



# Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

2020 - 2026

Referendum Version



## Overview Information

This Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Together with its associated documentation this Neighbourhood Plan is to be used for its intended purpose only.

Related information and the Plan evidence base can be found on the website: [melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org)

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

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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 and the neighbourhood plan is endorsed by local people through referendum, it will help to guide the future development of Melksham in a way which benefits the whole community.*

*Richard Wood, Chair, Melksham Neighbourhood Plan  
Steering Group*

# 1 Introduction



## 1.1 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

1.1.1 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 planning is not a legal requirement but a right which communities in England can choose to use.

1.1.2 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

1.1.3 Once it has passed through a number of required stages, 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.

1.1.4 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.

1.1.5 Neighbourhood Plans can consider what infrastructure needs to be provided in their Plan area. Additional infrastructure has been highlighted by many residents as important to enable Melksham and Melksham Without to grow in a sustainable way.

1.1.6 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.

1.1.7 This 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'**.

(National Planning Policy Framework 2019)

## 1.2 What area does this Neighbourhood Plan cover?

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

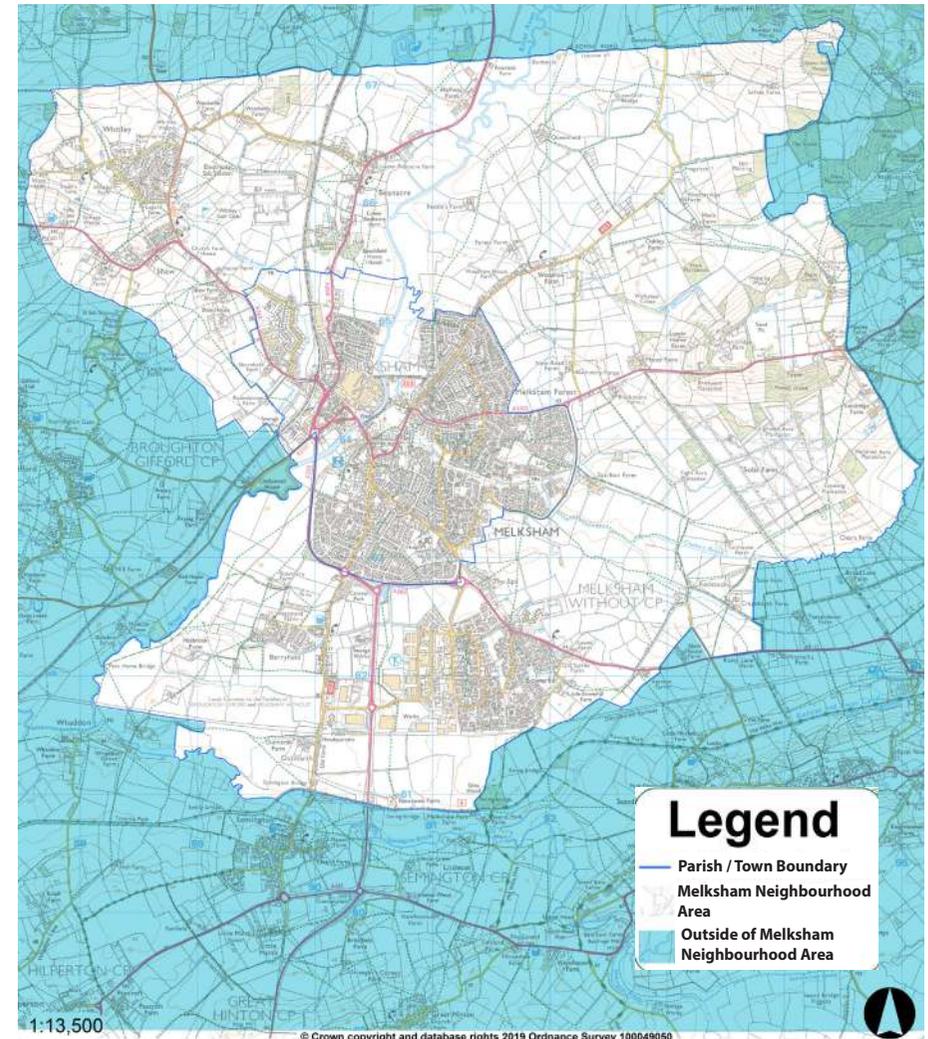
1.2.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is a joint one prepared by Melksham Town and Melksham Without Parish. The Plan area totals approximately 3,360 hectares (c.8,300 acres) and includes an estimated 24,052 people (2018 figure).

## 1.3 Who has prepared the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan?

1.3.1 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.

1.3.2 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 consultants.

Figure 1: Melksham Neighbourhood Area



### Maps and Evidence Base Reports

All maps and evidence base reports referenced in the Plan are also available on [melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org) as individual files

## 1.4 How does the Neighbourhood Plan represent the community's views?

1.4.1 As part of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan the community have been consulted to inform the issues addressed, to explore the question of housing allocation and kept updated on Plan progress. This is detailed in the Consultation Statement which can be found on the Plan website ([www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org)).

1.4.2 The draft version of this Neighbourhood Plan was shared for formal consultation (known as Regulation 14 stage) with local people and many others, including those on a list of statutory consultees in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 for 8 weeks between Monday 1st June - Monday 27th July.

1.4.3 The decision to proceed with the Regulation 14 consultation was carefully considered given the situation with Covid-19. The consultation period was extended to 8 weeks from the compulsory minimum of 6 weeks for Regulation 14 to make allowances for the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Comparison with Regulation 14 responses from other Wiltshire Market towns revealed that the response levels were comparable to other areas (consulting under normal circumstances) and reflects the care taken by the Qualifying Bodies and the Steering Group to make sure people were made aware of the consultation and that people knew how to respond. Though we were not able to hold public events, people were invited to call or email with any

questions or for help to access the plan and/or the comments form.

1.4.4 All comments received during Regulation 14 consultation about the draft Plan have been carefully considered and changes made to the Plan and the associated evidence base in response where necessary.

1.4.5 In October 2020 the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan was formally submitted to Wiltshire Council. The Council then arranged the public consultation required under Regulation 16; the period for this consultation was also extended as a response to the Pandemic. An Independent Examiner then considered the Plan and the representations received through the consultation and the Plan is now, modified as recommended by the Examiner, put to a community referendum. If approved at a referendum, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the overall development plan for Wiltshire to guide developers, planning officers and Councillors when considering planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area.

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

1.4.7 The Plan will be actively used, reviewed and monitored to see how it is being used by applicants and Wiltshire Council in relation to planning matters. It will be updated and amended to respond to future policy contexts, challenges and opportunities.

## 1.5 Navigating the Plan

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

1.5.2 Planning policies form the main focus of the Plan.

1.5.3 The **Planning Policies** (page 24 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**

1.5.4 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.

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

1.5.6 **Priority Statements** (pages 83 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.

1.5.7 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](http://melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org)



### Jargon Alert!

Though we have tried to make this a reader friendly document, planning can be full of unavoidable jargon, so a glossary of key terms is included at the end of the Plan (click for **page 90**). This is followed by a list of all references contained within the footnotes in the Plan (click for **page 94**).

# 2 Setting the Agenda



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

2.1.1 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

2.1.2 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.

2.1.3 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.

2.1.4 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.

2.1.5 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

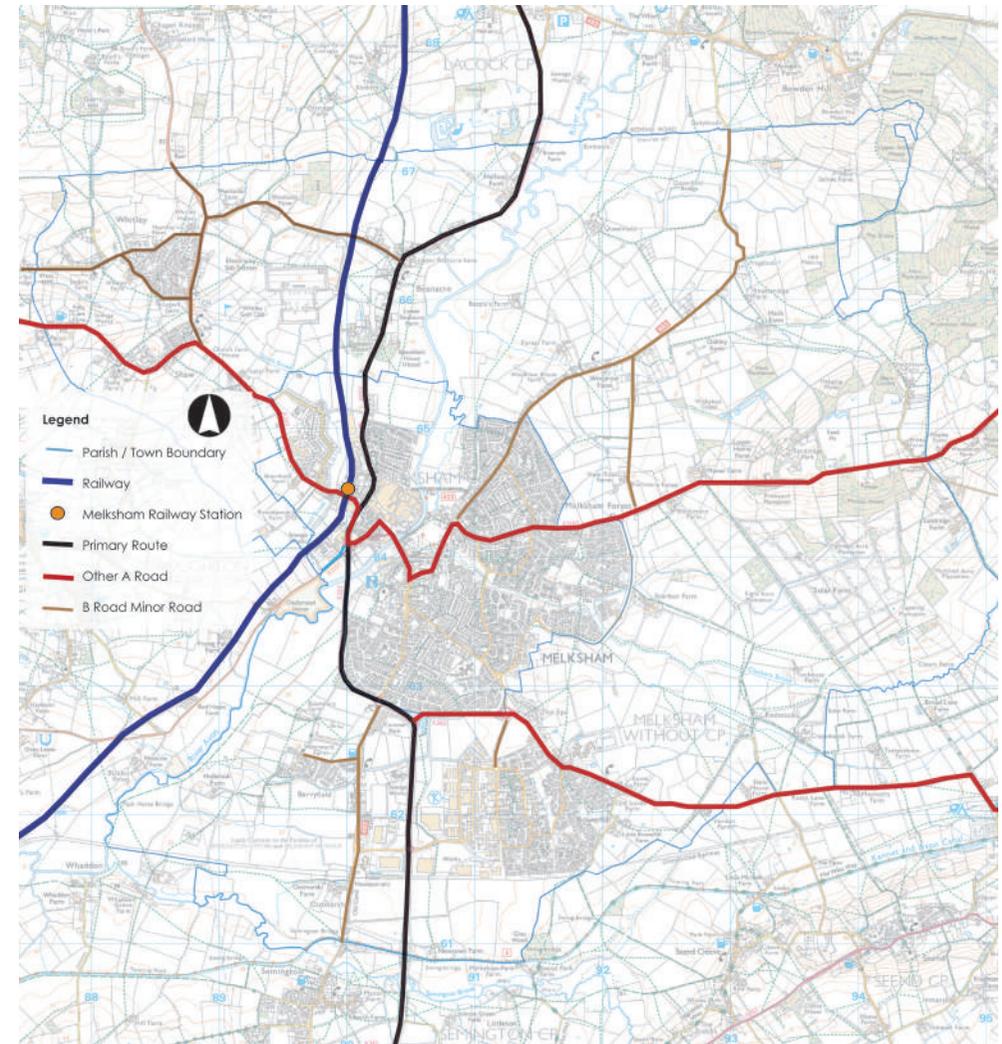
2.2.1 The facts, figures and studies that make up the Plan evidence base have helped to build up a picture of the Plan area today, the pressures it faces, how it has been changing, what its current needs are and what may be needed in the future.

- Melksham Community Area is the fifth largest community in Wiltshire after Swindon, Salisbury, Trowbridge, and Chippenham
- The total resident population of the Plan area (Melksham Town and Melksham Without) in 2018 was estimated to be 24,052<sup>1</sup>

an increase of 9.58% since 2011 when the population was 21,907.

- 2,749 households in the Neighbourhood Plan area have dependent children of all ages - just over 30% of all households<sup>1</sup>.
- The predominant age band in 2017, with 1,897 people (12.67%), was 'all persons aged 50 to 54'<sup>1</sup> and our population is ageing<sup>2</sup>.
- The Employment Land Review noted that total jobs have grown by 16.6% since 2009<sup>3</sup> 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 work<sup>4</sup>.
- We have a railway station, but public transport generally is limited in the area, and the area around the Station is in need of investment and improvement.
- The Plan Area is strategically located on the A350 between Chippenham and Trowbridge.

Figure 2: Rail and Key Roads Routes



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## 2.3 The wider context

### National

2.3.1 Neighbourhood Plans must have regard to 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.

2.3.2 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 the strategic policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted 2015).

### Wiltshire

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

2.3.4 The Wiltshire 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 WCS breaks Wiltshire down into Community Areas. The Melksham Community Area covers 11 parishes in total, and

Melksham Town is the main settlement. Melksham Town together with Bowerhill village is defined as a Market Town. Whitley and Shaw are defined together as a Large Village. Other settlements in the Plan area are defined as Small Villages.

2.3.5 The Wiltshire 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 indicative housing numbers set out in the Wiltshire Core Strategy meaning that there is no outstanding housing requirement for either area (Wiltshire Council Housing Land Supply Statement (HLSS), December 2020).

2.3.6 Wiltshire Council is currently reviewing the Wiltshire 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 the first quarter 2021, with formal consultation taking place later in 2021, meaning that the new Local Plan may be in place by the end of 2022.

2.3.7 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.

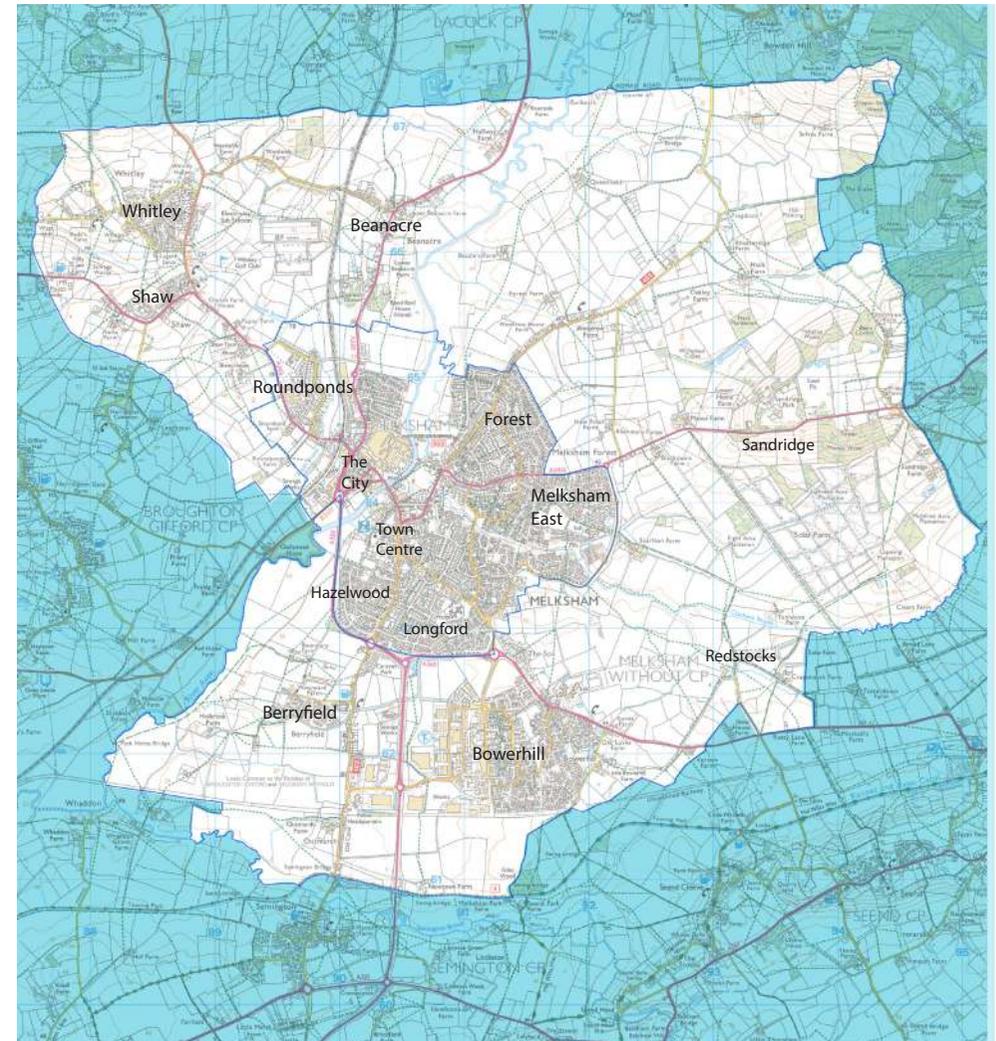
## 2.4 The approach to the Neighbourhood Plan

2.4.1 *“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)*

2.4.2 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. The ‘Planning for Melksham’ paper currently forming part of the Local Plan Review Regulation 18 consultation states that Place Shaping Priorities will be the basis for an overarching planning policy for Melksham and are also a starting point for policies that can be in neighbourhood plans. The Council will continue to work with Town and Parish Councils to find the priorities best suited to delivering sustainable development and town centre improvements.

2.4.3 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

Figure 3: Neighbourhood Area Settlements and Neighbourhoods



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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 available on the Neighbourhood Plan [website](#)).

2.4.4 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.

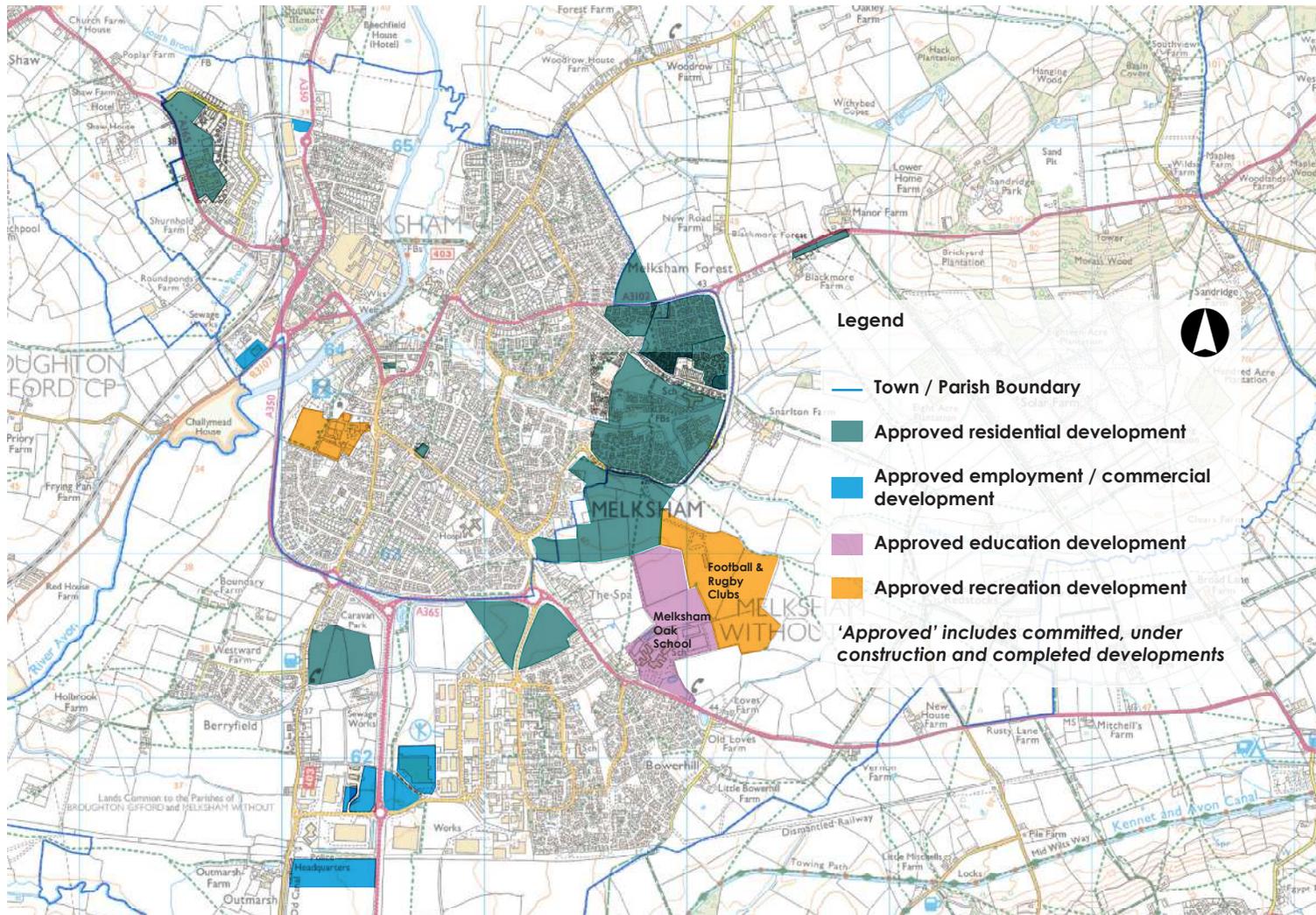
2.4.5 Given the overlapping timetables of this Plan and the Local Plan review, a carefully sequenced approach to both has been agreed with Wiltshire Council as follows:

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 cover the period to 2036, and 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 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 designation of Local Green Spaces.
4. According to the latest Wiltshire Council HLSS (December 2020), housing requirements for the Melksham Neighbourhood Area have been met. The specific situation at Shaw/Whitley, as evidenced in housing supply data provided to the steering group by Wiltshire Council, is that little market housing and no affordable housing has been delivered in the village since 2000. This would not be addressed through strategic Local Plan allocations. Meeting a rural housing need will be addressed in this Neighbourhood Plan through an allocation of land at Middle Farm Whitley (Policy 7 - **click to go to page 41**).

Figure 4: Major planning permissions granted during the current Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted 2015) period (at September 2020)



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## 2.5 Melksham Town Introduction

2.5.1 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.

2.5.2 Melksham was first recorded as 'Melchessa' 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.

2.5.3 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.

2.5.4 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.

2.5.5 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.

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

2.5.7 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.

2.5.8 Melksham has a strong sense of community with many community groups run by dedicated volunteers contributing positively to the health and well-being of local people.



**Church Walk, Melksham**



**Blenheim Park Bowerhill**



**War Memorial**



**Christ Church Shaw**



**Methodist Church Whitley**



**Berryfield**



**St Barnabas Church, Beanacre**



**Melksham Town Hall**

## 2.6 Melksham Without Introduction

2.6.1 Melksham Without Parish 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.

2.6.2 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.

2.6.3 Whitley was probably settled around the same time as Shaw and the origin of both names means a white clearing or wood / copse. At its heart, the village is an agricultural centre with a number of working farms, and farms that have been converted to residential use but the agricultural land associated with them dispersed to other local farms. The village is rich with listed buildings. The agricultural heritage, the listed buildings along with some other significant 20th century residential development, give Whitley its unique character, charm, and local distinctiveness.

2.6.4 Medieval Shaw was a small community centred on its manor house and the chapel here seems to have had more to do with the

barony of Castle Combe than local needs. The settlement remained small and rural but by the 17th century there were a reasonable number of houses. The population grew during the 19th century and a church and school were provided.

2.6.5 Through the passage of time the villages of Whitley and Shaw have grown but continue to be distinct settlements.

2.6.6 Beanacre [Bennecar/Benecar] (bean field) is the ribbon development, interspersed with open frontages, along the busy, main A350 between the northern boundary of the town of Melksham and the village of Lacock. It is one of the oldest settlements in the area, first mentioned in estate records of 1275, the earliest surviving dwelling is the Grade I listed Old Manor which lies off the Old Road.

2.6.7 In the southern part of the parish 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.

## 2.7 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

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

2.7.2 Recent reports<sup>5</sup> 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.

2.7.3 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.

2.7.4 In July 2019, Wiltshire Council made a resolution to seek 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.

2.7.5 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.

2.7.6 As part of its effort to support Wiltshire Council’s July 2019 resolution, 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.

2.7.7 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.

2.7.8 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](http://www.treecharter.uk)). They have also worked with volunteers to plant hundreds of trees supplied by the Woodland Trust

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

2.7.10 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.

The Plan includes a number of other policies that specifically address the challenge of climate change including:

- Promoting green, environmentally sustainable building standards – **Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction**
- Supporting the installation of electric (or other ultra-low emission) vehicle charging points – **Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicles**
- Supporting a vibrant town centre so that people can shop locally - **Policy 9: Town Centre**
- Supporting local employment opportunities – **Policy 10 Employment Sites**
- Giving proper consideration to routes for buses, cyclists, footpaths and green infrastructure in our housing developments - **Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel**
- Protecting or promoting a network of biodiverse green spaces and green corridors, conserving established trees and hedgerows - **Policy 12: Green Infrastructure and 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 community, health and education 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 to contribute to carbon neutrality in Wiltshire 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 within settlements, and exceptionally, adjacent to settlements.
6. Promoting the delivery of infrastructure to address the needs of the population.

**Great places for shopping, working and getting around through:**

7. Protecting and enhancing the vitality of Melksham town centre.
8. The retention, regeneration and intensified use of previously developed employment land.
9. Supporting improved transport infrastructure for the increasing Melksham population.
10. Encouraging journeys by rail and bus together with improving cycle and walking routes to reduce 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 community 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.



**Riverside Walk**

# 4 Planning Policies

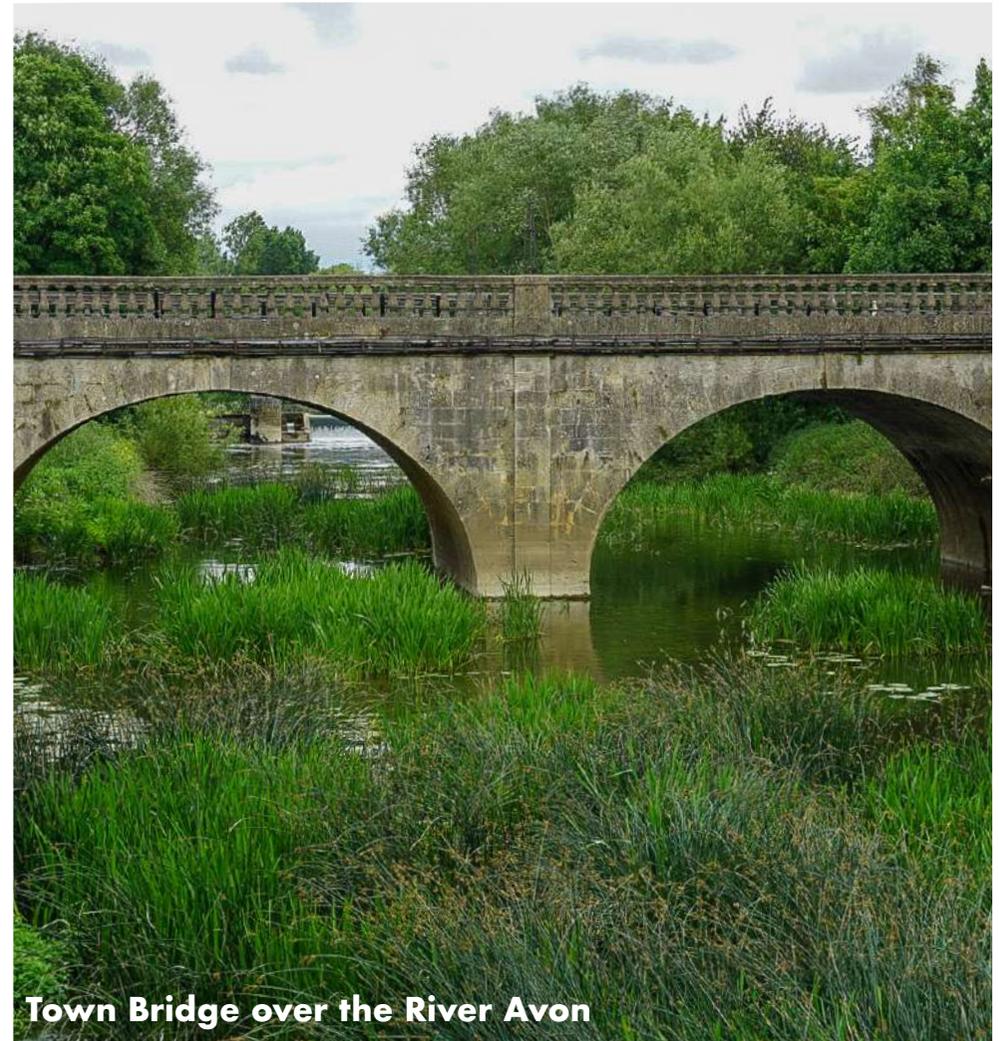
There are 19 planning policies in five overall sections, related to the Plan objectives. For each policy there is one or more objective, then the policy itself in coloured boxes, and then the key reasons behind the policy.



## 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).



**Town Bridge over the River Avon**

## 4.1 Index of Policies

### **Sustainable development and climate change**

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

### **Housing and infrastructure needs**

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

### **Shopping, working and getting around**

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

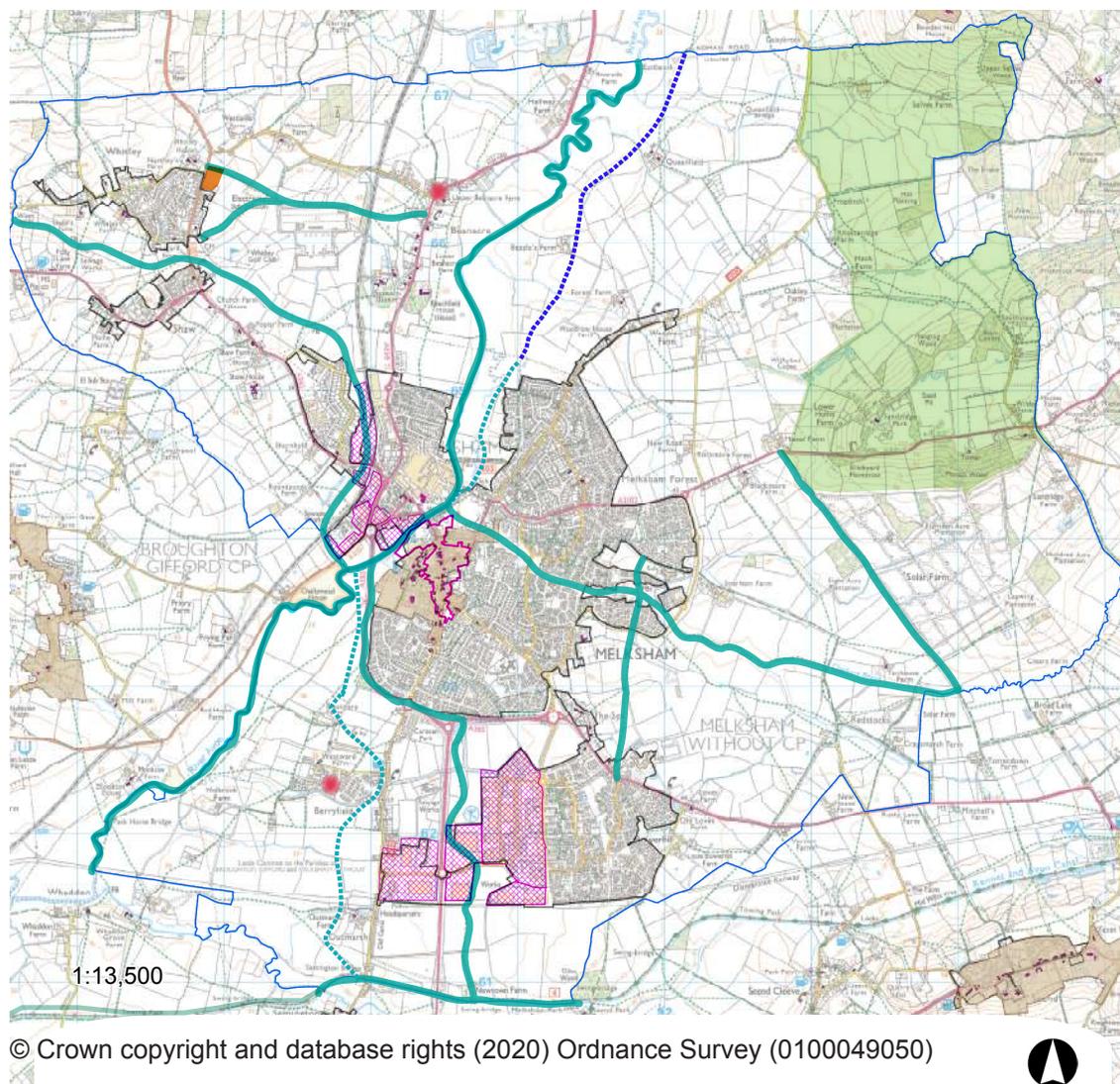
### **Community well-being and nature**

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

### **Built and natural environment**

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

Figure 5: Strategy Overview



-  Small Villages (Wiltshire Core Strategy - CP 1)
-  Indicative Green Infrastructure Corridors
-  Canal Link (Wiltshire Core Strategy - CP16)
-  Historic Canal Route (Wiltshire Core Strategy - CP53)
-  Site Allocation Land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley (Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan - Policy 7)
-  Neighbourhood Area Boundary
-  Listed Buildings (Wiltshire Core Strategy - CP58)
-  Conservation Area (Wiltshire Core Strategy - CP58)
-  Settlement Framework Boundary (Wiltshire Core Strategy CP2 and Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (WHSAP))
-  Principal Employment Area (Wiltshire Core Strategy - CP35)
-  Commercial Area Boundary (West Wiltshire District Plan- TC1)
-  Special Landscape Area (West Wiltshire District Plan - C3)

# Sustainable Development and Climate Change



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

## **Policies in this section:**

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

### Sustainable Design and Construction

**This policy helps meet objective 1:** Reducing carbon emissions to contribute to carbon neutrality in Wiltshire by 2030.

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

#### **Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction**

**Within the constraints of scale and viability, development and infrastructure proposals that contribute to Wiltshire becoming carbon neutral by 2030 will be supported. Proposals should therefore address sustainable design and construction which includes:**

- i. maximising green infrastructure to sequester carbon and provide other benefits such as shade;**
- ii. demonstrating good connections to existing services and facilities, or a mix of uses in the proposed development that minimises the need to travel by private vehicle;**
- iii. demonstrating mitigation of green house gases and adaptation to a changing climate;**
- iv. illustrating application of the Energy Hierarchy principle of reducing energy demand, producing, supplying and using energy efficiently and**

**generating energy through zero or low carbon means (through, for example maximising south facing areas of roof space to collect solar energy) onsite or nearby.**

**For major applications, 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.**

**Innovative approaches to the construction of low carbon homes which demonstrate sustainable use of resources and high energy efficiency levels, such as Passivhaus, are encouraged.**

## The reason for the policy

4.2.1 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 Wiltshire Council's resolution to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.

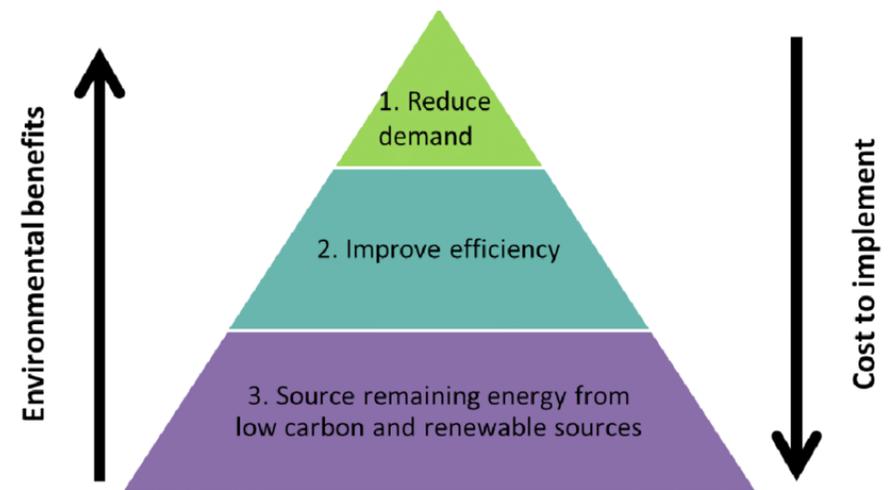
4.2.2 In their report, 'UK Housing: Fit for the Future?'<sup>6</sup> the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) warns: "We will not meet our targets for emissions reduction without near complete decarbonisation of the housing stock. Energy use in homes accounts for about 14% of UK greenhouse gas emissions. 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."

4.2.3 The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) who have provided advice and guidance in the preparation of this Plan, believe that it is both economically and technically viable for developers to achieve larger carbon savings to contribute to the UK's ability to meet climate change targets. This is what our Plan acknowledges.

4.2.4 Innovation in energy and construction technologies is fast-moving. In our Plan area we want to see buildings that are more energy efficient, that place a lower burden on energy supply and generate renewable energy contributing to tackling the climate crisis as well as keeping down energy bills in people's homes.

4.2.5 This policy also acknowledges the importance of an holistic approach to meeting the urgent aim of achieving carbon neutrality. It is recognised that a range of factors in the built environment needs to be considered from dwellings to green infrastructure and carbon sequestration that can lock-up and store carbon from the atmosphere, to layout and linkages that enable people to safely and conveniently choose walking or cycling.

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



### Local Energy Generation

**This policy helps meet objective 1:** Reducing carbon emissions to contribute to carbon neutrality in Wiltshire by 2030

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

#### **Policy 2: 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 amenity and safety of local receptors, 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 supported.**

#### **The reason for the policy**

4.3.1 The NPPF states that local planning authorities “should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy” (NPPF paragraph 152). 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, geothermal, biomass or solar energy, particularly where it enables communities to take a more active role in the production of renewable and low carbon local energy.

4.3.2 As evidenced by the number of solar farms, solar is a particularly good form of renewable energy for this area. The Planning Practice guidance for ‘Renewable and Low Carbon Energy’ sets out information on how to assess and mitigate the impact of glare and glint from solar panels on residents and other receptors, which can be a problem locally. The key receptors with respect to glint and glare are residents in surrounding dwellings, road users, train infrastructure (including train drivers), and aviation infrastructure.

### Community Energy generation in Wiltshire

Nadder Community Energy Ltd raises money in their local area by selling shares which are paid back over a 20 year period, plus interest; this money is used to put solar panels or other renewable energy systems into their community. Last year they generated approximately 472,458 KW electricity and raised over £90,000 for the community.  
([www.nadderce.org.uk](http://www.nadderce.org.uk))



Below: Solar PV and hotwater on the roof of a local home



#### Passivhaus

Passivhaus buildings provide a high level of occupant comfort while using very little energy for heating and cooling. They are built with meticulous attention to detail and rigorous design and construction.

Passivhaus buildings achieve a 75% reduction in space heating requirements, compared to standard practice for UK new build.

([www.passivhaustrust.org.uk](http://www.passivhaustrust.org.uk))



#### 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 (care is needed to ensure correctly specific and installed systems). 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.

# Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management

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

## **Policy 3: Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management**

**Particularly in the South Brook catchment area, natural flood management works to conserve and enhance the ecological flood storage value of the water environment, including watercourse corridors and catchments, are supported.**

**Where development proposals are in areas with known surface water flooding issues, they should include appropriate mitigation and construction methods, including where appropriate, contributions towards wider catchment projects.**

**Major development should include provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs), where appropriate, as part of the Natural Flood Management approach and wider Green Infrastructure networking.**

## **The reason for the policy**

4.4.1 Community consultations during preparation of this Plan highlighted strong concerns over development in high flood risk areas, and the importance of protecting homes from flood damage. The risk of flooding must not be increased by new development.

4.4.2 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 Met Office predicts that in a business-as-usual scenario, Britain could experience a decrease in summer rainfall by up to 47%, and up to 35% more rain in winter by 2070. This flood risk is exacerbated by the many drainage streams from the north of Whitley that outfeed in the First Lane area. The UK's winter floods of 2013-14<sup>7</sup> 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 early 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.

4.4.3 Any development has the potential to worsen surface water flooding. Paragraph 157 of the National Planning Policy Framework, sets out that new development should make use

of opportunities to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, where appropriate through the use of natural flood management techniques. 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.

4.4.4 When managing rainfall, the SuDS network should be designed to match natural drainage routes, infiltration rates and discharge rates as far as possible. Therefore the aim must be for water to be discharged as high up the *drainage hierarchy*<sup>8</sup> as possible:

1. into the ground (infiltration);
2. to a surface water body;
3. to a surface water sewer, highway drain, or another drainage system;
4. to a combined sewer

4.4.5 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.

4.4.6 Development in the neighbourhood area should demonstrate adherence to the National Design Guide (2019), which includes guidance on integrated water management that enhances the character of a place and makes it more resilient.



### South Brook

The South Brook catchment area has been identified as a priority flood risk area by both the Environment Agency and Wiltshire Council. South Brook and its tributaries flow through Whitley, Shaw, Shurnhold and Beanacre.

The area has seen many incidents of flooding. Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) have been working in the South Brook catchment area for the delivery of the Natural Flood Management (NFM) works.

([bristolavonriverstrust.org/nature-based-solutions-in-south-brook/](https://bristolavonriverstrust.org/nature-based-solutions-in-south-brook/))

### Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Charging

**This policy helps meet objective 1:** Reducing carbon emissions to contribute to carbon neutrality in Wiltshire by 2030

**...and objective 3:** Encouraging and promoting the use of sustainable technologies.

#### **Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Charging**

**Development proposals for houses with on-plot parking spaces and/ or garages are encouraged to provide appropriately located charging technology for charging low emission vehicles, such as an electric vehicle charging point.**

**Where shared or off-plot parking spaces are provided, the charging provision locations should have appropriate regard for pedestrian movement. Proposals for new employment, leisure or retail developments are also encouraged to make provision for charging facilities for staff and / or other users**

#### **The reason for the policy**

4.5.1 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 Vehicles<sup>8</sup>.

4.5.2 The UK will end the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040 or earlier<sup>9</sup>. This reflects the Independent Committee on Climate Change's advice on what is needed in order for the UK to end its contribution to climate change by 2050. The government's Road to Zero Strategy (2018)<sup>10</sup> 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
- 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.

4.5.3 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. As part of the commitment to enabling more Ultra Low Emission vehicles, the Town and Parish Council will be working with partners to deliver locations for charging at various sites across the Plan area.

4.5.4 Improvements to the Melksham railway station (see page 54 for more detail and diagram below) will also introduce rapid electric car charging points as part of an overall masterplan to improve the station. The planned installation of six charging points is a key part of the plan to increase sustainable transport use, encouraging electric car users to visit the station and use the train.



### 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 CO<sub>2</sub>/km from the tailpipe
- is capable of operating in zero tailpipe emission mode for a range of at least ten miles.

([www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk))

# 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:**

**Policy 5: Community Engagement**

**Policy 6: Housing in Defined Settlements**

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

**Policy 8: Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities**

### Community Engagement

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

#### **Policy 5: Community Engagement**

**Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive, proportionate and effective engagement with the community will be looked on more favourably than applications that have not, in line with National Planning Policy. Pre-application community engagement is also expected for Reserved Matters Applications as well as Outline or Full.**

**Potential applicants are therefore encouraged to follow the approach set out in the Melksham Community Engagement Protocol and the Wiltshire Council Statement of Community Involvement.**

#### **The reason for the policy**

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

4.6.2 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)

4.6.3 Early discussion between applicants and the local community, as well as with the Local Planning Authority, from the earliest stages enables a more collaborative approach to the process of preparing a development proposal that will need to balance many factors as the design evolved *“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).*

4.6.4 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”.*

4.6.5 The above policy and the Community Engagement Protocol (see Appendix 1, click for **page 96**) are intended to facilitate a structured approach to enable effective involvement of the local community in outline and full planning applications addressing all aspects of a proposal, from design and layout to issues on climate change and energy generation.

4.6.6 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. The nature and scale of engagement should be balanced in appropriate proportion to the scale and likely impact of any proposals.



### Housing Development

**This policy helps meet objective 5:** Supporting sustainable development of new housing and associated facilities within settlements, and exceptionally, adjacent to settlements.

#### **Policy 6: Housing in Defined Settlements**

**Proposals for sustainable housing development within the settlements of the Neighbourhood Area will be supported where they:**

- i. accord with the Settlement Boundary provisions of Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 2 and the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (WHSAP);**
- ii. include a suitable mix of house types, sizes and tenures informed by and addressing the current and demonstrable needs for Melksham and Bowerhill, Shaw and Whitley Large Village and the Small Villages in accordance with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 45 (Meeting Wiltshire's Housing Needs), and**
- iii. have regard to the character of and integration with the surrounding area.**

**In accordance with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 2, development will not be permitted outside the Settlement Boundary other than in circumstances as permitted by other policies within the Core Strategy.**

**At the Small Villages of Beanacre and Berryfield, development will be limited to infill within the existing built area or, where it is appropriate to provide a rural exception site for affordable housing to meet identified local needs, outside but well connected to the built area.**

**Affordable housing provision will be in accordance with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 43 which sets out when this is required and indicates the proportions which will be sought from open market housing development.**

**In principle support will be given to proposals for custom or self-build projects in locations where new residential development is acceptable.**

## The reason for the policy

4.7.1 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 2006-2019 totalled 1,837 and ‘developable commitments’ 2019-2026 total 947. The total of 2,784 shows that the housing actually delivered/committed was 17% over the indicative housing requirements set out by the Core Strategy<sup>11</sup> and this is likely to have increased since the base date of April 2019. Melksham Town, in particular, has over delivered a significant amount of new housing in contrast to under delivery at the Principal Settlements, without a corresponding increase in infrastructure.

Area	Indicative requirement 2006 – 2026	Completions 2006 – 2019	Developable commitments 2019 – 2026	Indicative remaining requirement
Melksham and Bowerhill	2,240	1,699	895	0 (-354)
Melksham Community Area Remainder	130	138	52	0 (-60)

4.7.2 Given that the Melksham Community area has already exceeded the indicative housing requirements set out for it by the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Neighbourhood Plan supports small scale, sustainable windfall development within settlements that



### 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, Melksham and Bowerhill and Shaw and Whitley.

Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policies 1 and 15 define the settlements of the Plan area as:  
 Market Towns: Melksham and Bowerhill village  
 Large Villages: Shaw and Whitley  
 Small Villages: Beanacre and Berryfield

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. Consideration of future large scale housing development will have regard for the availability of land identified for each of the time periods as described on **page 14**.

### 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 within settlements, and exceptionally, adjacent to settlements.

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

**Land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley (approximately 1.6 hectares, as identified in Figure 6) 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. the development will deliver approximately 18 dwellings including affordable homes in conformity with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 43;**
- ii. proposals will be accompanied by a landscape conservation scheme that retains and secures the sustained management of existing hedgerow boundaries;**
- iii. the developable area will be contained within land south of the junction with Top Lane and a**

- c15m minimum landscaped buffer along the western and eastern boundary of the site incorporating new hedgerow and tree planting;**
- iv. incorporation of a Local Equipped Area for Play;**
- v. habitat creation that achieves an overall net enhancement to biodiversity on site;**
- vi. be of an appropriate layout, form, appearance and materials and landscape treatment that protects the amenity of neighbouring residents and enhances the form and character of Whitley, protects the setting of adjacent listed buildings and conserves the rural setting of the site;**
- vii. include appropriate mitigation measures to prevent any increase in flood risk within the site or elsewhere and provide multifunctional benefits of amenity and biodiversity;**
- viii. provide a single vehicular access to Corsham Road and enhanced pedestrian crossing facility across Corsham Road to an adoptable standard;**
- ix. retain and enhance the existing public right of way along the site's northern boundary, and incorporate accessible public green space to the north of the site, north of Top Lane.**

## The reason for the policy

4.8.1 Neighbourhood Plan 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”.

4.8.2 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. Taking into account the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which may require a strategic approach to allocation through the Local Plan itself, the decision was taken to give no further consideration in this Plan to those sites adjacent to the settlement boundary of Melksham and Bowerhill.

4.8.3 Whitley and Shaw are distinct communities. Wiltshire Core Strategy (Policy 1) defines them together as a “large village” appropriate for housing development to meet local needs. Consistent with this, Whitley and Shaw’s housing needs will be addressed by the Neighbourhood Plan distinct from those related to Melksham Town. Since 2000 there has been little market housing and no affordable housing built within either settlement. This land

Figure 6: Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley, Melksham Without Site Allocation Diagram



- Site boundary
- Developable area (approx. 0.9ha)
- ↔ Single site vehicle access
- Retained and enhanced public right of way

- Community open space and play area
- Landscaped buffer (min. 15m wide)
- Retained hedgerows

Base map Supplied by: Stanfords 26 Mar 2021  
 Licence: © Crown Copyright and database rights 2021 OS100035409  
 Order Licence Reference: O11462594  
 Centre coordinates: 388908 166456

allocation therefore redresses that shortcoming.

4.8.4 A call for housing sites was conducted as part of the JMNP process. Rural sites were amongst those put forward for assessment. No suitable sites within the Shaw and Whitley large village settlement boundary were made available. The site has been the subject of assessment both by AECOM and the Neighbourhood Plan's own design and landscape consultants<sup>12</sup>.

4.8.5 Whilst some constraints were identified, the Land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley site was selected as viable and capable of development at a scale and density that complements Whitley's existing residential character. The proposed amount and density of development has been the subject of dialogue with the land owner and community input through the Regulation 14 consultation. These have raised no issues challenging the suitability or viability of the site.

4.8.6 To give greater assurance of the provision of affordable housing, the site has been allocated as a market housing development with an obligation to include affordable housing in accordance with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policies. There has also been a lack of market housing delivery within Shaw and Whitley. A mixed market and affordable housing development contributes towards addressing these shortfalls.

4.8.7 There are no public children's play facilities or any public areas of natural green space in Whitley. The nearest facilities are in neighbouring Shaw. In principle, the provision of these facilities within the allocated site, combined with enhancements to pedestrian crossing facilities and public footpath enhancements linking to the open countryside, introduces new green infrastructure facilities to the community. The precise amount and balance between natural open space and equipped children's play facilities will be informed by Wiltshire Council's play space standards.'

4.8.8 Applicants bringing forward development proposals for this site are strongly encouraged to follow the Community Engagement Protocol as included in **Appendix 1 on page 96**.

### Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities

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

#### **Policy 8: Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities**

**To ensure the sustainability of housing development, proposals must consider, assess and address their necessary infrastructure requirements and, in so far as they relate to matters within the Applicant's control, plan any related programmes of work in coordination 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 prevailing Wiltshire policies, will be delivered through the Community Infrastructure Levy, planning conditions and section 106 agreements.**

#### **The reason for the policy**

4.9.1 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".

4.9.2 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.

4.9.3 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 produce annual infrastructure funding statements which set out how much money has been raised through developer contributions (both CIL and S106 obligations) and how it has been spent<sup>13</sup>.

4.9.4 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 Council.



# 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:**

Policy 9: Town Centre

Policy 10: Employment Sites

Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

### Town Centre

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

#### **Policy 9: Town Centre**

**Development proposals within the town centre Commercial Area as defined in Wiltshire Core Strategy (see Figure 7) will be supported provided:**

- i. the use will contribute to sustaining or enhancing the range or quality of shopping provision and the vitality and viability of the town centre;**
- ii. the proposal is in keeping with the scale and character of the centre of this Market Town and, where appropriate, preserves or enhances the Conservation Area;**
- iii. access to public transport, cycle routes and car parking is considered and addressed;**
- iv. where appropriate, a positive contribution is made to conserving and enhancing the appearance and quality of primary frontages and town centre pedestrian and cycle routes;**
- v. appropriate regard is demonstrated for current and appropriate national and local guidance and established best practice.**

**Development proposals at edge of centre locations which are inter-connected with the Commercial Area will, additionally to the above, be required to evidence that there are no suitable and viable sites or buildings within the defined Commercial Area.**

**Planning applications for development or change of use of ground floor frontages within the defined town centre primary frontages (see Figure 7) 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.**

### The reason for the policy

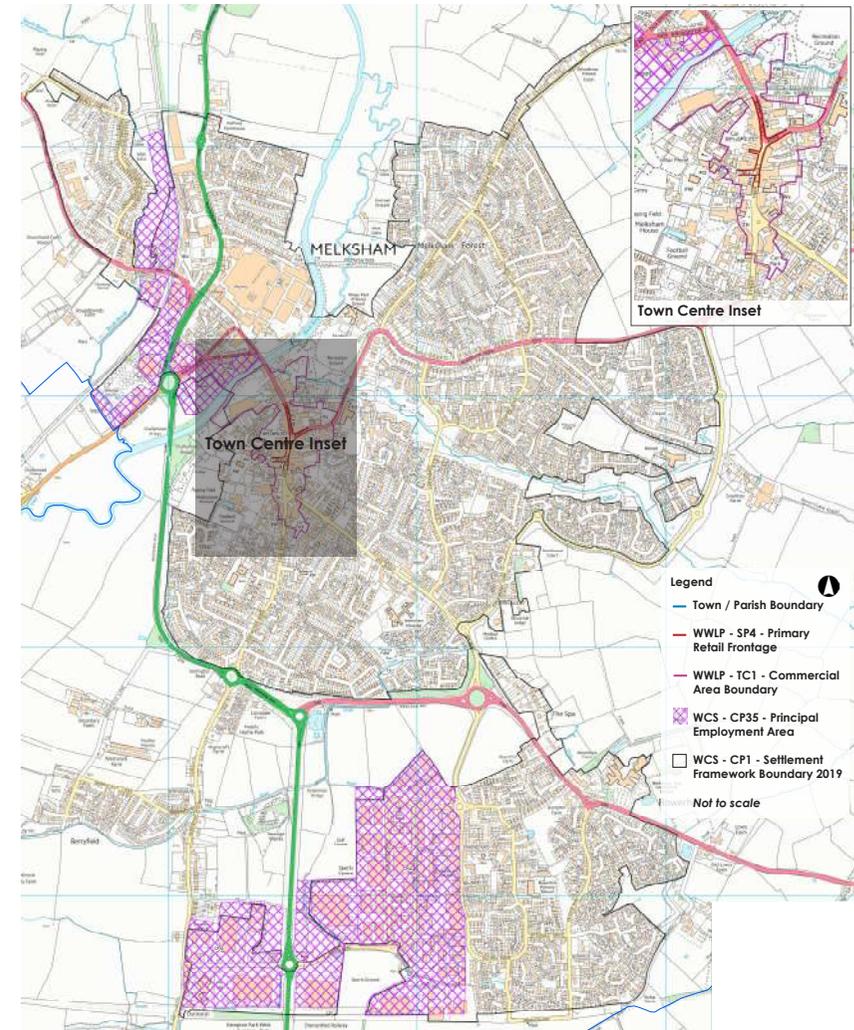
4.10.1 In the rapidly changing national and local context for high streets and market towns, we want to enable our town to change and evolve in response to challenges, changes and opportunities. Most recently, the increase of home-working as a result of coronavirus could provide a boost to local high streets, which means many high streets have the potential to thrive. 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.

4.10.2 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.

4.10.3 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".

4.10.4 There are around 155 businesses operating in the

Figure 7: Principal Employment Areas and Town Centre Commercial Area (Wiltshire Core Strategy)



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town centre and a good number of shops comprising a mix of independent traders, supermarkets and national retail brands.

4.10.5 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.

4.10.6 The Melksham Town 2020 - 2036 Scoping Report (Melksham Town Council 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.

4.10.7 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.

4.10.8 A key part of the town's vitality is night-time activity and economy. Developments that positively enhance the night-time economy of the town would be supported, but care would be needed to ensure the amenity of those living in the town centre was not negatively impacted

4.10.9 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 84 and Priority Statement 2: Town Centre Regeneration for more information.



### Employment Sites

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

**...and objective 7:** Protecting and enhancing the vitality of Melksham Town Centre.

#### **Policy 10: Employment Sites**

**Proposals for the retention and reuse of previously developed employment land will be supported in principle, particularly by start-up and small businesses bringing a range of new employment opportunities. The Principal Employment Areas and the central Commercial Area are shown on Figure 7.**

**Proposals should seek to generate the same number, or more, permanent full time equivalent jobs as the existing or former use.**

#### **The reason for the policy**

4.11.1 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 Wiltshire Employment Land and Workspace Review 2017<sup>14</sup> 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.

4.11.2 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. Expansion of new employment opportunities within the Plan area is considered desirable to reduce the amount of out-commuting to deliver sustainable travel movements.

4.11.3 Wiltshire Core Strategy Core 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 areas hatched in red on Figure 7 are covered by Wiltshire Core Strategy 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.

4.11.4 Through Wiltshire Core Strategy 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 2017<sup>14</sup>.

### 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 and bus together with improving cycle and walking routes to reduce the need to travel by car.

#### **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 (in accordance with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy CP61) how sustainable transport modes are maximised and that safe and suitable movement can be achieved for all people.**

**As a key element in the local sustainable transport network, proposals that would achieve further improvements to the accessibility and quality of the links between the wider town and Melksham Railway Station will be supported. Improvements to the quality of the public realm around the station, will also be supported.**

#### **The reason for the policy**

4.12.1 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 are important. The needs of disabled travellers should also be considered and provided for. Consideration will be given to the spending of Town and Parish Council CIL receipts on improvements to the sustainable travel network, and public realm.

4.12.2 Increased levels of walking and cycling were seen across the UK during the pandemic. In May 2020 a £2 billion package to create for cycling and walking was introduced by the government.

4.12.3 Extensive networks of high quality routes that enable people to walk and cycle safely and conveniently should reflect five core design principles<sup>15</sup> of:

- coherence
- directness
- safety
- comfort
- attractiveness

### Melksham Railway Station

Melksham railway station, located in the north west of the town, 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 (a not-for-profit company) has resulted in a recent improvement in local rail services with an increase to eight trains in each direction daily. Trains from the station run approximately every two hours each way between Westbury and Swindon. The plan is for the doubling of this service to every hour in the future.

Working with GWR and Wiltshire Council, TransWilts has developed an ambitious and detailed Master Plan for the Melksham

station site. The Master Plan followed on from consultation with local residents which highlighted the need for 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 as the line links Westbury, Trowbridge, Melksham and Chippenham with Swindon.

The longer term plan for the Station is summarised as;

1. Conversion of redundant building into a café
2. Extension of the car park
3. Reconfiguration of carriageway/footpath in order to add a bus stop
4. Shared use pathway, pedestrian and cycle route to Foundry Close
5. Stepped station access from Bath Road.

Phase 1 & 2 of the Plan commenced in 2020 and includes new platform signage, destination indicators, increased parking,

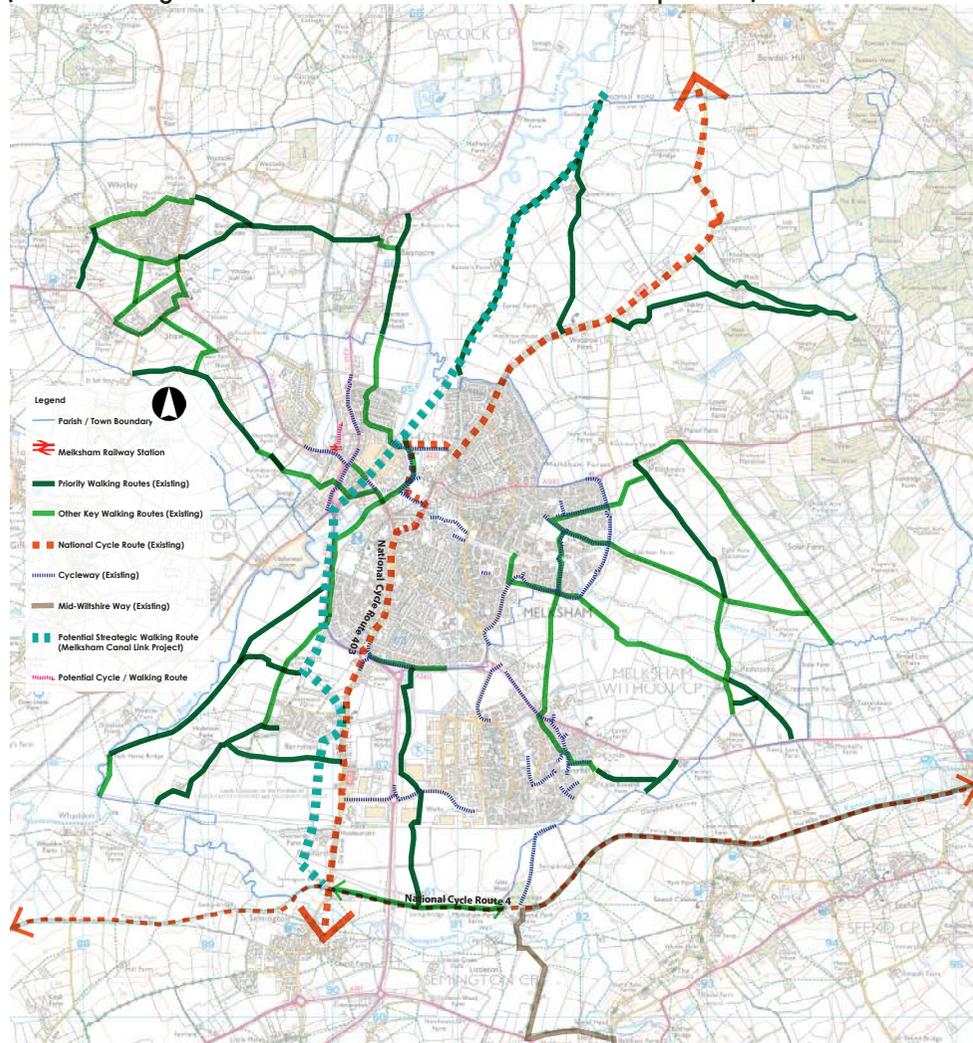
electric vehicle charging, cycle storage and even a community café.

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.

Image below is an extract taken from the website [melkshamhub.co.uk](http://melkshamhub.co.uk) which provides more detail about the improvements.



Figure 8: Key Routes for Walking and Cycling  
(Source: Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Report V7)



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## Sustainable transport hierarchy

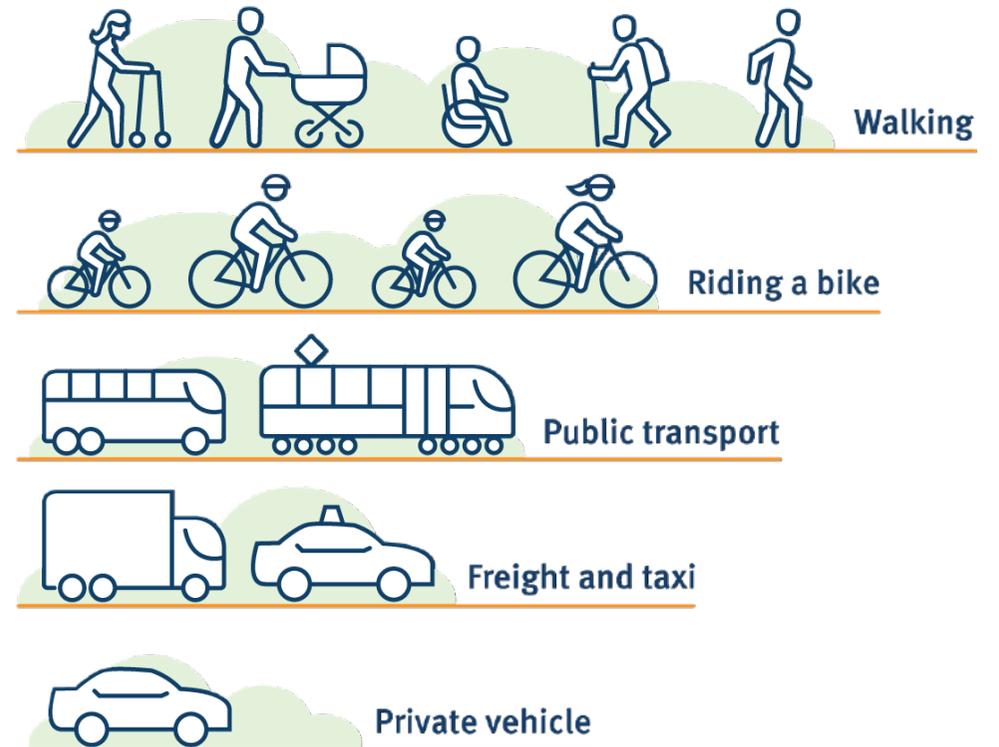


Image sourced from kindpng.com

# 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:**

Policy 12: Green Infrastructure

Policy 13: Biodiversity

Policy 14: Open Spaces

Policy 15: Community Facilities

### 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.

#### **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 connectivity of existing GI will be supported; the potential for GI within the Neighbourhood Area is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 9.**

**Proposals for major developments must:**

- i. identify the existing GI within and around the development site, and**
- ii. demonstrate how GI has been incorporated into the proposal, and**
- iii. assess and address how the proposal will benefit the function and connectivity of GI through the site and beyond.**

#### **The reason for the policy**

4.13.1 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.

4.13.2 GI is a term that covers the network of green spaces, and other green features such as woodlands and verges, together with water courses that give us a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities and wildlife.

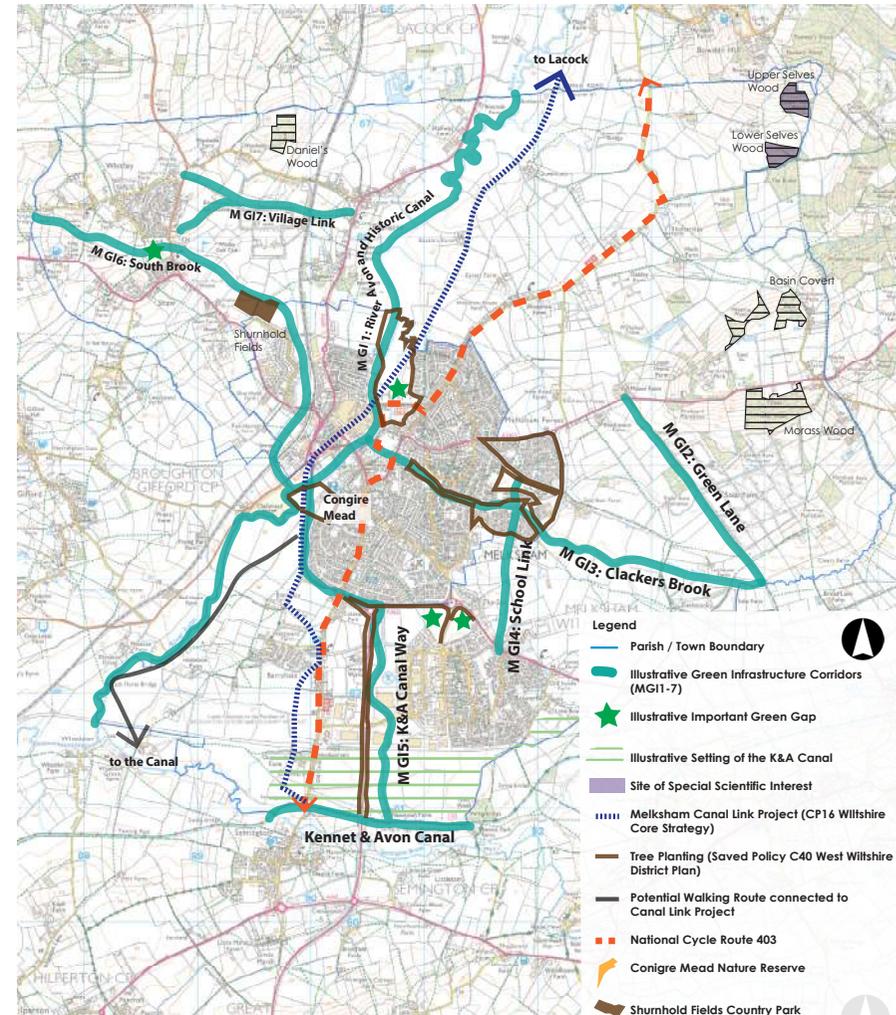
4.13.3 Figure 9 illustrates diagrammatically GI assets and their connectivity potential as identified in the GI Evidence Base Report<sup>16</sup>. The report identifies local elements of GI with the aim of linking local sites and delivering connectivity of assets between and within different parts of the Plan area.

4.13.4 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.

4.13.5 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 ([www.buildingwithnature.org.uk](http://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk)).

4.13.6 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.

Figure 9: Diagrammatic Illustration of the Potential for Green Infrastructure (Source: Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Report V7)



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### 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.

#### **Policy 13: Biodiversity**

**Development proposals, including those for field based solar farms, will be expected to deliver at least a 10% improvement in “biodiversity value” within and, where appropriate, beyond the site in order to deliver tangible benefits for biodiversity, including specific attention for protected species.**

**Protection and enhancement of statutory and non-statutory nature conservation sites (as shown on Figure 10) is a priority for the Neighbourhood Area and development proposals must demonstrate sensitive responses to these sites where necessary, such as accommodating a buffer zone.**

#### **The reason for the policy**

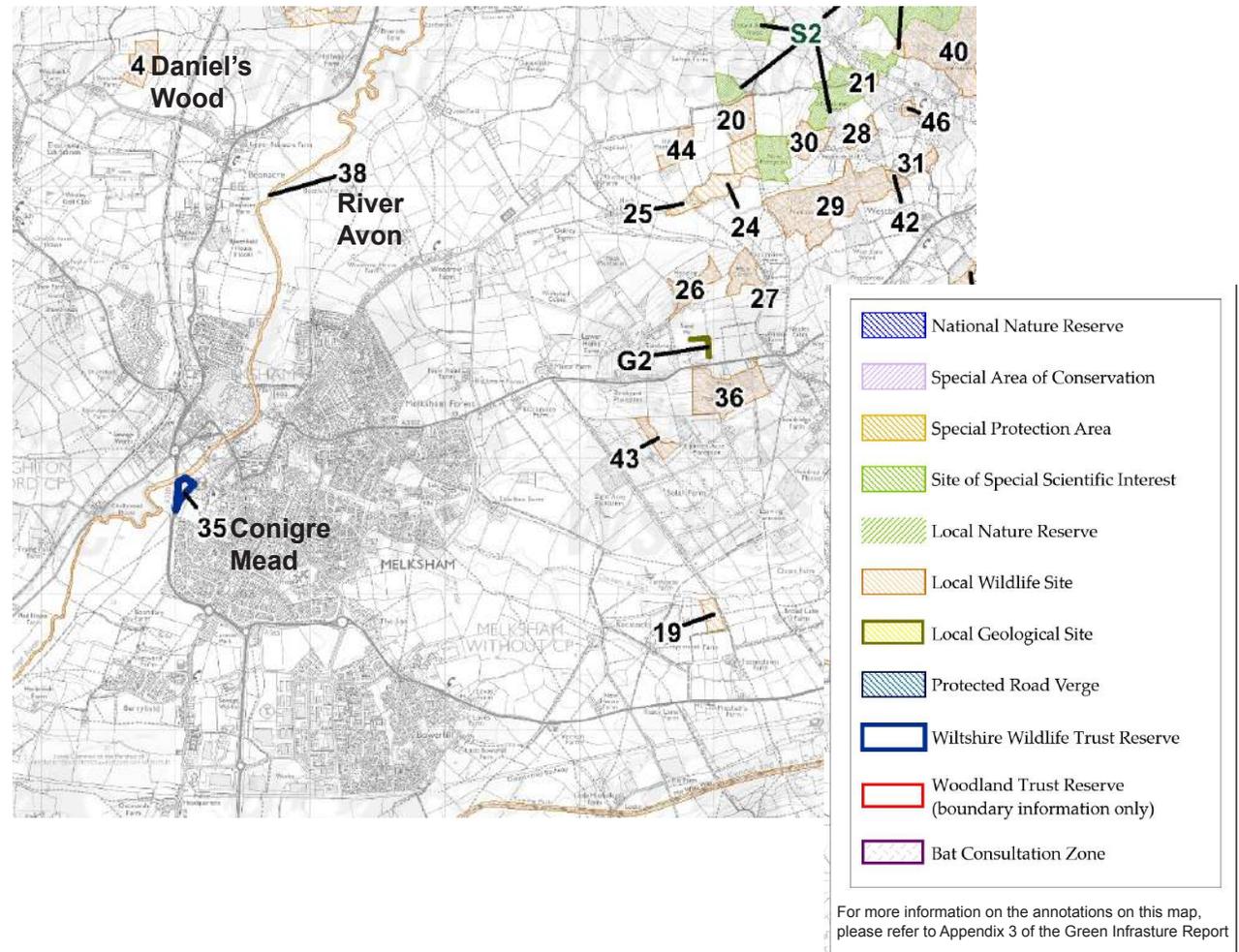
4.14.1 The Neighbourhood plan area is host to a range of wildlife sites and features which support the overall wildlife network and contribute to the well-being of wildlife and residents alike.

4.14.2 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<sup>16</sup>, which adds Neighbourhood Plan level information to the biodiversity data. Figure 10 on page 60 is a map of key local sites for biodiversity.

4.14.3 This policy seeks to reflect at the Plan level, and build upon both the NPPF (paragraph 174), and revised legislation in the forthcoming Environment Bill which looks set to include a duty for developers to include minimum 10% net biodiversity gain in new schemes. Biodiversity value will be calculated using the Defra Metric Biodiversity calculator.

Figure 10: Wildlife Sites within the Neighbourhood Area (Note: the numbered sites on the map, produced by the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre can be found listed in appendix 3a of the Green Infrastructure evidence base report available on the website: [melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org))

4.14.4 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, and is directly linked to the Government’s aim in its 25 Year Environment Plan to “leave the environment in a better state than we found it”.





### Melksham Canal Link Project

A key priority for the Plan area Green Infrastructure 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 9) for developing a canal link to the south west of the town between the Kennet & Avon Canal and the River Avon, and to the north east of the 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 outstanding environmental concerns raised 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 is being coordinated by the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust<sup>17</sup> in collaboration with funders who envisage how the canal will be delivered. The Town and Parish Councils would wish any associated development to be appropriate and in accordance with the vision and policies of this Plan.

### 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.

#### **Policy 14: Open Spaces**

**Development proposals that involve the whole or partial loss of an existing open space (as shown on Figure 11 and detailed in the Green Infrastructure Report<sup>16</sup>) must demonstrate:**

- i. from an assessment of open space provision, using the quantity and access standards for open space as set out by Wiltshire Council, that there is a surplus in the catchment area of open space beyond that required to meet both current and forecast need, and full consideration has been given to all functions that the open space performs, or**
- ii. that a replacement open space (or enhancement of the remainder of the existing site) provides a net benefit to the community in terms of the quantity, quality and accessibility of the open space including by walking and cycling.**

#### **The reason for the policy**

4.15.1 The open spaces in the Neighbourhood Area are defined as green spaces which have recreational value and are freely accessible to the community but allotments and school playing fields, which are generally not freely accessible but are important components of open space provision, are also included. The 'natural green spaces with limited access', whilst included in Figure 11 because of their value to the community, are excluded from the Wiltshire quantity and access standards for open space.

4.15.2 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. The pandemic has highlighted what the evidence already demonstrated - the closer people live to accessible green space the happier and healthier people are.

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

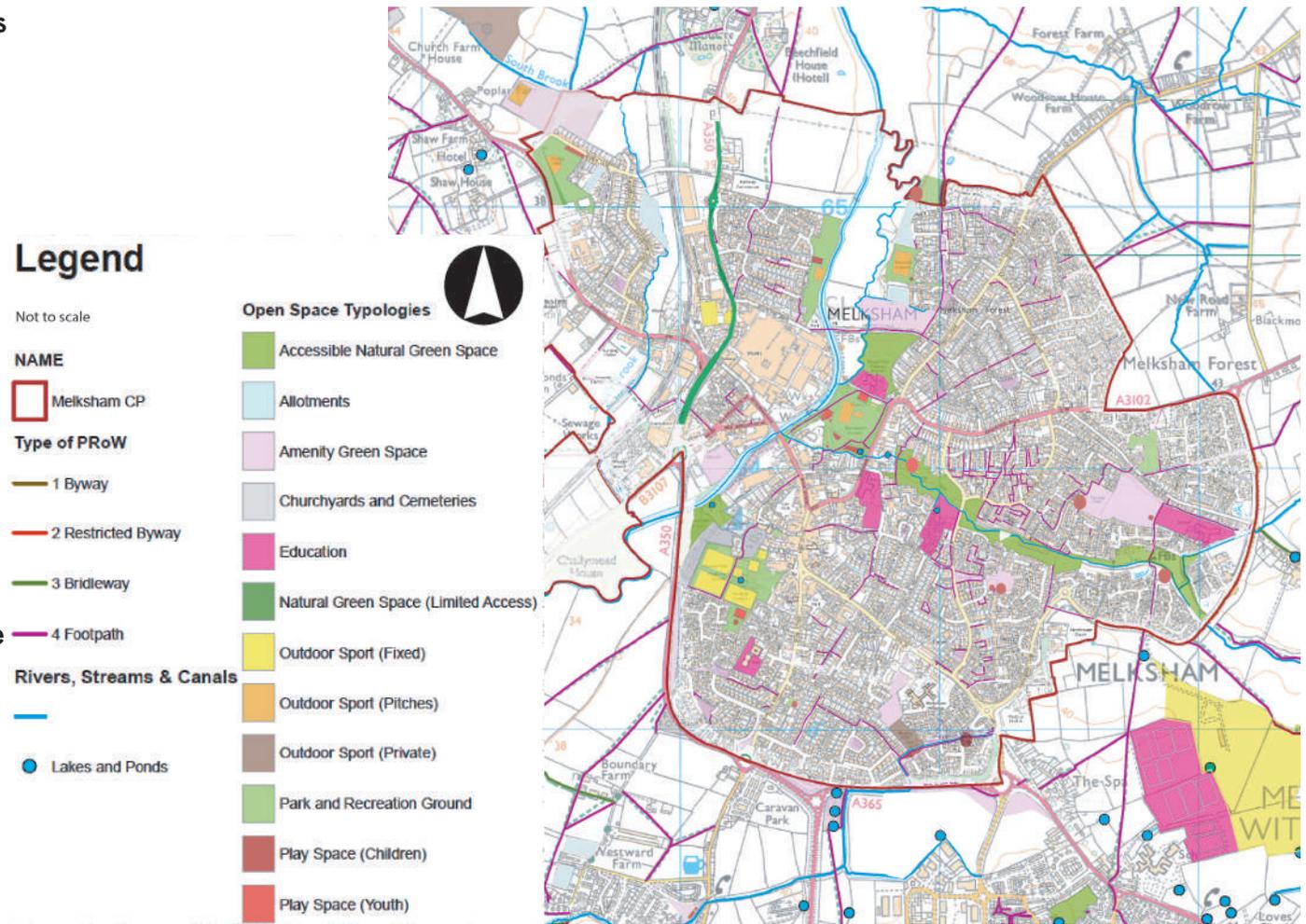
Figure 11a: Melksham Open Spaces and Public Rights of Way  
(Source: Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Report V7)

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

4.15.5 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.

4.15.6 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 preparing 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.



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Figure 11b: Whitley, Shaw and Beanacre Open Spaces and Public Rights of Way (Source: Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Report V7)

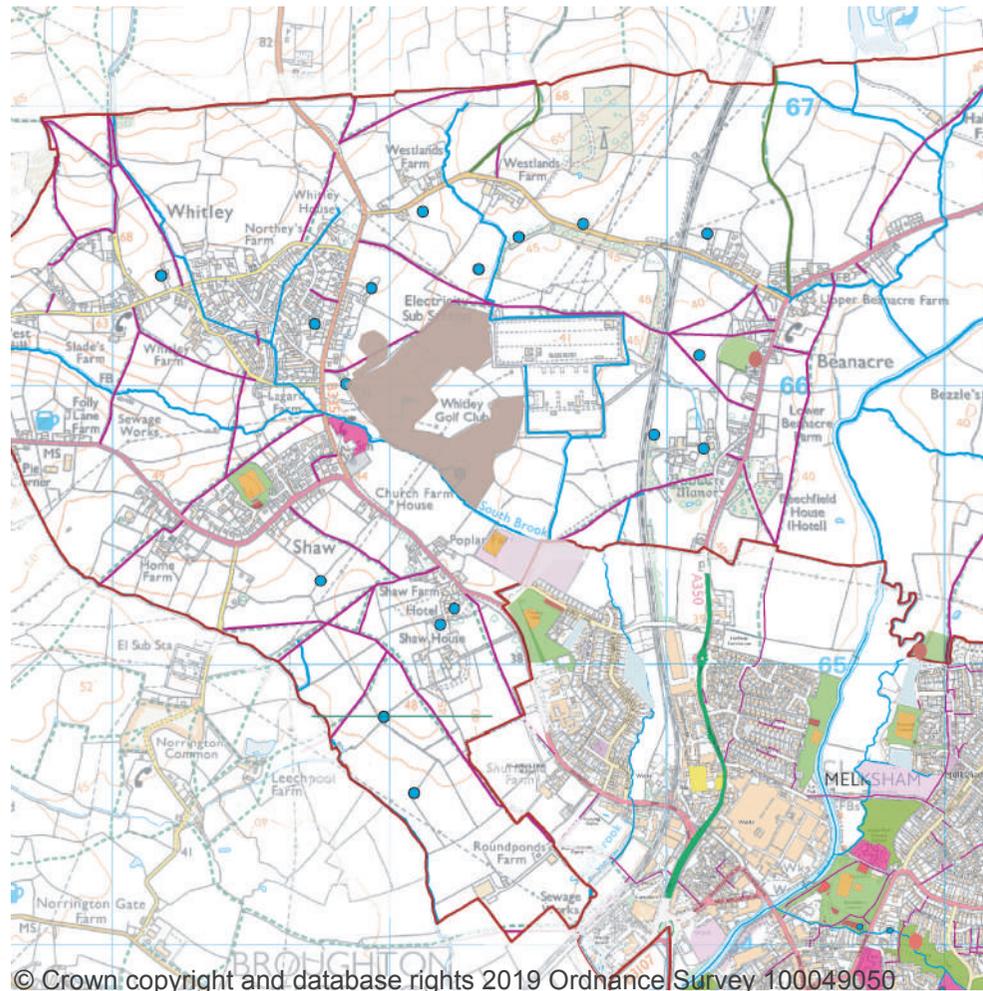
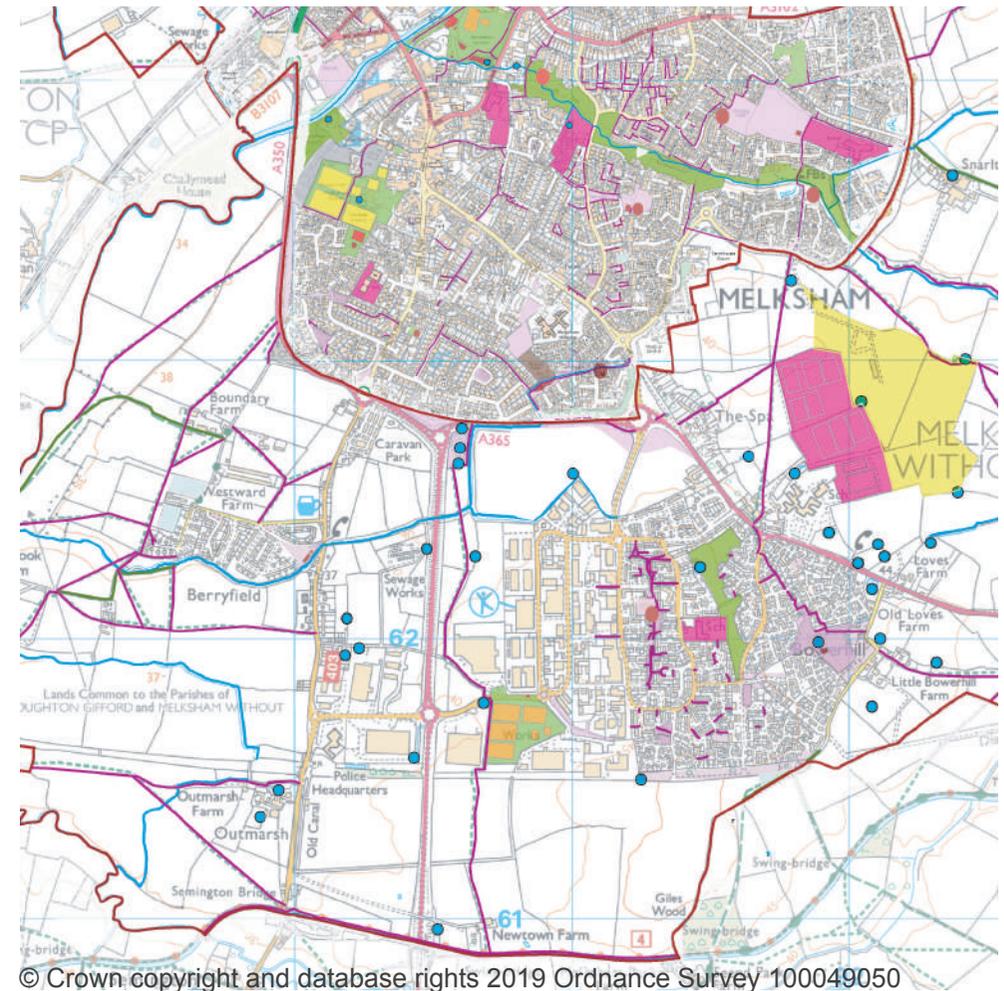


Figure 11c: Bowerhill and Berryfield Open Spaces and Public Rights of Way (Source: Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Report V7)



### Community Facilities

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

#### **Policy 15: Community Facilities**

**Development proposals that involve the loss, in whole or part, of a community facility (as identified in Figure 12 and detailed in the Community Facilities Report<sup>19</sup>) must demonstrate that:**

- i. adequate alternative provision exists or will be provided in an equally accessible or more accessible location, including by walking and cycling, within the catchment area of the facility; or**
- ii. it would not be economically viable, feasible or practicable to retain the building or site for use as a community facility; redevelopment for non-community use will only be considered as a last resort and where all other options have been exhausted.**

**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 community facilities within the Plan area.**

**New or replacement 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**

4.16.1 Wiltshire Core Strategy 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 Core Policy does not apply however to Melksham and Bowerhill Village and to their services and community facilities as they are larger, non rural settlements of Wiltshire<sup>18</sup>.

4.16.2 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<sup>19</sup> compiled by the Plan Steering Group are wide-ranging and can

include community centres, public houses, cultural centres and venues, places of worship, education establishments and training centres and childcare facilities, health and social care facilities, sport and recreation facilities and civic and administrative facilities. However, the list and maps produced for the Neighbourhood Plan cannot be said to be exhaustive (there are almost certainly more facilities than those included on the maps).

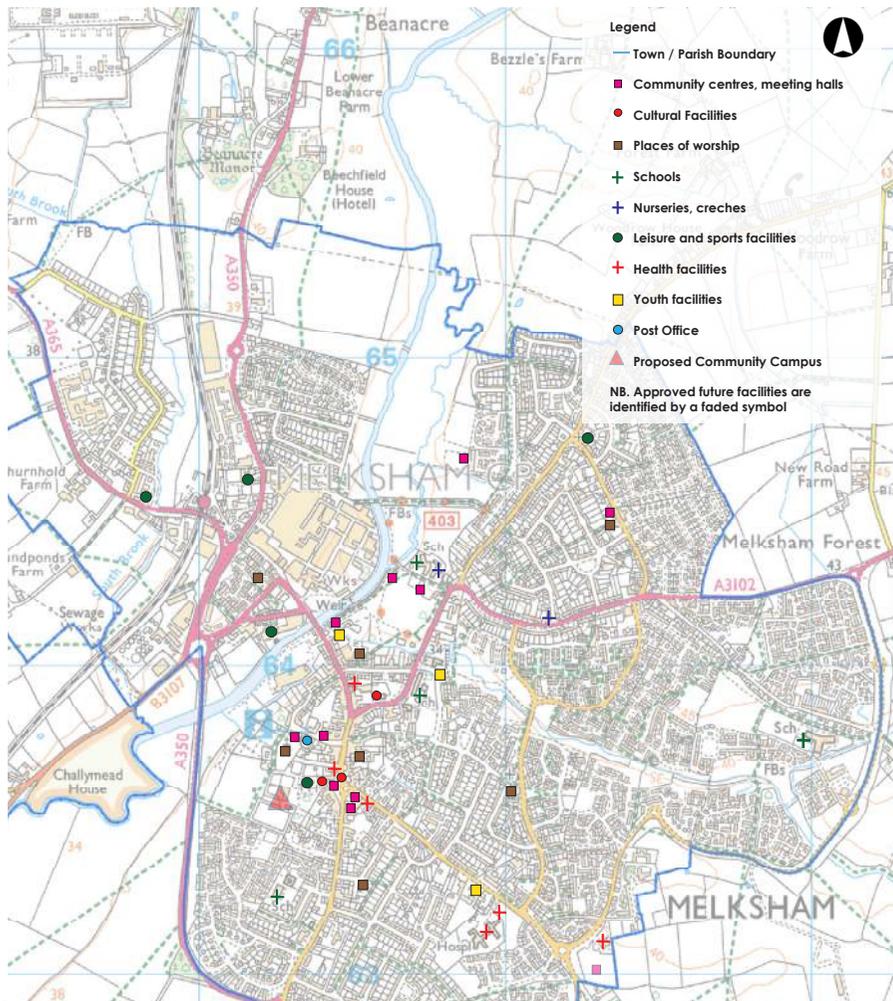
4.16.3 At the time of writing, the community is awaiting the development of the new Community Campus. The Campus will be a hub for community services, and provide a new library, swimming pool, sports hall, gym, dance studio and meeting room, amongst other facilities. However, there have been delays to the delivery of this key future asset. A number of existing local facilities have closed and vacated their premises in order to move into the new campus, but as the campus is not yet developed, this has led to a temporary gap in provision

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

4.16.5 This policy supplements the Wiltshire Core Strategy by identifying the key local facilities and services, with the aim of



Figure 12a: Melksham Town Community Facilities  
(Source: Neighbourhood Plan Community Facilities Report V5)



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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.

4.16.6 Consultation illustrated how important community, health and leisure facilities are for the health and wellbeing of the people of Melksham and its wider community.

4.16.7 The Community Facilities Evidence Base Report<sup>19</sup> sets out in detail the facilities in the Plan area. It is 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.

4.16.8 Proposals for partnership working with national or local agencies to develop strategic community facilities to meet the identified needs for the Plan and wider surrounding areas will be supported.

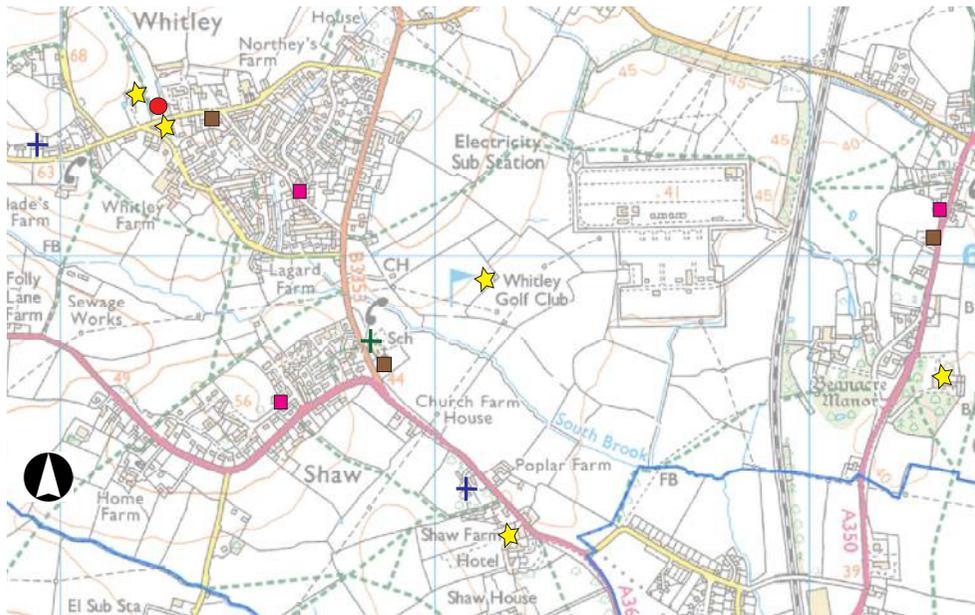


Figure 12b: Whitley, Shaw and Beanacre Community Facilities  
(Source: Neighbourhood Plan Community Facilities Report V5)

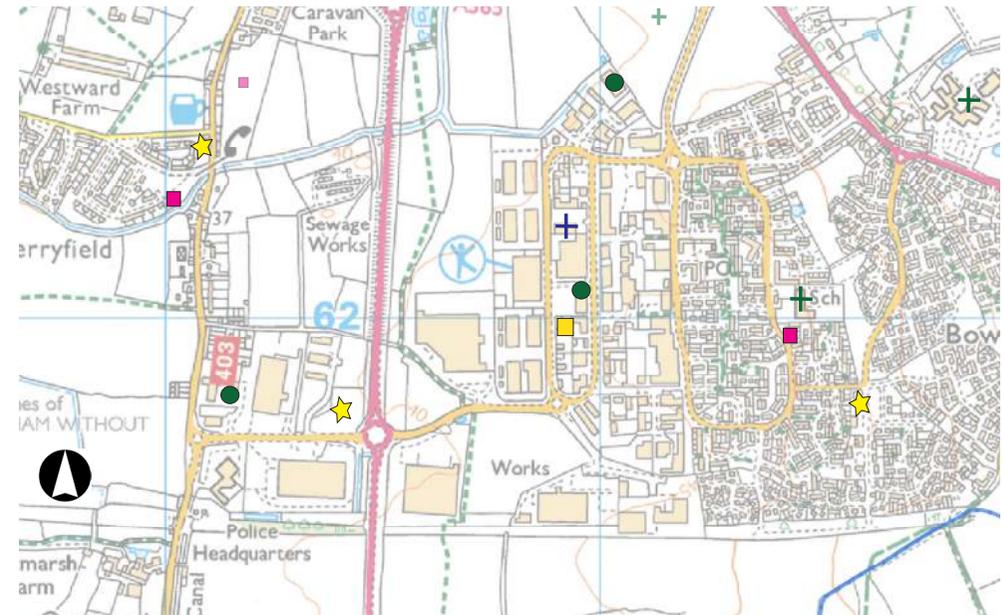


Figure 12c: Bowerhill and Berryfield Community Facilities  
(Source: Neighbourhood Plan Community Facilities Report V5)

Figures 12a, 12b and 12c not to scale, please refer to map on previous page for key and Community Facilities Report<sup>19</sup> for further information on facilities. One additional type of facility is noted in the rural areas - pubs denoted by a star ★

# Natural and Built Environment



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

## **Policies in this section:**

Policy 16: Trees and Hedgerows

Policy 17: Landscape Character

Policy 18: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design

Policy 19: Local Heritage

### Trees and Hedgerows

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

#### **Policy 16: Trees and Hedgerows**

##### **Ancient and Veteran Trees:**

To be supported, development proposals should ensure that there will be no loss or deterioration of the irreplaceable habitats of ancient woodlands (as shown in Figure 12) and ancient or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. In accordance with current guidance<sup>20</sup> a minimum buffer of at least 15 metres in width should be maintained between ancient woodland and any development boundary. A buffer zone around an ancient or veteran tree should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree.

##### **Other Existing Trees and Hedgerows:**

To be supported, development proposals should ensure that there is no damage to or loss of trees of good arboricultural and amenity value.  
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 throughout the built and natural environments of the Plan area will be supported in principle.

### The reason for the policy

4.17.1 As set out in the Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report<sup>16</sup>, 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%<sup>21</sup> of the UK. See Figure 13 on page 73 for mapped information on trees in the Plan area.

4.17.2 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.

4.17.3 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 future<sup>22</sup>. 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.



### The Importance of Trees: Key facts from the Forestry Commission ([www.forestryresearch.gov.uk](http://www.forestryresearch.gov.uk))

- Trees naturally absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, 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.



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

4.17.5 Where tree loss is unavoidable, the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard can be used to inform the number of replacement trees, as set out in the Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report<sup>16</sup>. Whilst a particular site or design approach to trees will inform the number and approach to tree planting, the standard below is an established methodology to underpin discussions on the

Below: Tree Replacement Standard Methodology

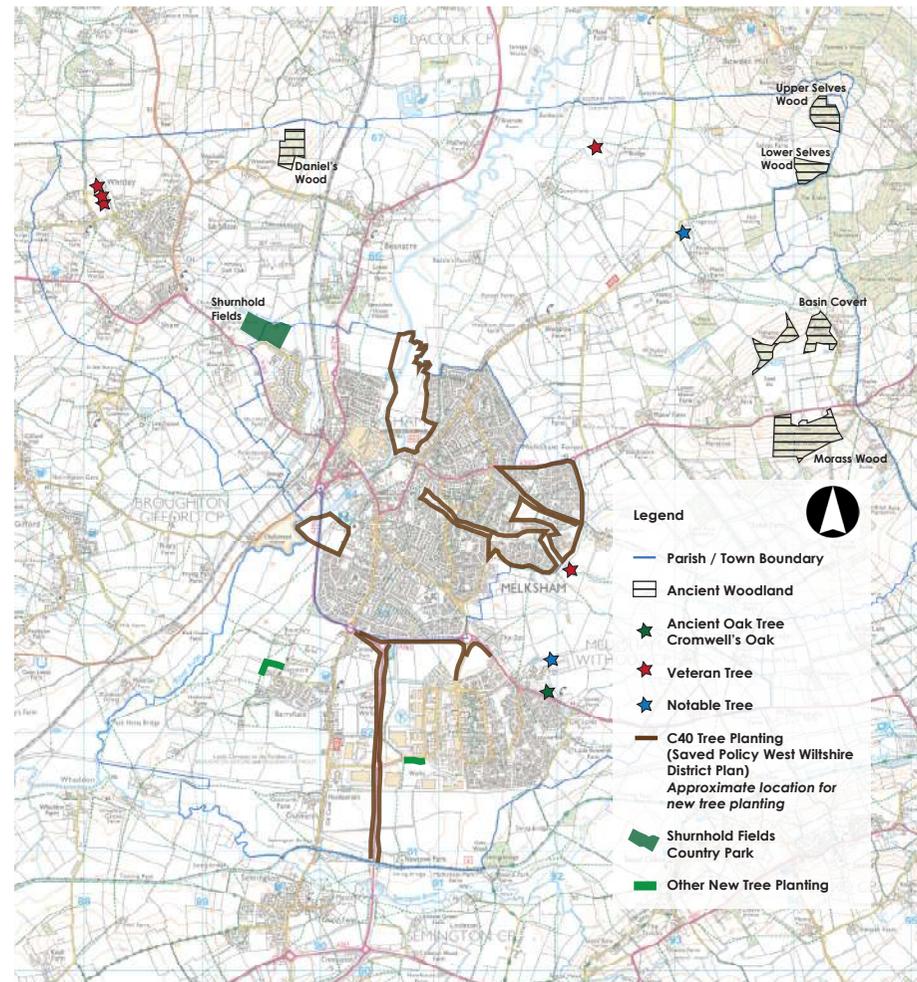
Trunk Diameter of Tree lost to development (cm measured at 1.5 metres above ground level)	Number of Replacement Trees
Less than 15	0 - 1
15 - 19.9	1
20 - 29.9	2
30 - 39.9	3
40 - 49.9	4
50 - 59.9	5
60 - 69.9	6
70 - 79.9	7
80 +	8

replacement of these key assets.

4.17.6 The Plan area is within the area of the Forest of Avon which is part of a national programme of Community Forests across England delivering more trees and woodlands. Linked to this 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. Shurnhold Fields has 200 trees for WW1 commemoration along with a native rare species orchard.



Figure 13: Ancient Trees, Ancient Woodland and Areas of New Tree Planting (Source: Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Report V7)



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### Landscape Character

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

#### **Policy 17: Landscape Character**

**Development proposals will be expected to:**

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

#### **The reason for the policy**

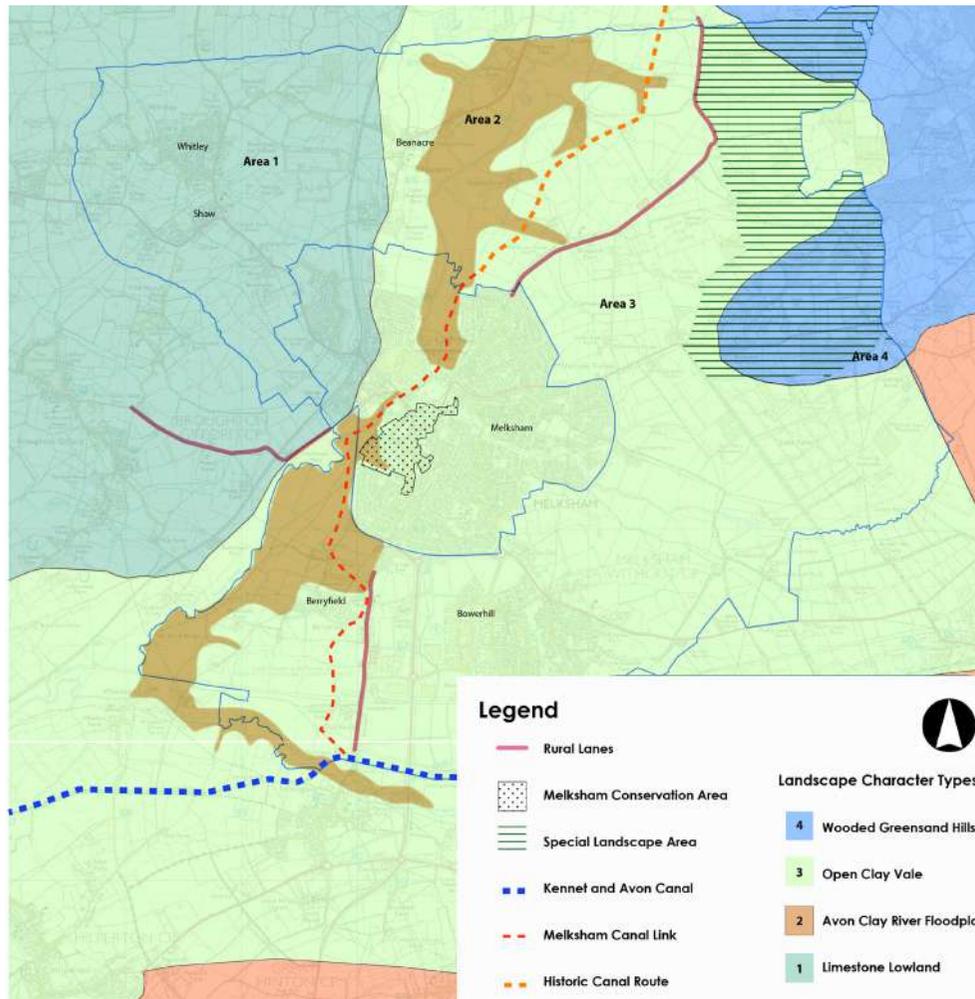
4.18.1 The local landscape is the backdrop to our daily life, and reflects the relationship between people and place. Retaining and enhancing the character and appearance of the landscape in Melksham is recognised as hugely important as the town continues to grow and develop – in particular at the edges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

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



**Bridge across the River Avon**

Figure 14: Landscape Character (source: Neighbourhood Plan Local Landscape Report V2)



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of 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 14, as are other identified areas of distinct character.

4.18.3 Key characteristics of the landscape of the Plan area are detailed in the Green Infrastructure Report<sup>16</sup> and the Local Landscape Character Evidence Base Report<sup>23</sup> 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 Melksham Without Parish 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.

4.18.4 Elements of Historic Landscape Character (tangible elements of past land-use that influence the present-day landscape) have also influenced the sense of place and identity of the present-day town and surrounding rural areas and should be drawn on within major planning proposals.

4.18.5 A number of views across the landscape have been included in the Landscape Character Report<sup>23</sup> to illustrate the different characteristics and features across the Plan area. From many places expansive views of the wide open landscape can be appreciated.



Primrose Drive Nature Area

### 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.

#### **Policy 18: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design**

**Development proposals that contribute positively to the conservation, enhancement and extension of the quality and local distinctiveness of Melksham and Melksham Without will be supported.**

**In addition to having regard to the National Design Guidance and Wiltshire Council design policy, development proposals must demonstrate how they have been informed by the Melksham Rapid Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement<sup>24</sup> and therefore how they have responded positively to the history and character of the area in which the site is located.**

**Proposals for major development must demonstrate through a masterplan how the proposed development layout, density, access proposals and building design approach complement and extend the positive characteristics of Melksham and Melksham Without's settlements and landscape, both historic and topographic.**

#### **The reason for the policy**

4.19.1 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.

4.19.2 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has undertaken analysis of local character and this is presented in the Melksham Rapid Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement<sup>24</sup>, as part of the evidence base to the Neighbourhood Plan and this design policy.

4.19.3 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

Figure 15: Character Areas (source: Neighbourhood Plan Rapid Community Character Statement v2)

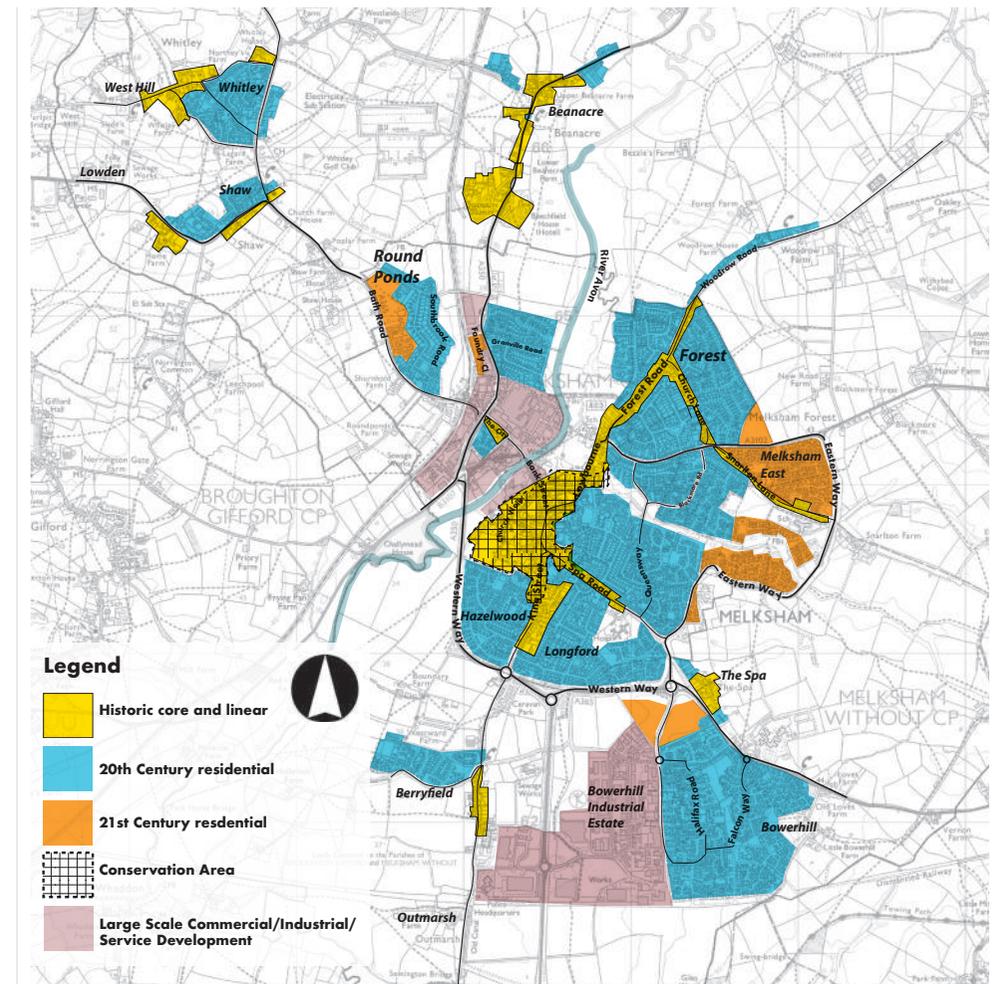
local distinctiveness and quality of place.

4.19.4 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.

4.19.5 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).

4.19.6 In 2019 the Government published a ‘National Design Guide’ which highlights the importance of understanding and responding to local character (in many senses). Figure 16 illustrates the 10 components of good design as set out in the National Design Guide<sup>25</sup>. The importance for design is also underscored by the update of Building for Life 12<sup>26</sup> in the summer of 2020, an industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods: Building for a Healthy Life (BHL).

4.19.7 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



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Sustainable Design (Policy 1) local heritage (Policy 19), landscape (Policy 17) and G.I (Policy 12) to achieve a responsive and successful proposal.

4.19.8 This policy also links directly, and adds local detail to Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 57, providing local detail on character and locally valued features.



Figure 16: 10 components of good design (MHCLG 2019)

### Local Heritage

**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.

#### **Policy 19: Local Heritage**

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

**For other areas of local heritage importance, including archaeological importance, together with buildings or structures that are noteworthy as unlisted local heritage assets as illustrated in the Melksham Rapid Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement<sup>24</sup>, development proposals must demonstrate that appropriate consideration has been given to:**

- i. the significance of the heritage asset;**
- ii. its most distinctive and important features;**
- iii. the elements of its setting and immediate surrounds that contribute to its significance, 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**

4.20.1 This policy adds local detail to Wiltshire Core Strategy 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”. The Historic Environment Record was accessed as part of the evidence base for the plan (and is placed in full on the Neighbourhood Plan website<sup>27</sup>) and has been drawn on in the preparation of this Policy.

4.20.2 There are over 70 listed buildings in the parish, 19 in Whitley, 16 in Shaw and 19 in Beanacre. There are 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.

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

4.20.4 The Spa is about 1 mile from the 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.

4.20.5 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).

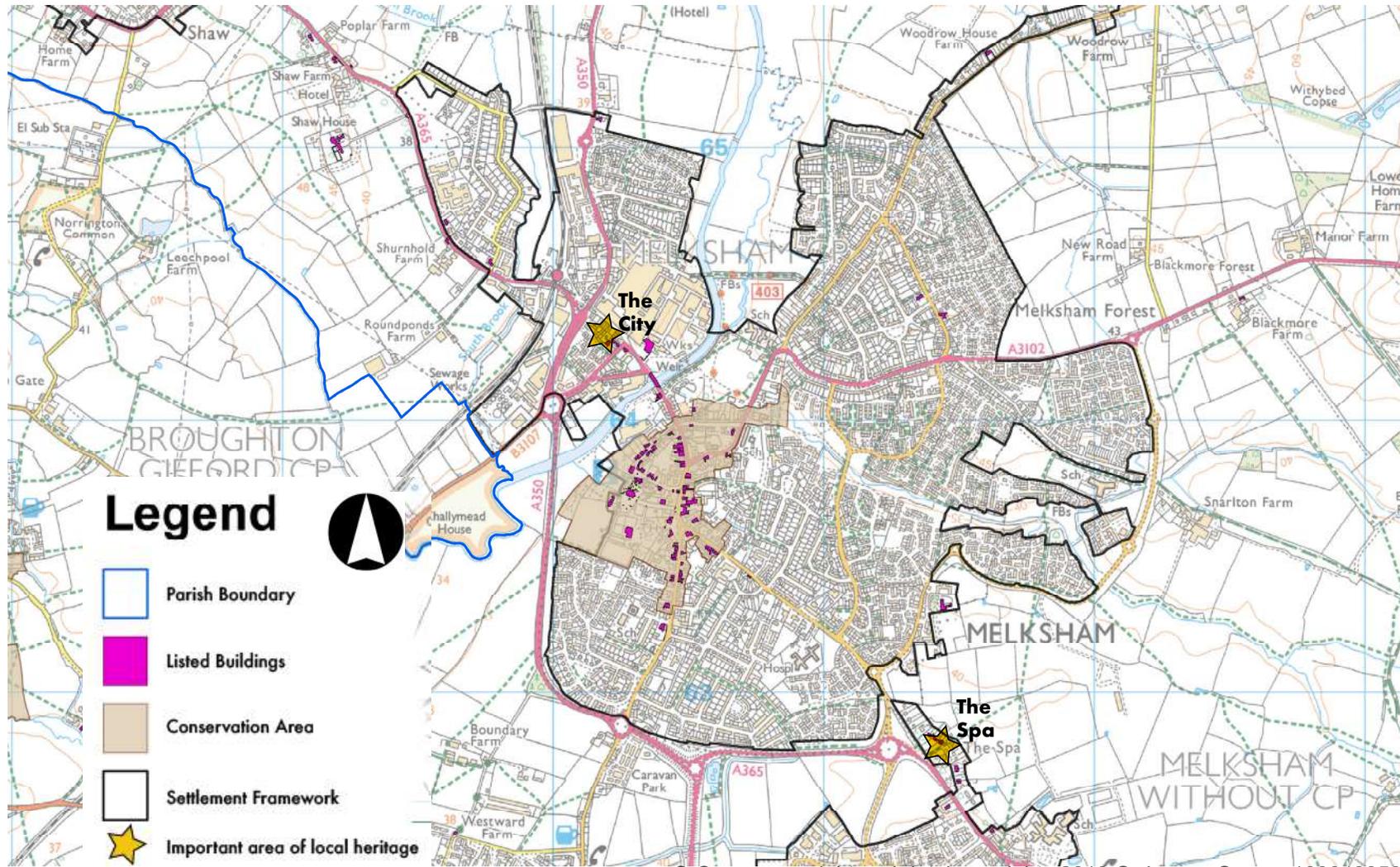
4.20.6 In addition to the buildings that are listed as being of national heritage or architectural importance, there are many buildings that are of local heritage importance, in particular those in the town centre built of local stone in a traditional style. When seen together these make a "high contribution to the whole character of the street scene and give the town centre a feeling of completeness"<sup>28</sup>.

4.20.7 The Parish of Melksham Without is rich in archaeological remains. The northern parish boundary follows the route of the former Roman road between Mildenhall and Bath, while a small Roman town and substantial Iron Age settlement have recently been discovered to the north west of Beanacre. Most of the Parish is covered with the remains of prehistoric, Roman and medieval settlements, with earthwork remains from former medieval and post-medieval field systems particularly prominent.

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  
 (source: Neighbourhood Plan Rapid Community Character Statement v2)



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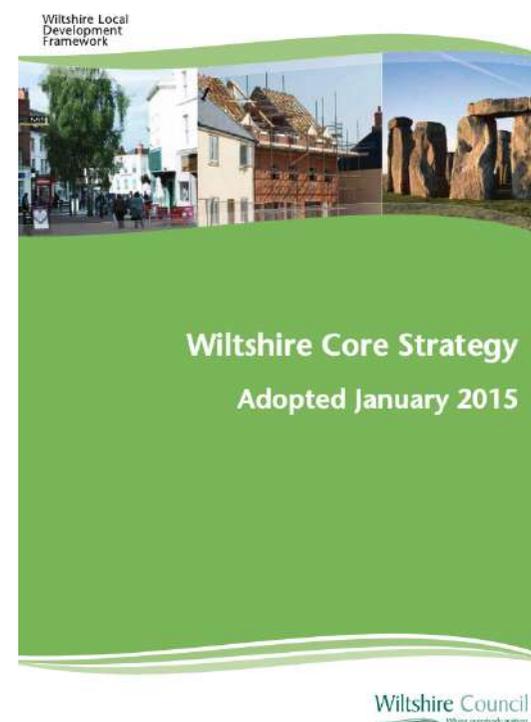
# 5 Priority Statements

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 either because they are strategic in nature or address issues beyond this Neighbourhood Plan time period. These 'statements' are not presented in any order of priority.

## 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.

A 'Planning for Melksham' paper currently forms part of the Local Plan Review Regulation 18 consultation and this states that Place Shaping Priorities 'will be the basis for an overarching planning policy for Melksham and are also a starting point for policies that can be in neighbourhood plans. The Council will continue to work with Town and Parish Councils to find the priorities best suited to delivering sustainable development and town centre improvements.



## Priority Statement 2: Town Centre Regeneration

Development proposals within the defined Melksham Town Centre area and key access routes must be aware of the objectives of the emerging Masterplan/Vision for this area and take account of 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.

Once the Masterplan/Vision is 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.

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.

## **(...cont.) Priority Statement 2: Town Centre Regeneration**

### **Criteria for Edge of Centre Development and Town Centre Expansion**

#### **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.

#### **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.

### **Priority Statement 3: Transport Infrastructure - By-Pass**

The Town and Parish Councils will support efforts by Wiltshire Council to progress the delivery of a By-Pass, although it must be noted that the options for a By-pass are still at an early stage.

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, the Department for Transport requested further development of the schemes through a contribution to the Outline Business Case: 'the A350 Melksham Bypass and A338 Southern Salisbury Junction Improvements schemes has been approved to progress to the next stage of development under the Major Road Network (MRN) and Large Local Majors (LLM) programme. To help the scheme progress to the next stage, the Department will make a contribution of £1.33 million and £170,000 respectively towards the costs of developing the Outline Business Cases (OBC)'.*

Wiltshire Council will now develop outline business cases for the two schemes to enable them to progress to the next stage of development.

The Melksham scheme 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.

Consultation on a draft version of this Plan received a high number of comments linked to the By-Pass. Those comments have been logged, however it must be noted again here that the By-Pass is an issue outside of the Neighbourhood Plan scope. It is included in this section as a priority statement due to its local importance.

Public consultation is expected on a range of options for the By-Pass late October/Early November of 2020. The adoption of a preferred option would probably take place next year, subject to the outcome of the consultation. The Town and Parish Council will be responding to the consultation and encourage local residents and business to respond.

## Priority Statement 4: 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 in sustainable locations 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 (Wiltshire Health and Care, <https://wiltshirehealthandcare.nhs.uk/about-us/published-information/our-priorities-and-how-we-are-doing/>).

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 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

### **(...cont.) Priority Statement 4: Levels of Growth and Infrastructure**

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 setting out the terms for the sharing of CIL, or any replacement funding system. The Memorandum of Agreement will include a Statement of Priorities for infrastructure needs and civic amenity projects which will be reviewed annually and agreed jointly between the Town and Parish Councils.'

### **Priority Statement 5: 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<sup>16</sup>) 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.

## Priority Statement 6: 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 as a need for further land is indicated by the Wiltshire Employment Land Review 2018<sup>3</sup>. 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.



# 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.

**CP (Core Policy):** Reference for Core Policies included in the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted 2015).

**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.

**Reserved Matters Application:** An application which deals with some or all of the outstanding details of the outline application proposal, including:

- appearance - aspects of a building or place which affect the way it looks, including the exterior of the development
  - means of access - covers accessibility for all routes to and within the site
  - landscaping - the improvement or protection of the amenities of the site and the area and the surrounding area, this could include planting trees or hedges as a screen
  - layout - includes buildings, routes and open spaces within the development and the way they are laid out in relations to buildings and spaces outside the development
  - scale - includes information on the size of the development, including the height, width and length of each proposed building
- The details of the reserved matters application must be in line with the outline approval.

**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.

**WCS:** Wiltshire Core Strategy. A key document in the Wiltshire Development Plan.

**Wiltshire 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.

**WWDP: West Wiltshire District Plan.** A number of policies from the West Wiltshire District Plan are saved and form part of the Wiltshire Development Plan.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> LGA Basic Facts about the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan area downloaded August 2019
- <sup>2</sup> [https://lichfields.uk/media/5115/lichfields-insight-focus\\_solutions-to-an-age-old-problem-in-the-south-west.pdf](https://lichfields.uk/media/5115/lichfields-insight-focus_solutions-to-an-age-old-problem-in-the-south-west.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Wiltshire Council Employment Land Review 2018
- <sup>4</sup> Wiltshire Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, February 2019
- <sup>5</sup> 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
- <sup>6</sup> 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](http://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/UKhousing-Fit-for-the-future-CCC-2019.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> 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.
- <sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/consulting-ending-sale-new-petrol-diesel-and-hybrid-cars-and-vans>
- <sup>10</sup> Department for Transport, 2018: The Road to Zero Next steps towards cleaner roads transport and delivering our Industrial Strategy
- <sup>11</sup> Appendix 6 of the 2020 Housing Land Supply Statement (Wiltshire Council, 2020) which shows the position at April 2019
- <sup>12</sup> Additional Rural Site Assessments 2020, part of the evidence base produced for the Neighbourhood Plan, available at Melksham Neighbourhood Plan website <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/>
- <sup>13</sup> 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
- <sup>14</sup> <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wilts-elr-report-final.pdf>, <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wilts-elr-appendix-7-site-review-summaryspreadsheets-final.pdf> (see sites 68-79), <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wilts-elr-appendix-9-site-reviews.pdf> (sites throughout).
- <sup>15</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/cyclingguidance/sustrans\\_handbook\\_for\\_cycle-friendly\\_design.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/cyclingguidance/sustrans_handbook_for_cycle-friendly_design.pdf)
- <sup>16</sup> Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report V7, part of the evidence produced for the Neighbourhood Plan, available at Melksham Neighbourhood Plan website <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/>
- <sup>17</sup> Wilts and Berks Canal Trust Melksham Canal Link <https://www.wbct.org.uk/mcc-projects/melksham-link>
- <sup>18</sup> 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.
- <sup>19</sup> Community Facilities Evidence Base Report, 2020, part of the evidence base produced for the Neighbourhood Plan, available at Melksham Neighbourhood Plan website <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/>
- <sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences#ancient-woodland>
- <sup>21</sup> <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/ancient-woodland/>
- <sup>22</sup> Guidance on trees and development is provided by the woodland trust <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/4729/ancient-trees-and-development.pdf>
- <sup>23</sup> Local Landscape Character Evidence Base Report 2020, part of the evidence base produced for the Neighbourhood Plan, available at Melksham Neighbourhood Plan website <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/>
- <sup>24</sup> Melksham Rapid Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement 2020, part of the evidence base produced for the Neighbourhood Plan, available at Melksham Neighbourhood Plan website <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/>
- <sup>25</sup> National Design Guide 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>
- <sup>26</sup> Building for a Healthy life <https://www.designforhomes.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/14JULY20-BFL-2020-Brochure.pdf>
- <sup>27</sup> Melksham Neighbourhood Plan website <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/>
- <sup>28</sup> Melksham Urban Design Study 2006

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# Appendix 1

## 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” (Local Government Association, 2014) 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 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.

Melksham Without Parish 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 for the Town and Parish Council. Wiltshire Council are also asked by the Town and Parish Council to pass on contact details to applicants.
- **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, for example small householder applications are very unlikely to need to undertake more than neighbour consultations.
- **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.

### Contact Details

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

**[townhall@melkshamtc.gov.uk](mailto:townhall@melkshamtc.gov.uk)**  
**[clerk@melkshamwithout.co.uk](mailto: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 contact.

### Additional Notes

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, 2016/17)

### 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](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](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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