

Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

Site Assessment Portfolio

Overview Note DRAFT

Introduction

The material in this Site Assessment Portfolio brings together site assessment work undertaken that supports Section 4.3 of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan, including Policy 7 - Allocation of Land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley.

The Portfolio contains a number of reports and assessments that have been produced at different times and by different parties during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, between 2017 and 2020. The Portfolio therefore brings relevant work together, to provide comprehensive assessment of the known development potential in the Joint Plan Area and evidence base to support the proposed site allocation.

The elements of the Portfolio are introduced below.

Points of the Compass Appraisal (2017 Draft, AECOM)

This draft report was prepared independently by AECOM for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It is an appraisal of existing development constraints across the Joint Plan area (and located outside of the built-up area of Melksham Town) including biodiversity, land and soil resources, water resources and flood risk, air quality and environmental pollution, historic environment and landscape.

The Appraisal summarises the least constrained areas as follows:

- Quadrant 1 (NE of Melksham Town): areas closest to the settlement boundary of Melksham.
- Quadrant 2 (SE of Melksham Town): areas to the south and east of Bowerhill.
- Quadrant 3 (SW of Melksham Town): areas within Quadrant 3 located to the east of Berryfield.
- Quadrant 4 (NW of Melksham Town): areas located in the western parts of Quadrant 4, around Shaw and Whitley to the west of the B3353. However these locations play important roles for local distinctiveness, including in relation to facilitating separation between the settlements.

Site Assessment Report (2018, AECOM)

This report was prepared independently by AECOM for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It provides an assessment of available sites for suitability for housing. 32 sites were assessed, taken from the following sources:

- Available brownfield sites and sites which scored favourably in the Wiltshire Council Strategic Land Availability Assessment (2012) (SHLAA)
- Sites included in the Wiltshire Council Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (2017) (SHELAA)
- Additional sites considered by the steering group, particularly those which had potential to accommodate 10 dwellings or more, scored favourably within the SHELAA and had support from local residents (based on the results of the community consultation which took place though autumn and winter 2017).

Of the sites assessed, 10 were found most appropriate for shortlisting for taking forward for allocation in the Joint Neighbourhood Plan. The 10 sites are listed below:

- Site 3: Land occupied by Cooper Tires
- Site 6: Land north of Sandridge Road
- Site 7: Land west of New Road Farm
- Site 13: Land east of Corsham Road (opposite First Lane)
- Site 15: Woolmore Farm Yard
- Site 16: Merretts Yard, Snarlton Lane
- Site 17: Whitley Farm
- Site 24: Berryfield, land west of A350
- Site 25: Berryfield, land east of A350
- Site 27: Land north of Berryfield (for small-scale regeneration of the existing developed areas).

A further 12 sites were found to be potentially suitable for taking forward in the Joint Neighbourhood Plan, but with more significant constraints which would need to be addressed prior to allocation in the Joint Neighbourhood Plan:

- Site 1: Greenfield Land at Avonside Enterprise Park
- Site 2: Brownfield Land at Avonside Enterprise Park
- Site 4: Murray Walk
- Site 5: Land West of Semington Road, to the rear of Townsend Farm
- Site 9: Land to the rear of Savernake Avenue
- Site 12: Middle Farm, Corsham Road
- Site 14: Land south of Western Way
- Site 19: Beanacre: Land west of Chapel Lane
- Site 21: Beanacre: Land east of Chapel Lane
- Site 23: Berryfield, Land west of Semington Road, south of Berryfield Lane

- Site 27: Land north of Berryfield
- Site 32: Roundhouse Farm, Bath Road (for small-scale regeneration of the existing developed areas).

The remaining sites were found to not be suitable for development.

Housing Sites Community Engagement (2017, Lemon Gazelle)

This draft report was prepared independently by Lemon Gazelle on behalf of Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council. It summarises the community engagement process which took place through autumn / winter 2017, including results, undertaken in relation to sites and development within the Joint Neighbourhood Area. The purpose of the report is to review community aspirations alongside the technical assessment of sites.

Rural Site Assessments (2020 Draft, Place Studio)

In order to progress AECOM's site assessment work from 2018, further detailed site assessments were carried out on those found by AECOM as most or potentially appropriate for taking forward in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Taking into account the potential large scale housing requirement for the neighbourhood area through the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, no further consideration was given to available sites located adjacent to the boundary of Melksham Town as part of this further work.

Further detailed site assessments were carried out on the sites located away from the Melksham Town boundary. These were termed 'rural sites', and are listed below:

- Site 12: Middle Farm, Corsham Road
- Site 13: Land east of Corsham Road (opposite First Lane)
- Site 17: Whitley Farm
- Site 19: Beanacre: Land west of Chapel Lane
- Site 20: Beanacre: Lacock Road
- Site 21: Beanacre: Land east of Chapel Lane

Onsite surveys were undertaken and supplemented by assessment undertaken by a suitably qualified Landscape Professional. Heritage Assessment of Site 17: Whitley Farm was undertaken by a heritage professional to take proper account of the heritage assets on site (*see Heritage Assessment of emerging site(s) for new housing development – Whitley Farm (2020) below*).

The Place Studio Rural Site Assessments concluded that Site 12: Middle Farm, Corsham Road is most suitable for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan, and identified a number of features of the site and its context which should be considered when drafting an allocation for development of this land.

Heritage Assessment of emerging site for new housing development – Site 17 Whitley Farm (2020, John Davey MRTPI, IHBC, AA Dip (Conservation))

This report was independently prepared by a qualified Conservation Consultant to assess the suitability, in heritage terms, for development of the Whitley Farm site. The assessment was undertaken due to the significant heritage assets on site.

The assessment concludes that the entire site is not considered suitable for development as this would result in harm to the setting of the heritage assets and their significance. The north west corner of the site may have potential for a modest scheme of high quality design which fully respects the setting and significance of the listed buildings.

Site 17 Landowner Evidence Base (Savills 2017 -2020)

Between 2017 and 2020 planning and property consultant, Savills produced and submitted various pieces of evidence in support of the allocation of land at Whitley Farm within the Melksham NDP. This included an illustrative layout and capacity study, illustrative plans for the conversion of listed buildings, various environmental evidence reports and a revised heritage impact assessment.

Wiltshire Council Heritage Service, Site 17 (Whitley Farm) Assessment, February 2020

Wiltshire Council heritage service provided written commentary on the heritage significance of Whitley Farm and provided brief comments on illustrative development capacity material submitted on behalf of the land owner by their agent. This was material in resolving whether the site was suitable in-principle.