

**Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan**

## **Additional Rural Site Assessments**

**May 2020**

**Place Studio**

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1      Landscape Assessment

Appendix 2      Heritage Assessment of emerging site for new housing development – Site 17  
Whitley Farm

## 1 Background

### Baseline Site Assessments

*AECOM Site Assessment Report (2018, AECOM)*

This report was prepared independently by AECOM for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It provides an initial assessment of identified 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 through 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).

AECOM considered that all other sites were not suitable for development allocation. This included Site 20 at Beanacre, Lacock Road, which has been included in the further assessment of rural sites (see below).

### *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.

## **2 Rural Site Assessments (2020, Place Studio)**

Previous assessment and community consultation work formed the basis of identifying sites for further and more detailed assessment.

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

The Steering Group resolved that further site assessments were to be 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
- \*AECOM considered that this site was not suitable for allocation

### **Rural Sites Further Assessment**

Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council are producing their Neighbourhood Plan collaborating with Wiltshire Council to help ensure both the Neighbourhood Plan and the Local Plan produce a coordinated and complimentary approach to strategic and neighbourhood place making and policies.

The cumulative capacity of the suggested sites around and within Melksham that were identified as part of the NDP call for sites and assembly of SHLAA sites in 2016/7 has the potential to contribute towards the strategy for and allocations of land to meet Melksham's housing needs up to 2036 in the updated Wiltshire Local Plan. But this should be considered in the context of all other spatial options being considered by Wiltshire Council in drafting the Local Plan.

It is therefore considered that strategic decisions relating to land allocation at Melksham should be considered as part of the Local Plan making process by Wiltshire Council. This may include

consideration of those sites identified as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process. Once strategic housing allocations and numbers have been resolved, a review of the NDP may consider if and where further non-strategic site allocations at Melksham should be made.

### **Further Site Assessment Methodology**

Surveys supplemented those assessment undertaken by AECOM. These were undertaken by suitably qualified landscape, design and planning consultants. Where heritage was identified as a potential issue at Whitley Farm a further heritage impact assessment was undertaken by a qualified heritage specialist to take proper account of the heritage assets on site (see Heritage Assessment of emerging site(s) for new housing development – Whitley Farm (2020) in the Appendix).

Each professional assessment was undertaken independently and produced reports without influence by other factors. The landscape, heritage and sustainable development considerations of these assessments can be found in the appendices to this report.

An initial desktop appraisal of each AECOM site assessment was undertaken, cross referencing with published evidence and in liaison with members of the NDP steering group. This considered the accuracy of AECOM's initial assumptions and findings. Each site then was visited and re-assessed utilising recognised landscape appraisal, site suitability and heritage impact criteria. The findings of these desktop and appraisals were then consolidated and weighed to produce a ranking.

### **Assessment Summary Conclusion**

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

## **3 Sites Assessments Combined Commentary**

### **3.1 Site 12 East of Middle Farm, Corsham Road B3353 Whitley**

3.1.1 AECOM Findings and Justification: *This site has minor constraints. The site may be appropriate for taking forward as part of the Neighbourhood Plan. However there are a number of constraints which would need to be overcome to enable development, including potential impacts on the road network. **Capacity 44***

#### **Additional Commentary / Key Issues**

3.1.2 Further assessment of this site concurred with AECOM findings. The site is relatively well connected to public transport and local facilities. It has the potential for development that would "complete" the NE corner of this part of Whitley and link to development frontages to the south.

3.1.3 It is agreed that the site is capable of supporting development. However, should it be allocated, site parameters should include for the retention of the existing PROW passing through an area of open/amenity space, to conserve existing links to the open country and views from Top Lane.

3.1.4 The creation of a new access from Corsham Road will necessitate the removal of significant existing screen hedging, which currently makes a positive contribution to the green and rural

character of Whitley. Without appropriate landscape mitigation, this may result in the increased “suburbanisation” of the village.

### **Conclusion**

The site is suitable for allocation with criteria that will protect the existing public rights of way, green infrastructure and residential amenity and secure safe access.

### **3.2 Site 13: Land east of Corsham Road (opposite First Lane)**

3.2.1 AECOM Findings and Justification: *This site has minor constraints. The site is relatively unconstrained, with no significant landscape or biodiversity designations. The site is also located outside of the boundary of any flood risk zones, has good access, and is close to local public transport links into Melksham town centre. As such the site is considered as appropriate for taking forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan. Capacity 15*

#### **Additional Commentary / Key Issues**

3.2.2 AECOM on-site assessment considered sound. However, site forms part of rural separation between Shaw and Whitley. Whilst the northern section of the site may be more closely related to the developed context of the village, the southern section (South of First Lane junction) are of greater significance in maintaining rural separation.

3.2.3 The potentially developable section of the site would therefore have a significantly smaller capacity (c.7) and would need to be accessed from the northern (private) lane.

### **Conclusion**

The site is not suitable for allocation due to its relationship with the green gap between Whitley and Shaw and its impact on local landscape quality.

### **3.3 Site 17 Whitley Farm**

3.3.1 AECOM Findings and Justification: *The site has minor constraints to development, and development has the potential to be sympathetic to surrounding residential areas and capitalise on the underutilised nature of the site. Although there are three Grade II listed buildings within the locality of the site, development has the potential to enhance the setting of these historic features. From a community perspective, the inclusion of any flood alleviation schemes, for example through sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDs) would help to address surface water flooding issues. As such, the site is considered appropriate for taking forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan. Capacity 31*

#### **Additional Commentary / Key Issues**

##### **Brownfield Land Classification**

3.3.2 The site is described by AECOM as a former farm and as ‘brownfield’. It is however questioned whether the disused farm buildings can be considered a brownfield site. Brownfield land is defined as land that has been ‘previously developed’, by the NPPF, this definition excludes agricultural or forestry buildings and gardens.

3.3.3 Previously developed or Brownfield land is defined by the NPPF (NPPF 2019 page 70) as “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 was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings;”*

3.3.4 The Place Studio team therefore assess this site to be greenfield.

### **Site Assessment**

3.3.5 The site contains two Grade II listed buildings, late 17<sup>th</sup> Century Whitley Farmhouse and Barn at Whitley Farmhouse, also late 17<sup>th</sup> Century and a Grade II listed structure – a three step plain mounting block - against outside wall of farmyard.

3.3.6 Whilst the buildings do not currently appear on the Historic England’s heritage at risk register, there is greater risk of dilapidation as a result of disuse of the farm complex.

3.3.7 The existing setting of the historic structures is harmed by the existing neighbouring collection of 20<sup>th</sup> Century agricultural buildings, ad hoc storage units and general poor repair of the site. It is agreed that re-use and/or development of the site with appropriate new uses and buildings could conserve and enhance the setting of the existing historic assets. Potential allocation of the site should consider requirements for a comprehensive approach that secures the future conservation and maintenance of the listed structures as part of any development. This may also include guidance on the form and approach to securing appropriate design and landscape associated with an allocation.

3.3.8 The site is set within a rural context with close and long views to and from the open countryside. The site is slightly elevated and therefore more prominent. Whilst in a poor condition and with buildings and structures that are harmful to visual amenity, the farm use is consistent with the rural context. Housing development on this site could create a more anomalous intervention. Any potential allocation may consider design and landscape parameters to secure appropriate form and landscape mitigation. Such parameters may affect the potential capacity of the site, reducing it below the AECOM estimate.

3.3.9 The existing farm buildings complex, including a large slurry tank, has expanded into the neighbouring fields. This expansion has resulted in the removal of hedgerow, increasing the open view into the farm. Potential allocation and development creates an opportunity to restore the hedgerow and boundary structures as part of a comprehensive landscape requirements.

### **Conclusion**

The site is not suitable for allocation. Whitley Farm was proposed for potential allocation and was supported with a significant level of illustrative information to illustrate its potential capacity and ability to viably deliver off site community benefits, primarily relating to flood management, car parking and children’s play space. In addition to the potential to enhance the condition of the underused farm yard site, the community benefits package was material to the site being identified by the Whitley community as a preferred location for allocation. However, consultation with Wiltshire Council, Historic England and impact assessment undertaken to inform NDP evidence identified a risk of unacceptable levels of harm to the setting of Whitley Farm’s listed buildings. Whilst this was at odds with heritage assessment submitted on behalf of the land owner, it was concluded that only a significantly smaller amount of development could be reasonably accommodated on this site. Dialogue with the landowner’s representative concluded that this could not viably support the initially proposed package of community benefit.

### 3.4 Site 19: Beanacre: Land west of Chapel Lane

3.4.1 AECOM Findings and Justification: *Constraints to development include associated with access issues, the absence of any mains drainage, and the site's location away from the key services and facilities in Melksham town. However the site is relatively accessible by public transport. As such the site may be appropriate for taking forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan. Capacity 10*

#### Additional Commentary / Key Issues

3.4.2 The site is crossed diagonally by existing power lines. This is likely to significantly impact upon the viable capacity of the site, below the AECOM estimate.

3.4.3 Whilst access to the site is feasible via the existing (widened) gateway onto Chapel Lane, the route is bridleway at this point, requiring extension of the highway and potential loss of existing boundary vegetation.

3.4.4 Access from Chapel Lane onto the A350 may not be suitable to support additional traffic movements. Pedestrian links along the A350 Leacock Road towards local facilities and bus stops is extremely poor and affected by heavy and fast traffic.

3.4.5 The site is currently relatively well contained by existing housing boundaries and hedgerow to the open country. However, the site would extend the development boundary further into the open countryside.

#### Conclusion

The site is not suitable for allocation due to its access and infrastructure constraints and its impact on extension of the village into open countryside.

### 3.5 Site 20: Beanacre: Lacock Road

3.5.1 AECOM Findings and Justification: *The site has significant constraints. The main constraints to development surround access issues, its location away from the main built-up area of Melksham, the loss of agricultural land, the absence of any mains drainage, and the likely changes to the villagescape of Beanacre. Given the number of potential constraints, it is recommended that the site is not taken forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan. Capacity 35*

#### Additional Commentary / Key Issues

3.5.2 Further assessment concurs with AECOM conclusion.

#### Access

3.5.3 Site levels are c 1.5m above the A350 Lacock Road. The site is screened by vegetation that forms a gateway feature when approaching Beanacre from the north. The creation of a suitable site access onto the A350 would be likely to have significant harmful impact on the site boundary landscape.

3.5.4 In addition to distances to local facilities, pavements along the A350 are narrow and in close proximity to heavy and fast moving traffic.

#### Conclusion

The site is not suitable for allocation due to its access constraints and its impact on extension of the village into open countryside and impact on rural views.

### 3.6 Site 21: Beanacre: Land east of Chapel Lane

3.6.1 AECOM Findings and Justification: *The site has minor constraints. Constraints to development include associated with access issues, the absence of any mains drainage, and the site's location away from the key services and facilities in Melksham town. However the site is relatively accessible by public transport. As such the site may be appropriate for taking forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan. Capacity 11*

#### Additional Commentary / Key Issues

Site Sub-division and Use

3.6.2 This site is effectively sub-divided into three elements:

##### A Small Southern Paddock

Small and largely enclosed unimproved area of grass contained by existing building boundaries to the south and east and Chapel Lane hedgerow boundary to the west. There is no direct access to this parcel. However, it is contained within the existing limits of development and development would not encroach into the open countryside.

##### B Central linear strip

Connected to plot A, this section of the site extends behind existing development boundaries and is part of the open countryside. The plot is bounded to the north by a relatively new fence and hedge planting. The site has long views onto and from the open countryside. Whilst at the time of visiting views were screened by crops, views would widen at other times of the year.

##### C Northern Field

The site is an integral part of the rural setting to Beanacre, with long open views north and east, partially obscured by seasonal crops. The site is currently in use for private informal recreation/football.

3.6.3 Access is from Chapel Lane bridle way, which would require improvement to highway quality. As with site 19, the feasibility of additional vehicle movements onto the A350 from Chapel Lane may be considered unacceptable.

#### Conclusion

The site is not suitable for allocation due to its access and infrastructure constraints and its impact on extension of the village into open countryside.



**Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan**

**Additional Rural Sites**

**Landscape Assessment**

**2019**

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT NOTES			
<b>SITE REF - 12</b>		<b>SURVEYOR</b> C.Potterton	
<b>LOCATION</b> – Middle Farm, Corsham Road, SN12 8QQ		<b>DATE</b> 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2019	
<b>DESKTOP BASELINE</b> – Designations, PROW'S, Features, Historic, Cultural Associations, Ecological constraints / features (on site and adjacent if relevant)			
<p>Agricultural land covering 1.61 ha. Road ref B3353 to the west. Hedgerow to north, west and south side. Open to the east. No Conservation Area.</p> <p>Two Grade II listed buildings located to the north west of the site.</p> <p>PROW Ref MELW85 traverses northern boundary of the site.</p> <p>Adjacent residential properties to the south.</p> <p>Generally sitting at 55m AOD i.e. at the 'top' of a gentle 'plateau'.</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE</b> (National / Regional / Local)			
<p>NCA – 117 Avon Vales</p> <p>LCA - 16A: Malmesbury - Corsham Limestone Lowlands</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>LANDSCAPE VALUE OF THE SITE</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER</b>			
<p>Open farmland. Part of a larger field to the east. Sub-division of this field would be logical.</p> <p>Ribbon development to the east side of the B3353 and larger residential area of Eden Grove to west. This area is dominated by pylons and cables to the east.</p>			
<b>OVERALL SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b> landscape effects	High	Med	Low
<b>VISUAL BASELINE</b> extent of view / ZVI / key elements			
<p>Heavily dominated by nearby electricity sub-station and overhead pylons / cables traversing field to the north. Generally well screened from B3353 by road frontage hedging.</p> <p>Limited longer distance views to higher ground to the east. Do not consider that this site is widely visible in the landscape and any views from the east would be significantly disrupted by large electric station and plethora of pylons which dominate the area.</p>			
<b>VISUAL SENSITIVITY</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>OVERALL LANDSCAPE CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	High	Med	Low
<p>Some capacity for development but not the whole site. Must retain significant land to the east to extend existing green finger to provide buffer planting. Must also not extend northwards past Top Lane T Junction to avoid any incursion into setting of Whitley Barn and to retain appropriate space for PROW.</p>			
<b>MITIGATION</b> possibility / type / potential for success / key elements to address			
<p>Must retain and bolster road frontage hedging. Add significant boundary buffer zone planting to the east side and introduce north / south hedgerow.</p> <p>New entrance to be located where hedge removal for visibility splays can be reduced to a minimum.</p>			

<b>LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT NOTES</b>			
<b>SITE REF</b> - 13		<b>SURVEYOR</b> C.Potterton	
<b>LOCATION</b> – Land east of Corsham Road (opposite First Lane) SN12 8QD		<b>DATE</b> 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2019	
<b>DESKTOP BASELINE</b> – <i>Designations, PROW'S, Features, Historic, Cultural Associations, Ecological constraints / features (on site and adjacent if relevant)</i>			
<p>0.63 ha agricultural land / small field. Adjacent to B3353. Opposite to junction with First Lane. Southern boundary formed by tree lined access road leading to Whitley Golf Club. North side overlooked by adjacent residential properties.</p> <p>PROW MELW84 traverses northern boundary.</p> <p>Sloping site falling from north to south towards South Brook.</p> <p>Two Grade II listed buildings approximately 100m from the west side of the site. Intervisibility with spire of Grade II* listed Christ Church.</p> <p>Not Conservation Area.</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE</b> ( <i>National / Regional / Local</i> )			
<p>NCA – 117 Avon Vales</p> <p>LCA - 16A: Malmesbury - Corsham Limestone Lowlands</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>LANDSCAPE VALUE OF THE SITE</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER</b>			
<p>Important site forming gap between Whitley and Shaw. Small triangular paddock with good tree cover to south and good hedges to east and west. Northern side dominated by adjacent residential properties.</p>			
<b>OVERALL SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b> landscape effects	High	Med	Low
<b>VISUAL BASELINE</b> extent of view / ZVI / key elements			
<p>Open views into site through gateway from the northwest and particularly users of PROW. Partially hidden by frontage hedging. Locally sensitive to vies into the site, but northern portion already dominated by adjacent residential properties. Consider some local visual harm, but limited in extent.</p>			
<b>VISUAL SENSITIVITY</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>OVERALL LANDSCAPE CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	High	Med	Low
<p>Some limited potential for single dwelling to north side of the site only and grouped with 214 / 215 Need to retain a gap between Shaw and Whitley.</p>			
<b>MITIGATION</b> <i>possibility / type / potential for success / key elements to address</i>			
<p>Must create additional hedging across the site to retain paddock to the south. Bolster hedge planting to the road frontage.</p>			

<b>LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT NOTES</b>			
<b>SITE REF</b> - 17		<b>SURVEYOR</b> C.Potterton	
<b>LOCATION</b> – Whitley Farm First Lane. SN12 8RN		<b>DATE</b> 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2019	
<b>DESKTOP BASELINE</b> – Designations, PROW'S, Features, Historic, Cultural Associations, Ecological constraints / features (on site and adjacent if relevant)			
<p>Farmhouse and farmyard consisting of range of types / styles and size farm buildings and structures to include slurry tank. Includes listed barn, farmhouse and mounting block.</p> <p>Buildings not currently in use.</p> <p>PROW Ref MELW75 traverses e/w to the immediate south of the site.</p> <p>Main access off First Lane.</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE</b> (National / Regional / Local)			
<p>NCA – 117 Avon Vales</p> <p>LCA - 16A: Malmesbury - Corsham Limestone Lowlands</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>LANDSCAPE VALUE OF THE SITE</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER</b>			
<p>Current character of untidiness and disrepair (not uncommon with farmyards). Sits within wider agricultural landscape albeit with adjacent residential dwellings readily visible to the north and South-east.</p>			
<b>OVERALL SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b> landscape effects	High	Med	Low
<b>VISUAL BASELINE</b> extent of view / ZVI / key elements			
<p>Farmyard sits on the top of a hill and commands longer distance views in / out. Sensitive relationship with adjacent PROW. Existing untidiness and lack of maintenance / tidiness is a local visual issue but can be addressed. Limited local views to interior of the site. Listed elements are visually important from the roadside.</p>			
<b>VISUAL SENSITIVITY</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>OVERALL LANDSCAPE CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	High	Med	Low
<p>Has capacity for development but needs to work within existing building area / footprint. Must not increase built footprint into the adjacent countryside. Must be sensitive to setting of listed structures and can provide for improvement to their setting. Must also include for reinstatement and restoration of landscape features such as hedges.</p>			
<b>MITIGATION</b> possibility / type / potential for success / key elements to address			
<p>Provide new hedging and significant planting scheme to help restore landscape features. Must retain 'farmyard' design / character and not become typical residential development. Opportunity to repair / reinstate setting of important listed structures.</p>			

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT NOTES			
<b>SITE REF - 19</b>		<b>SURVEYOR</b> C.Potterton	
<b>LOCATION</b> – Beanacre, Land west of Chapel Lane SN12 7PX		<b>DATE</b> 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2019	
<b>DESKTOP BASELINE</b> – Designations, PROW'S, Features, Historic, Cultural Associations, Ecological constraints / features (on site and adjacent if relevant)			
<p>0.43 ha agricultural land. Grazed (currently) by Alpaca's. Residential properties to the south. Open farmland to the north.</p> <p>Bridleway MELW99 runs along Chapel Lane to the eastern boundary. Trimmed hedge and newly widened gateway to east side. Gardens to south / south-west boundary.</p> <p>Important Oak tree to NE corner alongside lane.</p> <p>Overhead cables. Small shelter to NW corner.</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE</b> (National / Regional / Local)			
<p>NCA – 117 Avon Vales</p> <p>LCA - 16A: Malmesbury - Corsham Limestone Lowlands</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>LANDSCAPE VALUE OF THE SITE</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER</b>			
Small site on the north side of the settlement. Important as a transition between residential properties and open countryside beyond to the north.			
<b>OVERALL SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b> landscape effects	High	Med	Low
<b>VISUAL BASELINE</b> extent of view / ZVI / key elements			
Overlooked by users of bridleway and adjacent residential properties especially 52c. No long distance views. Relatively isolated.			
<b>VISUAL SENSITIVITY</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>OVERALL LANDSCAPE CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	High	Med	Low
Limited potential due to overhead cables and restricted access. Would cause harm to users of the bridleway and to settlement pattern of the village. Ideally house 52c marks the extent of the village .			
<b>MITIGATION</b> possibility / type / potential for success / key elements to address			
Primary mitigation in the form of avoiding development. Limited size restricts the potential for successful mitigation of visual harm. Cannot properly mitigate the harm to the settlement pattern.			

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT NOTES			
<b>SITE REF - 20</b>		<b>SURVEYOR</b> C.Potterton	
<b>LOCATION</b> – Beanacre, Lacock Road		<b>DATE</b> 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2019	
<b>DESKTOP BASELINE</b> – Designations, PROW'S, Features, Historic, Cultural Associations, Ecological constraints / features (on site and adjacent if relevant)			
<p>Effectively flat or gently sloping land covering 1.49 ha agricultural land to north of A350. Important hedgerow (with trees) to southern boundary with road. No PROW's on the site but two to the south of the A350 (MELW67 / MELW109) and one to the immediate east (MELW101). Bridleway MELW99 runs along Chapel Lane to the west of the site.</p> <p>Outside settlement boundary. No actual boundary to the north i.e. is part of a much larger field. Trees to the site boundaries have potential as bat roosts.</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE</b> (National / Regional / Local)			
<p>NCA – 117 Avon Vales LCA - 16A: Malmesbury - Corsham Limestone Lowlands</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>LANDSCAPE VALUE OF THE SITE</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER</b>			
Open field separating roadside development in Beanacre and isolated ribbon development to north side of A350 (Nos 62-69).			
<b>OVERALL SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b> landscape effects	<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>VISUAL BASELINE</b> extent of view / ZVI / key elements			
Longer distance views to / from Bowden Hill / Chittoe to the east / north-east. Open views into the site from the A350 when looking south-west. Important green gap as part of entrance to village.			
<b>VISUAL SENSITIVITY</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>OVERALL LANDSCAPE CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>
None. Consider infilling of the gap between Beanacre and isolated ribbon development to north side of A350 (Nos 62-69) would be very harmful. Consider likely access off A350 would require significant engineering to deal with change in level and would result in significant loss of important roadside vegetation.			
<b>MITIGATION</b> possibility / type / potential for success / key elements to address			
Not possible to mitigate for harmful coalescence of settlements. Would also cause irreparable damage to important green entrance to village.			

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT NOTES			
<b>SITE REF - 21</b>	<b>SURVEYOR</b> C.Potterton		
<b>LOCATION</b> – Land to the east of Chapel Lane, Beanacre	<b>DATE</b> 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2019		
<b>DESKTOP BASELINE</b> – Designations, PROW'S, Features, Historic, Cultural Associations, Ecological constraints / features (on site and adjacent if relevant)			
<p>0.47 ha land. Sub-divided into three parcels. Playing field to north and two smaller parcels of paddock land to the south.</p> <p>Outside settlement boundary of village.</p> <p>Bridleway MELKW99 runs alongside western boundary – along Chapel lane.</p> <p>Vegetation to east and west boundaries. Internal hedging to east side of southernmost parcel.</p> <p>No adjacent Listed Buildings.</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE</b> (National / Regional / Local)			
<p>NCA – 117 Avon Vales</p> <p>LCA - 16A: Malmesbury - Corsham Limestone Lowlands</p>			
<b>LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>LANDSCAPE VALUE OF THE SITE</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER</b>			
<p>Three small parcels of land. One being used (lawfully ?) as small football pitch. Others are small generally unmanaged paddocks beside residential properties.</p>			
<b>OVERALL SENSITIVITY OF THE SITE</b> landscape effects	High	Med	Low
<b>VISUAL BASELINE</b> extent of view / ZVI / key elements			
<p>Short distance views limited to those from adjacent properties and Bridleway / Chapel Lane. Potential long distance views to Bowden Hill to North-east. Current tall maize crop gives accentuated sense of shelter / seclusion that is missing when crop cut. Moderate adverse harm on longer distance views.</p>			
<b>VISUAL SENSITIVITY</b>	High	Med	Low
<b>OVERALL LANDSCAPE CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	High	Med	Low
<p>Limited to small rectangle alongside Chapel Lane to the south. Consider both other parcels would cause significant harm to settlement pattern.</p>			
<b>MITIGATION</b> possibility / type / potential for success / key elements to address			
<p>Avoid development on outer parcels. Retention of perimeter vegetation and replacement if required for visibility splays. Need to retain character of Chapel Lane.</p>			

**Melksham Joint Neighbourhood Plan (draft stage)**  
**Heritage Assessment of emerging site(s) for new housing development**  
**Whitley Farm, First Lane, Whitley**

**Overview**

Whitley Farmhouse is a substantial stone-built late C17 building. The farmhouse and adjacent 8 bay threshing barn are both grade II listed buildings which have group value in addition to their individual architectural and historic significance. A C19 mounting block at the farm entrance is also grade II listed. There are several single storey historic farm outbuildings to the south of the farmhouse comprising of stables, cattle housing, pigsties etc. These undesignated heritage assets are within the curtilage of the listed building(s).

The farmhouse and barn are prominently positioned on First Lane and contribute to local distinctiveness. The site under consideration for development is therefore extremely sensitive from a heritage perspective. Modern bungalow development constructed on the opposite side of the lane to the farm intrudes on its historic rural setting. The surrounding open rural landscape to the east and south is gently undulating farmland with large open fields and limited tree and hedge growth. To the west is modern development. The public footpath across the fields to the south of the farm allows views from this open landscape towards the historic building complex and other large modern agricultural buildings at the farm.

**Relevant legislation and policy**

Under Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, when a local planning authority (LPA) is assessing development proposals affecting a listed building it is required to consider the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as revised in July 2018 is national policy in the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, including listed buildings, which must also be taken into account by the LPA, together with the related guidance given in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

Development proposals must also have full regard to the requirements of relevant heritage policy in the Wiltshire Development Plan.

**High level site assessment**

A heritage assessment of the emerging site in the draft Neighbourhood Plan has been carried out, involving desktop research and the site visit on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

The methodology applied is based on the guidance contained in 'The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans - Historic England Advice Note 3 October 2015'.

Available evidence material including sketch proposals for the site provided by planning consultants Savills who represent the landowner, has been reviewed. The landowner is proposing 21 units on the site, including conversion of one of the listed buildings together



with off-site flood mitigation to benefit the wider area. A sketch plan and sketch view of this proposal has been received.

<b>Whitley Farm, First Lane</b>	<b>Heritage Assessment</b>
Heritage assets affected by the potential site allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whitley Farmhouse – grade II listed building</li> <li>• Barn at Whitley Farm – grade II listed building</li> <li>• Mounting block at Whitley Farm – grade II listed building</li> <li>• C18 &amp; C19 single storey farm outbuildings of stone construction – undesignated heritage assets</li> </ul> <p>This group of buildings form a traditional historic farmstead which now includes modern agricultural buildings. They front on to First Lane with an undeveloped farmland setting to the south, east and west.</p>
Contribution made by the site in its current form to the significance of the heritage assets	<p>The proposed site for development comprises land immediately to the south and west of the historic element of the farmstead, mainly occupied by large footprint modern agricultural buildings with spaces between.</p> <p>Despite the poor appearance of the modern buildings on the site they visually identify as working-farm agricultural structures in the rural landscape and as such do not necessarily intrude on or harm the significance of the farmstead heritage assets. Nevertheless their removal could enhance the setting of the heritage assets and better reveal their significance.</p> <p>The land proposed for development projects south into the surrounding countryside with open fields adjoining to the south, east and west, forming a longstanding association between the historic buildings and their farmland setting and assisting the understanding and appreciation of the significance of the heritage assets as a farmstead.</p>
Impact the site allocation might have on the significance of the heritage assets	<p>Replacing the modern agricultural buildings with extensive new residential development would seriously intrude on the setting of the heritage assets.</p> <p>Such development would visually dominate and sever the important visual and physical historic connection between the farm complex and its associated farm land, harming significance.</p> <p>The historic rural setting of the listed farmhouse and barn has been previously partly damaged on the north side of First Lane by the visual intrusion of C20 bungalow housing</p>

	<p>development on the opposite side of the lane and further C20 development extending to the north west along the lane. Developing the land as proposed would result in the heritage assets virtually surrounded by modern development, harming their important rural/agricultural setting.</p> <p>Guidance in Part 1 of Historic England’s ‘The Setting of Heritage Assets’ advises that:  <i>Where the significance of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development affecting its setting, to accord with NPPF policies consideration still needs to be given to whether additional changes will further detract from, or can enhance the significance of the asset. Negative change could include severing the last link between an asset and its original setting.</i></p>
<p>Site opportunities to maximise enhancement and avoid harm (mitigation measures)</p>	<p>The extent of new housing currently proposed by the landowner would harm the setting of the heritage assets, and the proposed site is therefore not considered to be capable of providing for such large scale development.</p> <p>Development does however provide an opportunity to preserve the heritage assets, enhance their setting and avoid harm by applying the following mitigation measures:</p> <p><u>Reduced scale of development</u>  Subject to design and layout, a substantially reduced and more modest scale of development in the north west corner of the site only, adjoining First Lane, may avoid harming the setting of the heritage assets.</p> <p>This part of the site abuts No 126 First Lane, a C20 bungalow of mediocre appearance. Further C20 development continues along the lane to its junction with West Hill to the north west. In this context it is considered that a modest level of new development in the north west corner of the site could be accommodated.</p> <p>In contrast, approaching the farmstead from the south west along First Lane, the farmhouse has an open countryside context, retaining some sense of its historic rural setting on this part of the lane.</p> <p><u>Removal of modern agricultural buildings</u>  Assuming the farming use would cease, the development should be accompanied by the opportunity to remove the modern agricultural buildings on the remainder of the site,</p>

which could improve and enhance the setting of the heritage assets.

Design quality

A high quality purpose-designed development, possibly designed to reflect the appearance of a small and informal group or courtyard of linked farm cottages could avoid harming the significance of the listed buildings. It should integrate rather than conflict with the historic form and layout.

The longer distance views of the listed buildings along the lane from the west could be enhanced by removing unattractive structures and introducing high quality built form and planting. For example, tree planting along the east boundary of No 126 First Lane would improve the setting of the listed barn by softening the visual impact of the C20 development to the north west.

Urban or suburban form of development should be strongly resisted.

Detailed proposals for the preservation of the heritage assets

Any scheme would need to be supported by fully detailed proposals for the refurbishment and repair of the farmhouse, and its significance recognised by inclusion of a proportionately large garden space about the historic building.

Before any residential conversion of the barn is considered, less invasive uses such as commercial, educational or community should be fully explored. These would have a less invasive/damaging impact on the historic fabric, character and setting of the historic barn than residential conversion. If residential use is considered acceptable a fully detailed scheme of repair and conversion would be required.

Such detailed proposals could also include the potential to restore the undesignated single storey heritage asset farm outbuildings, possibly for use as individual residential units, with surrounding modern structures removed. Some of these structures may not be suitable for residential use due to their form, or be beyond economic repair, and a full assessment of their condition and suitability for conversion would be necessary.

	<p><u>Access arrangements</u></p> <p>The separate vehicle access to the barn and farmhouse as existing should be retained. This would enable a layout design retaining the historic yard as an open shared area between the two listed buildings, respecting their group value, and also provide informal parking in gravelled areas.</p> <p>The historic stone boundary wall facing First Lane, together with the listed mounting block could also be preserved as part of such an arrangement.</p> <p>The land to the west of the side of the listed barn is considered to be less sensitive in terms of potential impact on the heritage assets, and subject to highways agreement new development could be serviced from the existing farm access. Main entrance(s) to the barn if converted should be from the east side (the existing shared yard area), and any associated private garden space set to the west, possibly screened and separated from the access road to the new development by stone walling and planting.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p><b>The entire site as proposed is not considered suitable for development as this would result in harm, albeit 'less than substantial' to the setting of the heritage assets and their significance. The north west corner of the site is less sensitive in terms of context and may have potential for a modest scheme of high quality design which fully respects the setting and significance of the listed buildings.</b></p> <p><b>Consideration could be given to including land at the rear of No's 126 – 128 First Lane and No's 1 and 2 Peartree Close which, co-joined with land at the north west corner of the proposed site could be accessed from the existing farm entrance as described in the arrangement above (subject to highways agreement). Such infill development would be located a considerable distance from the heritage assets in an area of the settlement previously developed by C20 housing. Due to the location of this land, new built form would not impinge on or harm the setting of the heritage assets.</b></p> <p>NB: should it be decided to promote the site for development it is recommended that specialist advice is sought on its archaeological potential. It is in the Avon Vales Area researched by Historic England as part of the West Wiltshire National Archaeological Identification Survey (Lowland Pilot Project Report 2016) where there is clear evidence of historic occupation and settlement.</p>	

Desk- top study key references:

- The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans – Historic England Advice Note 3 October 2015
- The Setting of Heritage Assets – Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 December 2017

- West Wiltshire National Archaeological Identification Survey – Historic England 2016)

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