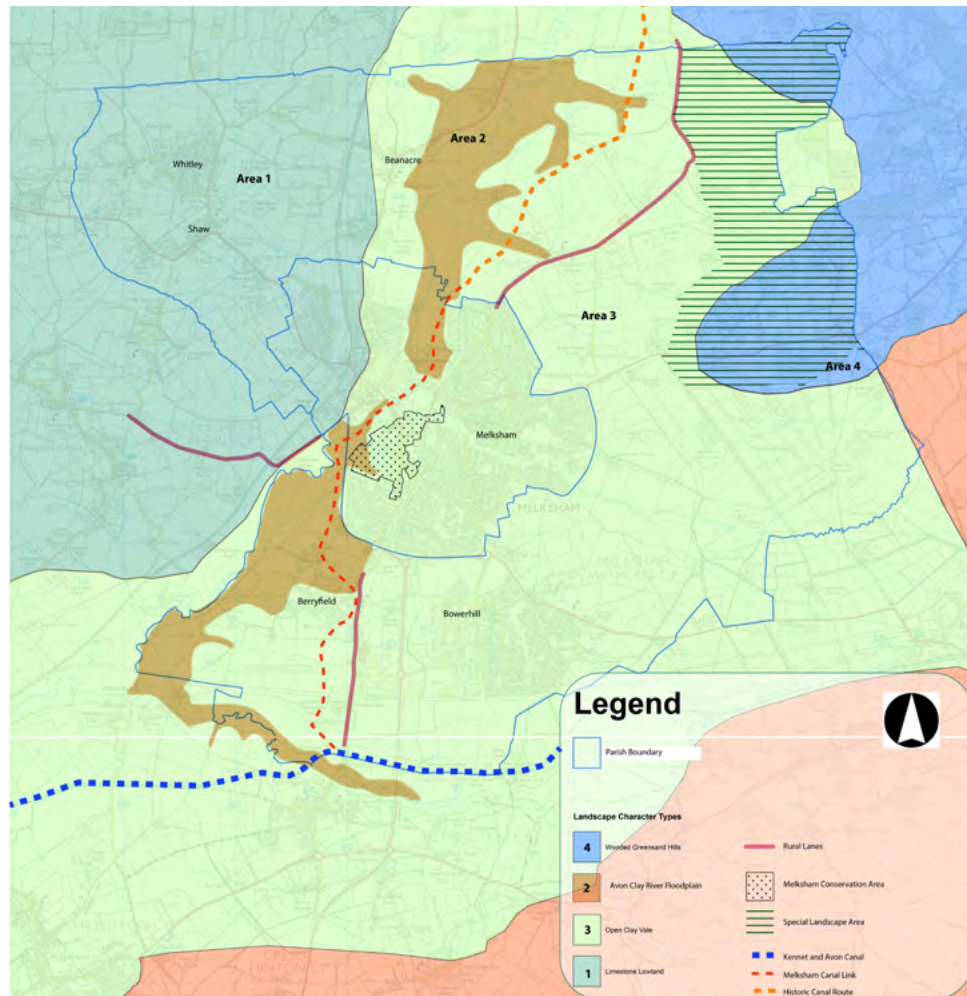
The local landscape is the backdrop to our daily life, and reflects the relationship between people and place. Retaining and enhancing the character and appearance of the landscape in Melksham is recognised as hugely important as the town continues to grow and develop – in particular at the edges between the built and natural environment.

The landscape within the Plan area is diverse in character ranging from areas of flat and low lying land with a general sense of



Bridge across the River Avon

Figure 15: Landscape Character



openness, to areas that are much more enclosed with lines of trees along the river Avon. As the land rises to the north east there is a designated 'Special Landscape Area' which is protected through core policy. This area, which has special characteristics worthy of a local level designation, is shown on figure 15, as are other identified areas of distinct character.

Key characteristics of the landscape of the Plan area are detailed in the Green Infrastructure Report and the Local Landscape Character Evidence Base Report which supplements Landscape Character Assessment work done by Wiltshire Council with local detail. Some key points are:

- The landscape around the river Avon forms a wedge of landscape into Melksham town running in between areas of housing (Riverside Drive to the west and Forest to the east) and from the south as far as the town bridge taking in the Conigre Mead nature reserve from where it spreads out again into the Parish of Melksham Without towards the edges of Berryfield.
- Houses from Methuen Avenue, in the Forest area, on the east of this character area, and houses from Riverside Drive on the west, front out onto accessible greenspace (allotments from Methuen Avenue), providing an active frontage and connection to the landscape of the river Avon.
- Brooks and stream corridors are scattered across the landscape,

for example Clackers Brook which, like the river Avon, forms a key area of natural green space and landscape, also making a link and connection with the built environment of the town. South Brook to the north west, meanders through agricultural fields between the two villages of Shaw and Whitley, contributing to the separate identity and character of the two villages and to local amenity, with a number of footpaths criss-crossing the area.

- An area of GI also functions as a landscape gap between Bowerhill and Melksham and is being protected as such in new housing developments in Bowerhill to the south of Western Way.

A number of views across the landscape have been included in the Landscape Character Report to illustrate the different characteristics and features across the Plan area. From many places expansive views of the wide open landscape can be appreciated.

4.6.3 Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design

This policy helps meet objective 15: Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to our built heritage and the character of the area, with high standards of design.

Draft Policy 18: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design

Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council will support development that contributes positively to the conservation, enhancement and extension of Melksham's quality of place and local distinctiveness.

Development proposals must demonstrate how they have been informed by the Rapid Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement which will be used to inform assessment of scheme design proposals.

Applicants should to submit a design compliance statement to demonstrate how a proposal has responded positively to the character of the area in which it is located.

Development proposals within Melksham and Melksham Without's settlements must conserve the

positive character and contribute to enhancing the quality and distinctiveness of the host neighbourhood area or village.

Proposals for major development must demonstrate through a masterplan how the proposed development layout, building designs, materials and detailing complement and extend the positive characteristics of Melksham and Melksham Without's settlements and landscape.

Figure 16: Character Areas

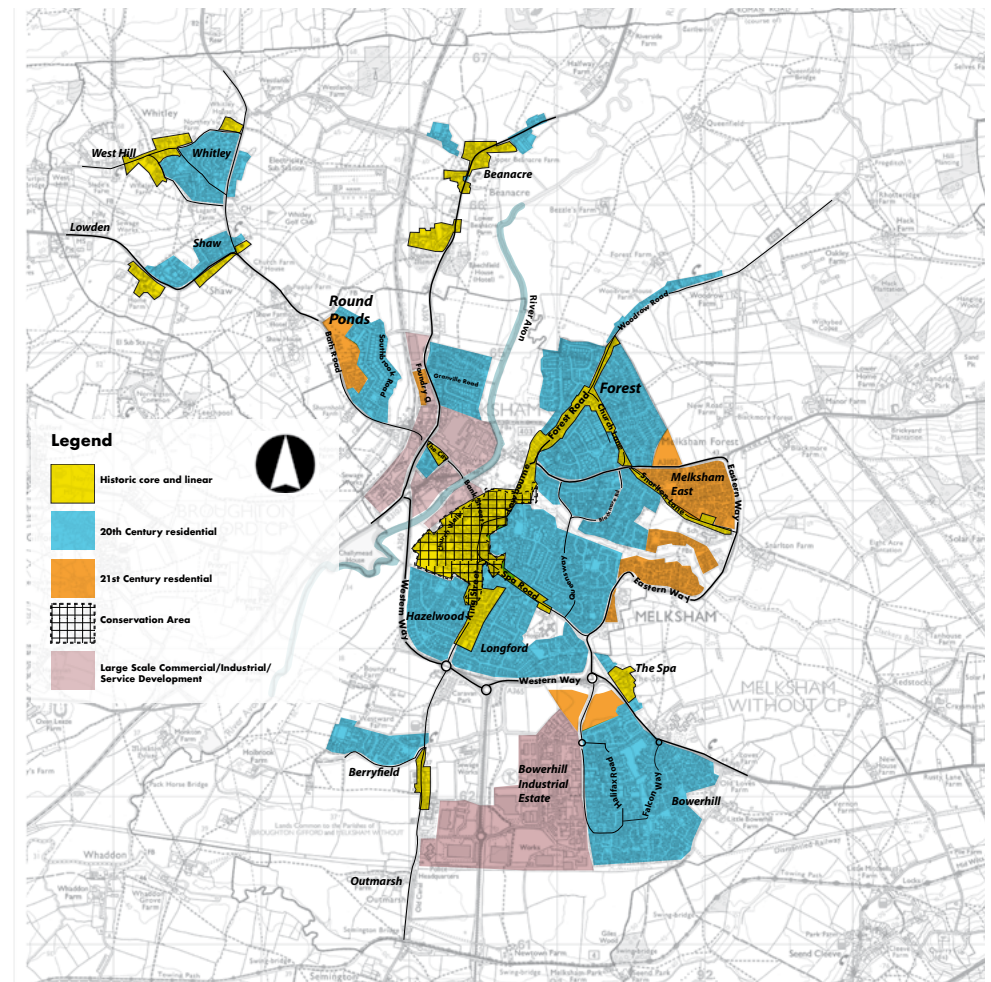
The reason for the policy

Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council recognise the importance of design quality to local distinctiveness and quality of life. In addition to expecting development proposals which are in conformity with Wiltshire Local Plan design policy and that respond positively to national design guidance, the Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure developments in the Plan area are designed to complement and build upon the local characteristics that contribute to the particular distinctiveness and positive quality of place of neighbourhoods in the Plan area.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has undertaken analysis of local character and this is presented in the Rapid Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement. This is a part of the evidence base to the Neighbourhood Plan and this design policy.

Those proposing any development should use this resource to inform the design of schemes, thereby conserving, enhancing and extending Melksham’s distinctive character. Those assessing development in the Plan area should use the Statement to judge the quality of design and its response to local distinctiveness and quality of place.

The character and quality of Melksham’s environment is defined by



its heritage, landscape and Green Infrastructure and accessibility as much as by the design of its buildings.

Part 12 of NPPF sets out importance of design in the planning and development process and sets out the role of communities in achieving 'good design': *"Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics"* (NPPF, Para 125). In 2019 the Government published a 'National Design Guide' which highlights the importance of understanding and responding to local character (in many senses). Figure 17 illustrates the 10 components of good design as set out in the National Design Guide.

Policy SP1 links directly to Wiltshire's Core Policy 57 which aims to ensure High Quality Design and Place Making, providing Parish level detail on character and locally valued features, in line with updated government guidance released in 2019 to enable policy delivery.

This policy addresses matters of development layout, form, materials and detailing. Design proposals should address all other Neighbourhood Plan policies, in particular those relating to local heritage (draft Policy 19), landscape (draft Policy 17) Green Infrastructure (draft Policy 12) to achieve a responsive and successful proposal.



Figure 17: 10 components of good design (MHCLG 2019)

4.6.4 Local Heritage

This policy also helps meet objective 15: Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to our built heritage and the character of the area, with high standards of design.

Draft Policy 19: Local Heritage

Proposals for development within the Melksham Conservation Area must show how they enhance and protect the characteristics and special qualities that make up the architectural and historic character.

For other areas of local heritage importance, together with buildings or structures that are noteworthy as unlisted local heritage assets as illustrated in the Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement, development proposals must demonstrate what consideration has been given to:

- i. the asset or area itself;**
- ii. its most distinctive and important features;**
- iii. the positive elements of its setting and immediate surrounds, and**
- iv. the contribution the asset and its setting makes to the character of the local area (whether in the Conservation Area or not).**

The reason for the policy

This policy adds local detail to Wiltshire Core Policy 58 (Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment) which aims to “ensure that Wiltshire’s important monuments, sites and landscapes and areas of historic and built heritage significance are protected and enhanced”. There are over 70 listed buildings in the Parish and over 150 in the town, the majority of the latter being in the Melksham Town Conservation Area. There is, however, no Conservation Area Assessment or Management Plan to guide and inform conservation, future development and investment.

Outside of the town centre there are two key areas of heritage importance - The City and The Spa.

The Spa is about 1 mile from Melksham town centre on the A365 Devizes Road. Its name originated from the discovery of saline springs on the Devizes road out of Melksham in 1813. Shortly afterwards the Melksham Spa Company was formed which led to the building of a pump room and a crescent of three pairs of attached Georgian buildings. These are highly distinctive, grade II listed buildings.

The area of housing for industrial workers known as ‘The City’ is

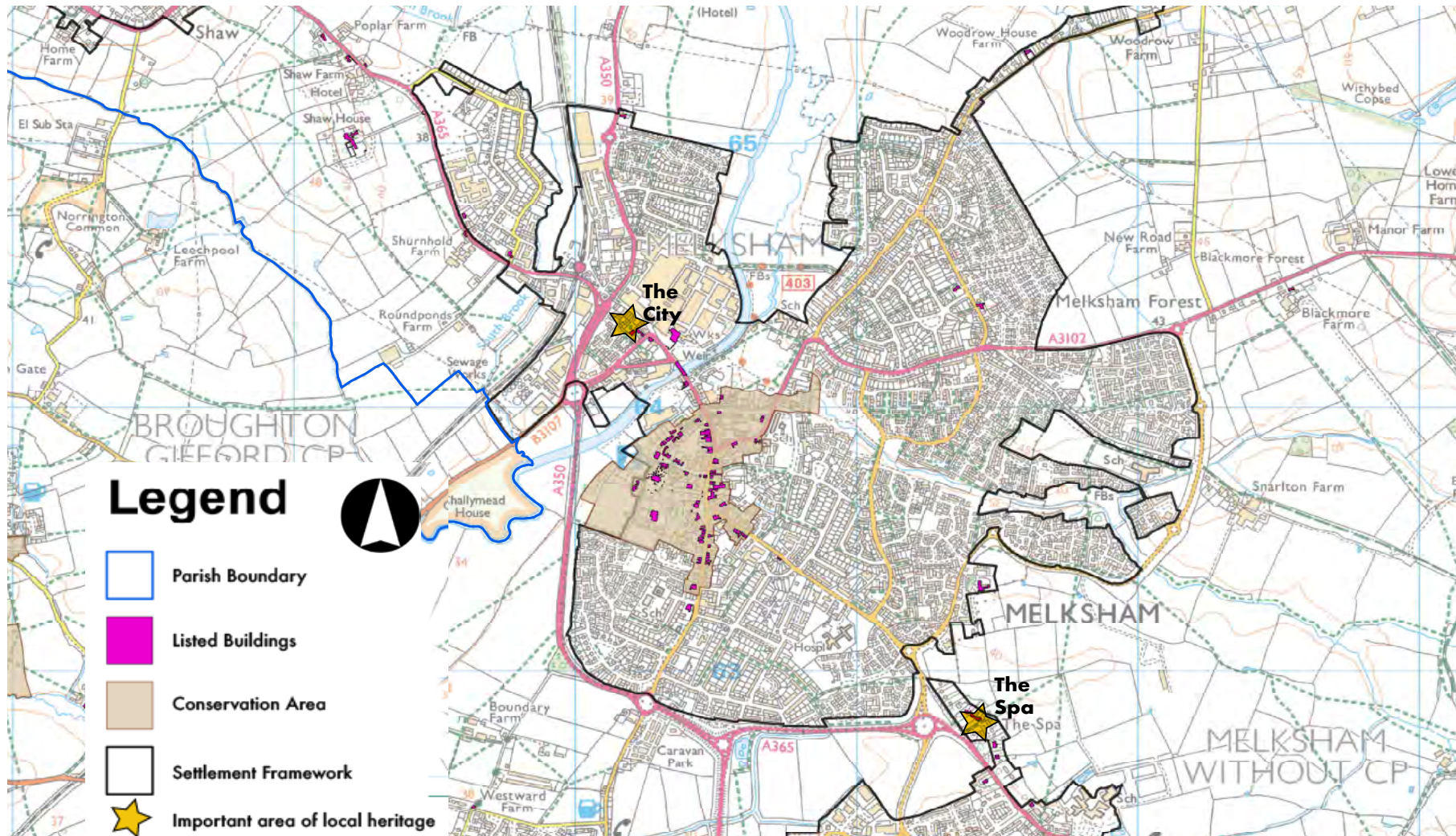
likely to date from the 17th Century when the town expanded to the north of the river for the first time. A few buildings still survive in this area including a Grade II listed former pub (The Red Lion), now vacant, and a row of attached cottages built in early 18th century of rubblestone with a stone slate roof. It is a fragmented area of heritage that survives alongside the Cooper Tires site, recent housing developments and the A350 bypass (that pedestrians and cyclists cross by an underpass).

In addition to the buildings that are listed as being of national heritage or architectural importance, there are many buildings that are of local heritage importance, in particular those in the town centre built of local stone in a traditional style. When seen together these make a “high contribution to the whole character of the street scene and give the town centre a feeling of completeness”²⁰.

Figure 17: Listed and Notable Buildings in the Conservation Area
Extracted from *Melksham Urban Design Study 2006*



Figure 18: Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Important Areas of Local Heritage



5 Priority Statements



Priority statements illustrate the commitment of the two Councils to bringing their influence to bear on matters outside the remit and scope of this Neighbourhood Plan. These 'statements' are not presented in any order of priority.

Draft Priority Statement 1: Wiltshire Local Plan Review

A priority for both Melksham Without and Melksham Town Council is careful and close joint working with Wiltshire Council on the preparation of this and subsequent Neighbourhood Plans as well as on the Wiltshire Local Plan Review. For the Local Plan Review, a Statement of Common Ground is being prepared between the two parishes and Wiltshire Council to agree common priorities, the sharing of evidence and information and the alignment between the Local Plan and a review of this Neighbourhood Plan.

Draft Priority Statement 2: Town Centre Regeneration

Development proposals within the defined Melksham Town Centre area and key access routes must consider and comply with the objectives of the emerging Masterplan/Vision for this area and be congruent with the plans and proposals evolving from it and those identified in this Plan.

The Masterplan/Vision is at an early stage, but it is likely to specify objectives and opportunities around minimising volumes and speeds of through-town traffic, minimising pollution, promoting shared spaces and developing and utilising event space. These priorities accord with the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government's report, *High Streets and Town Centres in 2030*, which states that *"high streets and town centres can survive, and thrive, by 2030 if they adapt. Their vision is for activity-based community gathering places where retail is a smaller part of a wider range of uses and activities and where green space, leisure, arts and culture and health and social care services combine with housing to create a space based on social and community interactions"*.

Heritage in the town centre consists of areas and buildings of national importance as well as locally valued heritage assets. It is also anticipated that the Vision will set out detail on ways to manage change in a way that conserves and enhances the character and appearance of the heritage assets of the Conservation Area and its setting.

A design guide for the town centre's public realm and public open space will also be introduced in order to guide and inform design proposals that enhance and protect the wider area beyond the Conservation Area.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Melksham's town centre will further develop as an attractive venue of choice for experiential activities, a home for high service retailers and high levels of customer experience, as well as being an attractive and desirable place to live, work and start a business, full of opportunity and ambition.

Draft Priority Statement 3: Employment

Out-commuting is a significant issue and is considered to be something that can be reduced through an increased and improved employment offer within the whole Plan area. The Parish Council will support the allocation of new employment land to the Bowerhill Industrial Estate. There needs to be enough employment land to support growth, but not an excess, which may lead to a need for additional housing to support it.

Draft Priority Statement 4: Transport Infrastructure - By-Pass

The Town and Parish Councils will support efforts by Wiltshire Council to progress the delivery of a By-Pass. In order for sustainable development to take place in Melksham and reduce high levels of traffic congestion on the A350, a By-pass to the town is a priority. This will need to improve the efficiency of the A350 as well as improve the local economy and meet other economic objectives for the town.

In February 2020, £150m funding was confirmed to be invested in two major road improvement schemes in Wiltshire, the A350 Melksham bypass and A338 at Salisbury.

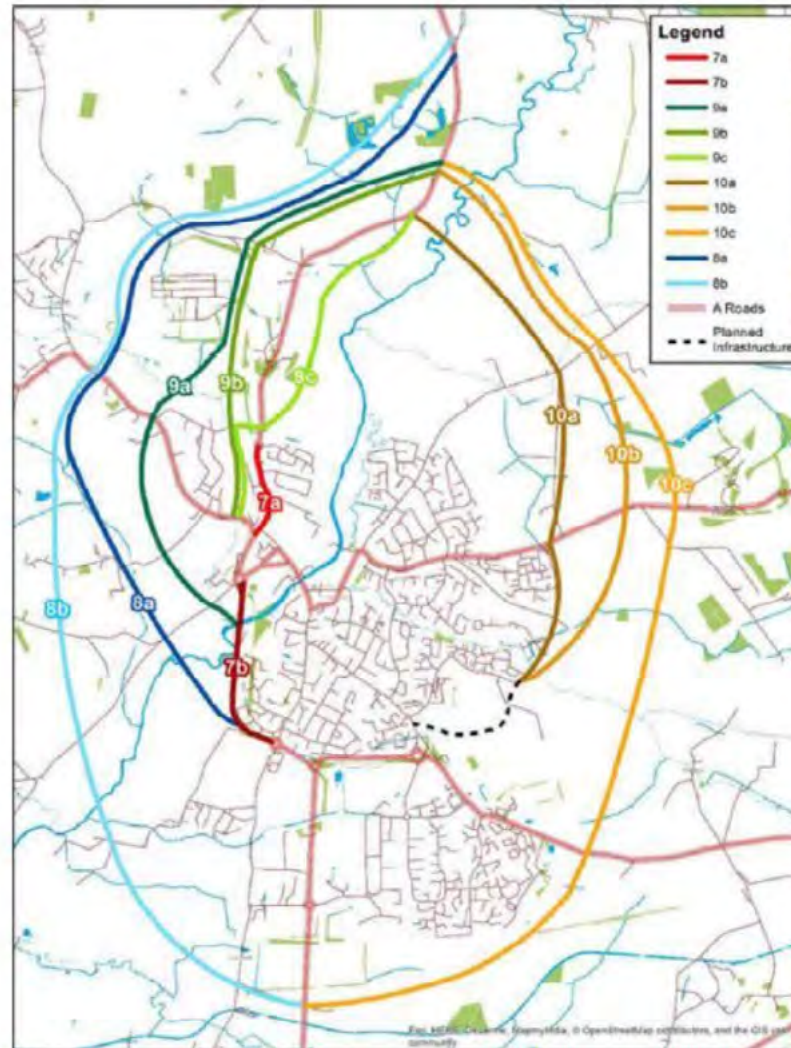
Wiltshire Council will now develop outline business cases for the two schemes to enable them to progress to the next stage of development under the government's Major Road Network (MRN) and Large Local Majors (LLM) programme.

The Melksham scheme, which is estimated to cost around £135m, will bypass the town centre and in turn resolve a critical pinch-point on the A350, improving north to south connectivity

throughout the Western Gateway. It is a part of a package of road improvement measures that will improve the northern section of this north-south route.

Figure 19: Melksham By-pass Route Options

Note no route option has been decided. The highway corridors are illustrative only and do not imply any specific alignment of new roads.



Note: highway corridors are illustrative only, and do not imply any specific alignment of new roads.

Draft Priority Statement 5: Levels of Growth and Infrastructure

The Town and Parish Council are seriously concerned that recent housing developments have been accompanied by inadequate infrastructure. Both Councils will seek to ensure that new development is accompanied by sufficient healthcare facilities, schools and highways infrastructure which have come under increasing pressure in the town.

Both Parish and Town Council advocate a holistic approach to future education provision rather than piecemeal funding, with sufficient primary and secondary school places provided to meet the needs of existing and all new housing development.

During the preparation of this Plan, many people have commented about health care facilities and education provision. Residents observed that medical facilities seem to be currently stretched to capacity and were concerned about how further new residents who come to live in the recent housing developments would be cared for. The Wiltshire Care Commission has established and set out the need for increased health care provision in an area that includes Melksham.

Draft Priority Statement 6: Wilts & Berks canal restoration

The Town and Parish Council continue to support the safeguarding of the future route of the canal, as this restoration project could provide significant economic, environmental and social benefits to Melksham.

It has been identified as a key aspiration in the Plan area's Green Infrastructure (see the GI Evidence Base Report) which can deliver multiple local aspirations from locally generated renewable energy in the form of hydro electricity from the River Avon, to extended walking and cycling routes and mooring facilities for visitors.

Draft Priority Statement 7: Transport Infrastructure - Melksham Railway Station and public transport

To increase levels of railway passenger transport and help reduce traffic congestion, railway station parking facilities should be improved and extended.

Improvements to the public transport serving the town centre will be promoted and encouraged to make it safer, more attractive and more convenient to users.

Note: Improvements to Melksham Station are included in the Wiltshire Revised Community Infrastructure Levy Regulation 123 List (2016) as infrastructure that may be funded, in whole or in part, by Community Infrastructure Levy funds.

¹ LGA Basic Facts about the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan area downloaded August 2019

² https://lichfields.uk/media/5115/lichfields-insight-focus_solutions-to-an-age-old-problem-in-the-south-west.pdf

³ Wiltshire Council Employment Land Review 2018

⁴ Wiltshire Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, February 2019

⁵ IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels

⁶ Committee on Climate Change (Feb 2019). UK housing: Fit for the future? www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/UKhousing-Fit-for-the-future-CCC-2019.pdf

⁷ Schaller, N. et al. (2016) Human influence on climate in the 2014 southern England winter floods and their impacts. *Nature Climate Change*, 6(6), p.627.

⁸ As of January 2020 the total number of locations which have a public charging point installed is 10,621 and that number is growing (<https://www.zap-map.com/statistics/>)

⁹ Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee Report, 2018: Electric vehicles: driving the transition

¹⁰ Department for Transport, 2018: The Road to Zero Next steps towards cleaner roads transport and delivering our Industrial Strategy

¹¹ Appendix 6 of the 2018 Housing Land Supply Statement which shows the position at April 2018

¹² Housing Sites Community Engagement Report 2017

¹³ Detailed information can be found in the Sites and Housing Evidence Base Folder that accompanies this Plan

¹⁴ The priorities for CIL spending by Wiltshire Council are specified in the 'Regulation 123 List (2016)'. It sets out priorities for CIL funding in the Melksham area: Improvements to Melksham railway station/ Installation of intermediate signals on the single track rail line through Melksham / Expansion of existing cemetery in Melksham

¹⁵ <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wilts-elr-report-final.pdf>, <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wilts-elr-appendix-7-site-review-summaryspreadsheet-final.pdf> (see sites 68-79), <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wilts-elr-appendix-9-site-reviews.pdf> (sites throughout).

¹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/cycling_guidance/sustrans_handbook_for_cycle-friendly_design.pdf

¹⁷ For the purposes of Core Policy 49, the smaller settlements of Wiltshire are defined as those Local Service Centres, Large Villages and Small Villages listed in Appendix E, or any smaller settlement not defined in the settlement hierarchy.

¹⁸ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/ancient-woodland/>

¹⁹ Guidance on trees and development is provided by the woodland trust <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/4729/ancient-trees-and-development.pdf>

²⁰ Melksham Urban Design Study 2006

Glossary



Ancient Woodland: Land that has had continuous woodland cover since 1600AD as designated by Natural England.

Ancient or veteran tree: A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient, but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.

Biodiversity net gain: Net gain is an approach that uses the planning process to leave biodiversity in a better state than it was before the development started, securing wider benefits for people and the environment.

Brownfield land: See previously developed land.

Conservation Area: Conservation Areas exist to manage and protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place - in other words, the features that make it unique.

Core Strategy: The Wiltshire Core Strategy which forms part of the Development Plan, setting out the spatial vision and strategic objectives of the planning framework for Wiltshire.

Development plan: This includes adopted Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Economic development: Development, including those within the B Use Classes, public and community uses and main town centre uses (but excluding housing development).

Ecological networks: These link sites of biodiversity importance.

Edge of centre: For retail purposes, a location that is well connected to, and up to 300 metres from, the primary shopping area. For all other main town centre uses, a location within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. For office development, this includes locations outside the town centre but within 500 metres of a public transport interchange. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge of centre, account should be taken of local circumstances. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre.

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Historic environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

Inclusive design: Designing the built environment, including buildings and their surrounding spaces, to ensure that they can be accessed and used by everyone.

International, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity: All international sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites), national sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and locally designated sites including County or Local Wildlife Sites.

NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework. The overall planning policy produced by the Government to inform the making of Development Plans including Neighbourhood Plans

and decision making on planning applications.

NPPG or PPG: Planning Practice Guidance. The overall national planning practice guidance and advice produced by the Government to inform the making of Development Plans including Neighbourhood Plans and decision making on planning applications.

Local Plan: The plan for the future development of the local area - in this case Wiltshire - drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community and statutory bodies. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Current core strategies or other planning policies, which under the regulations would be considered to be development plan documents, form part of the Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Plan: A plan prepared by a Town or Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular Neighbourhood Area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Main town centre uses: Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres) leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas,

restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

Open space: All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity. This can include privately owned open spaces such as playing fields.

Previously developed land: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill.

Sequential Test (Town Centre): The Sequential Test ensures that a sequential approach is followed to steer new development to areas in the most sustainable location. This requires that applications for main town centre uses (e.g. shops) should be located in town centre locations. If that is not possible, then they

should locate in edge of centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered.

Appendix 1 Pre-application Community Engagement Protocol



Introduction

The prime aim of this Protocol is to do all possible to ensure that new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area delivers good quality places to live and work. Its use will also contribute to improved outcomes for the current and future communities, as well as assisting applicants to make applications that accord with this plan and with those of Wiltshire Council. It is crucial for success with these aims for the community engagement to start very early in the preparation of applications, working with the communities of Melksham via the Town and Parish Council.

Use of this Protocol is without prejudice to the eventual judgement of either the Town or Parish Council on the merits of any final application, even if a good engagement process has been agreed and followed.

Pre-application community engagement is considered to be especially important in relation to any strategic site allocations made by Wiltshire Council, particularly with regard to any associated requirements for development briefs and masterplans that are to be approved by Wiltshire.

Context

National

National Planning Practice Guidance and the National Planning Policy Framework make several mentions of the considerable value of pre-application involvement, for example, in NPPF paragraph 39:

“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

The “10 Commitments for Effective Pre-application Engagement” published nationally by a group representing planning, industry and community groups, states that:

“Early, collaborative discussions between developers, public sector agencies and the communities affected by a new development can help to shape better quality, more accepted schemes and ensure improved outcomes for the community. These discussions also avoid wasted effort and costs.”

Wiltshire

Wiltshire Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2015 sets out how Wiltshire Council will involve the community in planning for the future use of land in their area and provides clarity on the levels of involvement that communities should expect in planning processes. Section 5 of the SCI outlines in detail how communities can be involved in planning applications. The Council acknowledges that whilst in the early stages of considering a development proposal, applicants may wish for any discussions with Wiltshire Council to be confidential, involvement of the local community can and should happen at the earliest possible stage.

The SCI sets out how the level of community involvement agreed should reflect the scale and complexity of the proposal and that it will be the responsibility of the developer. Applications for major development submitted to Wiltshire Council expect are expected to provide evidence that sets out how the community has been involved in the form of a Statement of Community Consultation. This should outline what public consultation has been carried out and how the results of the exercise have been taken into account in the submitted application.

Wiltshire Council also clearly state that community involvement in the development of a masterplan, or clear framework for the later

detailed design of a development area or large site, is "essential"

Process

Whilst there is an emphasis on early and positive pre-application engagement in major development proposals, the approach should also apply to smaller developments in the plan area because these can have at least as much impact as larger ones. Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council will play their appropriate role in delivering high quality pre-application engagement with themselves and with the wider community in the early stage of proposals that come forward.

The Parish of Melksham Without almost entirely surrounds Melksham Town. For development that takes place on the periphery of one or other Council area, and within other places in Melksham Without that are of high importance to the town (such as the commercial areas located at Bowerhill and Hampton Park etc.), both Councils will play a role.

Therefore, in respect of development proposals affecting the commercial areas, or residential sites on the periphery of Melksham Town, both Councils should be consulted in preapplication engagement.

Drawing from the 10 Commitments and other guidance on best

practice, potential applicants should work with Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council to fulfil the following principles:

- **'Day One' contact:** By far the best results for all emerge when contact is made with the relevant Council, and through us with our local community, at the earliest possible point in the process; consulting people late with already prepared schemes is not productive. See the end of this Protocol for contact details.
- **Agreed Process:** A key aim of this early contact is to discuss and agree the nature, scope, timetable, information and so forth of the engagement – i.e. the process to be followed. This should have particular regard to if and how both Councils should be involved in the process as noted above. For major development applications this will include Wiltshire Council.
- **Applicant Leadership but Shared Responsibility:** Although it is the applicant's role to lead and fund engagement, the Town and / or Parish Council will offer as much support as possible to any agreed process; for example by providing local information, contact details for local groups, advice on meeting places, access to newsletters and so forth.
- **Openness and Transparency:** Building trust between all and ensuring an agreed outcome depend heavily on having a process that is as open as possible on all sides, though the Town and / or Parish Council will respect any issues of clear commercial confidentiality.
- **Agreed Community:** A project may have an impact on a limited number of people or on all of the Town and / or Parish as appropriate. The details of those to be involved will need to be discussed and agreed for any project, as will the potential ways to contact and engage them.
- **Agreed Scope:** There will also need to be agreement about the scope of the engagement, i.e. what is and is not open to change (e.g. layout, quantum of development, design etc.).
- **Proportionality:** The nature and scale of engagement will be balanced in appropriate proportion to the scale and likely impact of any proposals.
- **Statement of Community Consultation:** For major development proposals applications, a statement of community consultation, should be submitted. this should describe and summarise the outcomes of the engagement, demonstrating how the proposals have (or have not) responded to results. If they have not, a short note should be included to explain this. If the process has been followed fully, the Parish Council will endorse this report; if not they may submit their own evaluation of it*. For smaller development proposals, a short statement describing and summarising the outcomes of the engagement is encouraged.
- The relevant Council expects to be consulted by Wiltshire Council and developers on all S106 Agreements and to be a

party to any negotiations, not a nominee, to ensure the most locally responsive results.

^a Large or significant new housing or mixed use developments / Large or significant new retail developments / Waste disposal sites / Large road schemes / Mineral extraction / Tall wind turbines

^b <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/10-commitments-effective-927.pdf>

^c For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Contact details and additional notes

Initial contact should be made at the very outset with the Town and / or Parish Councils.

townhall@melkshamtown.co.uk
clerk@melkshamwithout.co.uk

The Town and / or Parish Council commits to doing all possible

to arrange an initial meeting as soon as possible following this contact.

Melksham Without Parish Council will only consider taking on ownership and management of equipped play areas from developers, such as LEAPs (Local Equipped Area for Play) and NEAPs (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play) and not LAPs (Local Landscaped Area for Play).

*As per the opening proviso, endorsement of an engagement process and results does not necessarily mean support for the resulting proposals.

Appendix 2 Evidence Base Summary



Neighbourhood Area Level Evidence

Prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan

Community Facilities Evidence Base Report (Place Studio and NPSG, 2020)

Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report (Place Studio and NPSG, 2020)

Local Landscape Character Evidence Base Report (Place Studio and NPSG, 2020)

Site Assessment Portfolio, including:

- Overview Note
- Points of the Compass Appraisal (AECOM, 2017)
- Site Assessment Report (AECOM, 2018)
- Housing Sites Community Engagement Report (Lemon Gazelle, 2017)
- Rural Site Assessments (Place studio, 2020)
- Heritage Assessment of emerging site(s) for new housing development - Site 17 Whitley Farm (John Davey, 2020)
- Site 17 Landowner Evidence Base (Savills 2017-2020)
- Site 17 Assessment (Wiltshire Council Heritage Service 2020)
-

Rapid Community Character and Heritage Statement (Place Studio and NPSG, 2020)

Town and Parish Pre-application Protocol (see Appendix 1)

Pre-existing Reports

Melksham Urban Design Study (Melksham 1st and Colin Davis Associates, 2006)

Melksham Town 2020-2036 (Townswork, 2019)

Issues Report for Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (Lemon Gazelle, Undated)

Relevant Wiltshire Council (and others) Evidence

Severn River Basin District River Basin Management Plan (Environment Agency, Updated 2015). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718336/Severn_RBD_Part_1_river_basin_management_plan.pdf

Wiltshire Open Space and Play Area Study 2015-2026 (Ethos Environmental Planning on behalf of Wiltshire Council, Draft 2014). Available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-open-space-study-draft.pdf>

Wiltshire Council Brownfield Register (Part 1) (Wiltshire Council, 2018). Available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning->

brownfield-register

Wiltshire Council Statement of Community Involvement (2015), available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-policy-sci>

Wiltshire Core Strategy Retail Review (GVA Bilfinger, 2015). Available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-core-strategy-retail-review-draft-feb2015.pdf>

Wiltshire Employment Land Review (Hardisty Jones Associates for Wiltshire Council, 2018). Available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wilts-elr-report-final.pdf>

Residential Development and Trees – a Guide for Planners and Developers (Woodland Trust, 2019). Available at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2019/01/residential-developments-and-trees/>

West Wiltshire District Landscape Character Assessment (West Wiltshire District Council, 2007). Available at: http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planningpolicyevidencebase/evidencebasewest.htm#West_Wiltshire_planning_policy_evidence_base-Anchor-LCA

National Character Area Profile: 117 Avon Vales (NE522) (Natural England, 2014). Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4822288767647744?category=587130>

Wiltshire Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Appendix 5.9 Melksham Community Area (Wiltshire Council, 2017). Available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/shelaa-2017-appendix-5.9-melksham.pdf>

Wiltshire Core Strategy (Wiltshire Council, 2015). Available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/adopted-local-planjan16-low-res.pdf>

Saved policies of the West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration (Wiltshire Council, 2004). Overview of saved policies and full policies available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/westwiltshirelocalplan.htm>

Wiltshire CIL Charging Schedule (Wiltshire Council, 2015). Available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-may-2015-cil-charging-schedule.pdf>

Wiltshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan 3 – Appendix 1: Melksham Community Area (Wiltshire Council, 2016). Available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshireidp3december2016app1melkshamca.pdf>

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