Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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Date: Wednesday 28th September 2022

Start: 6.30pm

At: Melksham Without Parish Council, First Floor, Melksham Community Campus, Market Place, Melksham, SN12 6ES

Remote access via Zoom also available
To Join Zoom Meeting:

Meeting ID: 279 181 5985

Passcode: 070920

Click link below:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2791815985?pwd=Y2x5T25DRlVWVU54UW1YWWE4NkNrZz09

Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group AGENDA

1. **Welcome & Housekeeping**

2. **To note apologies**

3. **To elect new Chair & Vice Chair of Steering Group**

4. **Declarations of Interests & Register of Interests**

5. **Public Participation**

6. To agree **Minutes of Meeting** held on 29th June 2022

7. **To receive update on Task Group work to date and approve briefs for Locality Technical Support packages**
    a) Assessment and information to inform approach to housing (together with the Local Plan)
        i) To review and approve site assessment methodology produced by AECOM

        ii) To approve for publication the Housing Needs Assessment undertaken by AECOM

    b) Protecting valued local green space

    c) Green Gap Designation (new)
       i) To review and approve brief to AECOM
    d) Further addressing climate change
    e) Planning for future vitality of the town centre
       i) To review and approve the Town Centre Master Plan brief produced by AECOM
       ii) Car Park Review – To provide feedback on scope brief, to agree status of this review evidence document, to agree further consultation with stakeholders

       iii) Town centre sites may provide identified/allocated housing to meet local needs.

    f) Protecting our local heritage
    g) Strengthening locally Distinctive Design Policy (Guide/Code)
       i) To review and approve brief produced by AECOM
    h) Ensuring that local priorities are addressed as the bypass project is developed.
    i) Ensuing that local priorities are addressed as the Melksham Canal Link project is developed
    j) SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) – To review and agree scoping document produced by AECOM

8. To agree next steps (work streams for Oct, Nov, Dec)

9. To review Programme Dates
   https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/1082/Local-Plan-Review

10. To approve Community Communications

11. To consider policy request from Melksham Without Parish Council that annexes cannot be used as a separate dwelling in the future

12. To approve latest invoices and note current financial report.

13. To review Terms of Reference further to parish and town council review

14. To review and approve Membership of Steering Group

15. To agree date and venue of **Next Meeting of Steering Group** *(Weds 30th November suggested)*

Melksham Neighbourhood Plan
Steering Group Meeting

Date: Wednesday 29 June 2022
Start: 6.30 pm

Present:

Steering Group Members Present
Councillor David Pafford (MWPC)
Councillor Richard Wood (MWPC Sub)
Councillor Jon Hubbard (MTC)
Councillor Gary Cooke (MTC Sub)
John Hamley (MTUG)

Officers
Teresa Strange (MWPC)
Lorraine McRandle (MWPC)
Linda Roberts (MTC)
David Way (WC)

Task Group Members:

Councillor Baines (MWPC)
Councillor Mark Harris (MPWC)
Graham Ellis (MTC)

Planning Consultants:

Vaughan Thompson (Place Studio)

Via Zoom:

Shirley McCarthy (Environment)

MTC	**Melksham Town Council**
MWPC	**Melksham Without Parish Council**
WC	**Wiltshire Council**
MTUG	**Melksham Transport User Group**

MINUTES

1. Welcome & Housekeeping

Until a new Chair was voted in, Councillor Wood, as the current Chair (albeit a substitute for the meeting) took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The MWPC Clerk pointed out the various fire escapes.

(NB: Shirley had joined the meeting via Zoom. Unfortunately, due to various technical issues, Shirley was only able to listen to the meeting and not take part in discussions)

2. **To note new representatives from Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council**

The meeting was informed that the following Neighbourhood Plan representatives were appointed at the Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council's respective Annual Council meetings held in May.

CouncillorJon Hubbard: Melksham Town Council
Councillor Pat Aves: Melksham Town Council
Councillor John Glover: Melksham Without Parish Council
Councillor David Pafford: Melksham Without Parish Council

3. **To note apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor John Glover (MWPC) who was unfortunately having to attend a funeral and therefore Councillor Richard Wood was substituting. Apologies had also been received from Councillor Aves (MTC) who was attending another meeting with Councillor Gary Cooke substituting.

Apologies had also been received from Chris Holden who was unwell and Colin Harrison who was on holiday.

The MWPC Clerk informed the meeting that no apologies had been received from Wiltshire Councillor Mike Sankey (representative for the Area Board).

Members of the various task groups had been invited to attend the meeting; therefore, the following were in attendance and introduced themselves:

	Task Group(s)
Councillor Alan Baines (MWPC)	Housing, Bypass
Councillor Mark Harris (MWPC)	Housing, Bypass & Canal
Councillor Graham Ellis (MTC)	Heritage, Bypass

4. **To elect new Chair & Vice Chair of Steering Group**

Councillor Wood explained that he had stepped down as being a representative of the parish council for the Steering Group and was only in attendance at this meeting as a substitute. He was the outgoing Chair of the Steering Group and had been on the Steering Group, and its Chair, since the beginning of the process, for a number of years. In line with the Terms of Reference, the Chair of the Steering Group was elected every June, and therefore sought nominations for the Chair.

Councillor Baines proposed Councillor David Pafford as Chair.

The MWPC Clerk explained only Steering Group members were able to vote and nominate at present, as per the Terms of Reference, however, these were due to be reviewed later in the meeting.

Therefore, Councillor Wood nominated Councillor Pafford as Chair and sought a seconder.

Councillor Hubbard expressed concern that there was a perception that the parish council were leading the Neighbourhood Plan process. He noted that in the past that the Town Council had not been as engaged in the process as they could have been and therefore wondered if a Chair from the Town Council should be sought in order that residents would feel the Town Council were more involved.

Councillor Hubbard stated that he understood originally that there was supposed to be a rotating Chair from the respective councils each year which had not been the case, and whilst appreciating the involvement of Councillor Wood as Chair in the Neighbourhood Plan process to date, realised it was the Steering Group's decision.

The MWPC Clerk clarified that there was no rule regarding a rotating Chair between both Councils (as per the Terms of Reference, which had been agreed by both councils) and that the position of Chair had come up every year for the past 8-9 years and during this time Councillor Wood has been the only person to be nominated Chair with no other nominations coming forward from the group, including from the Melksham Town Council representatives.

Councillor Wood sought further nominations, with Councillor Jon Hubbard stating as he had raised the issue, he would put himself forward as Chair, noting Councillor Aves as the other Town Council representative was not present.

Councillor Wood sought a nomination for Councillor Hubbard from the Steering Group. Councillor Gary Cooke, after initially stating he was substitute for Councillor Aves and had not been given a remit on who she would nominate as a Chair, nominated Councillor Hubbard following further debate.

There was no seconder for Councillor Hubbard and therefore Councillor Hubbard reluctantly seconded Councillor Pafford as Chair.

As Shirley was having difficult speaking remotely at the meeting and therefore unable to vote and John Hamley was the only other Steering Group member able to vote who felt unqualified to vote as did not know the proposed candidates, it was suggested to defer this item until the next meeting, when hopefully more Steering Group members would be in attendance, which was agreed.

Councillor Wood continued chairing the meeting.

5. Declarations of Interests & Register of Interests

There were no declarations of interest, with a reminder for those who had not already done so to complete a Register of Interest Form for interests in the whole of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Forms were handed to Councillors Jon Hubbard and Gary Cooke to complete and return.

6. Public Participation

There were no members of public present.

7. To agree Minutes of Meeting held on 27th April 2022

Resolved: To approve and for the Chair to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2022.

8. To review Terms of Reference

The MWPC Clerk explained the Terms of Reference had been reviewed by the Steering Group in early 2021 and agreed by both councils as qualifying bodies, however there had been a recent question from the Town Council regarding point 7.4 regarding "dual hatted" councillors as they felt this prevented Town Councillors, who were also Wiltshire Councillors, being Steering Group members.

7.4 If a Steering Group Member is a member of more than one organisation, they should declare their wider interest. Members must not be 'dual hatted', for example, they cannot be a town, parish or Wiltshire Councillor if representing a community group.

The MWPC Clerk explained that this rule had been applied when a representative was recently sought from MTUG (Melksham Transport User Group) as Graham Ellis had been nominated but was not eligible under the Terms of Reference as a Melksham Town Councillor.

The MWPC Clerk also explained the Steering Group had previously consisted of Leads of the various task groups, with voting rights, during the drafting stage of NHP#1 and asked if the Steering Group wished the current Leads on the various task groups to join the Steering Group as previously, with voting rights.

Councillor Pafford proposed the Leads from each task group join the Steering Group as voting members, as this gave the group a broad spectrum of people on the group and hopefully more people attending meetings.

Councillor Hubbard expressed concern at widening the group to include the Leads from the various Task Groups, as some may be town or parish councillors and stated the Steering Group needed to consider if a Town Council representative who was also a Wiltshire Councillor was eligible to join the Steering Group under the current Terms of Reference, and expressed frustration at the current rules.

Councillor Pafford at this stage withdrew his proposal that Leads from the task groups join the Steering Group.

Councillor Wood felt if a Councillor was also a Wiltshire Councillor or a member of an organisation, they could be on the Steering Group but would only get one vote.

Councillor Pafford noted other minor amendments needed to be made to the Terms of Reference with regard to the Core Strategy and timings of meetings to reflect current practice.

Resolved: For both councils to approve amendments to the Terms of Reference as follows:

Point 7:4 to read as follows:

If a Steering Group Member is a member of more than one organisation, they should declare their wider interest (*removing the reference to "dual hatted" members*)

Point 10.1: The Steering Group will meet as required *rather than monthly*.

Point 10.2: Meetings will convene no earlier than 6.00pm and no later than 7.30pm and last for 2 hours.

Reference to the Core Strategy throughout the document to be amended to the Local Plan where appropriate.

9. **To receive update on Task Group work to date, progress with Locality Technical Support packages and agree next steps**

Vaughan updated the Steering Group on the recent work undertaken by the various task groups.

 a) **Housing**

   i. **Housing Needs Assessment and Housing Needs Local Survey**

A draft Housing Needs Assessment has been provided by AECOM via Technical Support and a local Housing Needs Survey has also been undertaken and the results collated which will provide a data approach specific to the neighbourhood plan area. Some aspects had been broken down where possible into the settlements of Melksham & Bowerhill, Shaw &Whitley and the wider rural area to align with the Core Strategy and Local Plan Review settlements.

The next steps for the group will be to review AECOM's work and completion of the survey work, which will provide the material to produce potentially a new housing policy to meet local housing needs. This will require developers to demonstrate how they considered the local type and tenure requirements in their proposals to meet the specific needs of the community. It can also influence housing allocations to ensure they respond to the community's housing needs.

ii. **Site Assessment**

The housing allocation/call for sites work is currently underway. Vaughan thanked both the Clerk to Melksham Without and David Way who had pulled together a long list of sites (currently circa 90 sites) which would need to be assessed for their suitability and sustainability. These sites will feed into an assessment process by AECOM via Technical Support and will take 12-16 weeks to complete. The next steps will be for the Steering Group to select the preferred sites later in the Autumn.

Vaughan explained this process will take some time to complete and extend into the Autumn, when it was hoped that the Local Plan would be available, in order to see what Wiltshire Council were proposing in terms of housing numbers and locational strategy. The choice of sites and number of houses for the NHP#2 to allocate can be informed by the Local Plan, with a meaningful amount required to ensure that NHP#2 sustains and refreshes its NPPF Paragraph 14 protection.[1]

Vaughan explained Berryfield appeared to have been enveloped in the urban area in AECOM's report and this would be fed back to AECOM with a request it is put back to a small village.

David explained as a small village Berryfield will only take infill development as per the current Wiltshire Council policy.

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[1] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf

Councillor Baines highlighted recent revisions of parish boundaries between the town and parish had also not been taken into account in AECOM's report.

b) Design Codes (including update on Wiltshire Council Design Code)

Vaughan explained this policy was going to be strengthened with a character statement and design code for the whole of the neighbourhood plan area. The group had obtained Technical Support to provide design characteristics for the different parts of Melksham and Melksham Without. The work has been approved and will start shortly.

Vaughan sought members from the steering group or task group to assist AECOM with this and suggested sending out an email for volunteers after the meeting. Wiltshire Council will be looking at more strengthened design policies and will be more specific.

The next stage will be to get the design code work from AECOM, review it and approve it.

c) Town Centre Master Plan

Vaughan explained the town centre featured as a Policy and a Priority Statement in the existing Plan, with good progress being made on this work with AECOM.

A meeting had taken place with AECOM and a Town Centre Master Plan brief produced which cut across Priority for People and also looked at connectivity between the rest of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Vaughan explained the plans had to focus on things that can be delivered through planning but could talk about non planning items which are material to the future vitality of the town centre.

The next stage would be to appoint AECOM to do a Town Centre Masterplan via Technical Support.

Councillor Wood asked how this work fitted in with the work the Town Council had already undertaken.

The MTC Clerk clarified the Town Council had agreed the Neighbourhood Plan would do this wider work with any implications to be considered by the town council as they arose.

Councillor Hubbard explained the Masterplan had not come to council as yet, but a proposal regarding Priority for People had been put to the Parish Council.

The MWPC Clerk explained the Priority for People proposal had gone to a recent Full Council meeting and a response would be forwarded to the Town Council in due course. The Parish Council wanted to understand the substance of what the Town Council were trying to achieve and who would be meeting the costs involved in achieving some of the proposals. As an example, easy walking routes to schools was one of the first things on the list but they were aware of the high costs of these highway works, with only short section of footway in the parish recently costed at £100,000.

Councillor Hubbard explained the plan needed to cover the whole community in order to be an effective document which is used, and needed all stakeholders to be involved in order for proposals to be achieved.

Councillor Baines felt Priority for People extends beyond the Neighbourhood Plan area and therefore needed to include those communities as well.

Vaughan clarified the Town Centre Masterplan was not Priority for People, but could provide spatial representation on how things can be, and should be, delivered, such as connecting the town centre to communities.

Vaughan explained the next stage would be to get the Town Centre Masterplan underway as soon as possible, dovetailing design coding and character work with the Town Centre Master Plan in order to get a joined-up approach.

Vaughan explained the Priority Statement for the Town Centre had also been discussed and along with the Policy would need to be updated, particularly as national legislation for Use Classes relating to town centres had been changed since the production of the current Neighbourhood Plan.

Vaughan explained other resources were available which could help with the Town Centre Master Plan, including resources from Wiltshire Council.

d) Local Green Spaces

Vaughan explained this identified local green spaces which are valuable to the community and qualify for designation as Local Green Space, which gives similar support in planning terms to a piece of land in a green belt.

The task group were currently working through a list of approximately 280 sites which had been identified by the community as important green spaces.

The next step is to review the list to get down to a deliverable short list of sites to be assessed against a strict criteria.

Vaughan explained engagement would also need to take place with the landowners of those sites which are considered suitable for designation as Local Green Spaces, in order for them to consider the appropriateness of this designation and have an opportunity to object to proposals.

Councillor Pafford explained one Neighbourhood Plan elsewhere in the county had identified where they wanted housing, but not where they didn't want housing which then was queried at Appeal, and asked whether this would be the same with green spaces.

Vaughan explained those sites which were eligible and pass the criteria would be okay as they would be protected as designated Local Green Spaces. However, those sites which did not meet the criteria would be vulnerable but could be identified as spaces of local value and be given material consideration. Therefore, a way of optimising protection for those sites which did not meet the necessary criteria needed to be found.

David Way sought clarification of designation of spaces of local value against an area being designated as a local green space, which in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) would hold more weight.

Vaughan explained the Neighbourhood Plan had policies on green infrastructure and the green environment and therefore there would be an evidence base which would show those areas identified by the community which were of local value, but did not meet the criteria to be designated as a Local Green Space. David explained it would be helpful if sites put forward could be listed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, as part of the evidence base.

Vaughan explained he had taken on board the comments raised on this issue and would look at ways of including those sites put forward, but not meeting the relevant criteria, in the Neighbourhood Plan.

e) **Local Heritage Assets**

Vaughan explained that Local Heritage Assets were for assets that did not meet the criteria to be 'Listed' but were still of value to the local community. A shortlist had been collated of assets put forward by the community and were currently being assessed. Owners would have to be consulted and those meeting the relevant criteria would be part of the evidence base for the heritage policy, this will enable both councils to respond to planning applications by referring to those on the list.

Councillor Wood mentioned Kelly's Lamp on Bowerhill, which was a local asset. Vaughan agreed to check Kelly's Lamp was included on the list of Heritage Assets for consideration.

Graham, as a member of the Heritage Task Working Group, explained only 7 or 8 had been nominated and were being reviewed currently and asked if an asset was of extreme valuable if it could be considered for being 'Listed'.

In the same vein, the MWPC Clerk stated the Parish Council had previously asked if The Spa could be considered as a Conservation Area but unfortunately there seemed to be no appetite at the time from Wiltshire Council or Historic England and therefore asked if the Neighbourhood Plan could give The Spa more than Listed status.

Vaughan explained there was a separate process through Historic England to list buildings, but would investigate the process, which would be outside the Neighbourhood Plan, but the site could be included as a local heritage asset.

David Way explained that as The Spa buildings were Listed, their setting was of great weight in the planning process.

f) Climate Issues

Vaughan explained this was about strengthening the existing commitments and actions for sustainable development and climate change responses in the neighbourhood plan. Wiltshire Council had advanced their climate strategy and other Neighbourhood Plans since Melksham's was adopted have pushed the envelope in their responses to climate change and sustainability and it was worth investigating these.

Vaughan explained Katie Lea from Place was assisting on this and had provided a topic paper for the task group to review and look at additional potential policy and evidence, and what pointers to best practice should be referenced in the neighbourhood plan.

g) Implications of Bypass

Vaughan explained the implications of the bypass had been included as a Priority Statement in the current Neighbourhood Plan. There was a need to get the priority statement factual and to consider how the Neighbourhood Plan represented the communities' views.

The task group had met the project engineer for the scheme in order to understand the latest on the project.

Vaughan explained the next stage would be to craft and refresh the Priority Statement in the Neighbourhood Plan. After this, it would be to agree the level of support which is given in the Neighbourhood Plan to proposals, once more information is released on the project. Trajectory of housing would also be a critical path.

h) Implications of Canal Link

Vaughan explained the task group were trying to arrange a meeting with the Wilts & Berks Canal representative to get the latest update on the project, to inform the position of the Neighbourhood Plan Priority Statement review.

The current Wiltshire Council Core Strategy protects the route of the proposed canal link; therefore it is not the job of the Steering Group to protect a route. However, he understood there is a concern regarding proposals for enabling development.

Councillor Hubbard queried whether the group could be confident the new Local Plan would protect the route of the proposed canal.

David Way explained it should do, but could not say for sure and explained that the Wilts & Berks Canal Group had recently produced a vision document with a safeguarded route which still went through Berryfield, behind the New Inn Pub, and followed the same route as previously detailed.

David explained the Local Plan would probably safeguard a Bypass route as well and understood consultation was taking place on a slightly revised route following feedback. He was hopeful that by the time Wiltshire Council went out to Regulation 19 consultation on the Local Plan later in the year, there would be a safeguarded route for the bypass, as with the canal.

David asked when the Steering Group hoped to go out to Regulation 14 in the Autumn and whether this would be prior to the publication of the Local Plan in the Autumn, as there would be quite a few things in the document the Steering Group would need to take into account.

It was agreed the Steering Group aimed to go out to Regulation 14 after the publication of the Local Plan Review, as long as the publication of the Local Plan did not slip several months, given the tight timeframe.

Vaughan explained the site assessment work may not come back until October and then the Steering Group would have to make the choices about the sites and which to include in the Neighbourhood Plan. It would then need complete the SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) and HRA (Habitats Regulations Assessment) on those proposals with the Plan being appropriately amended and refined before going out to Regulation 14

consultation. Vaughan anticipated that the Reg 14 consultation would be ready at Christmas/New Year time and would be informed by reviewing in line with the Local Plan.

Concern was expressed that the group only had 1 year left to get the review done in order to keep the 2 years protection from a lack of 5-year land supply, provided by Paragraph 14 of the NPPF.

Councillor Pafford sought guidance on what stage Wiltshire Council would give weight to the Neighbourhood Plan in determining speculative planning applications.

David clarified that pre-Reg 14 consultation, or even during the consultation, that the Neighbourhood Plan would have little weight; only when the Plan had been submitted and was going through the Examination process would it have more weight.

Concern was expressed at the delay in the Local Plan and the impact on the Neighbourhood Plan review and the need to keep in step with the Local Plan Review in order to adhere to policies in the Local Plan.

David felt that it was not the intention of the Government for groups to keep updating their Neighbourhood Plans every 2 years to keep Paragraph 14 protection.

Vaughan explained that as the Neighbourhood Plan consultant he would need to make sure the Neighbourhood Plan did not conflict with the emerging Local Plan and therefore was sound when going forward for examination.

i) **Request for screening opinion for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)**

Vaughan explained as the Plan will be allocating a site(s) there will be a requirement for an SEA and HRA.

David had enabled a draft screening opinion on the SEA, with a request being submitted to Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England, requesting comments within 5-6 weeks.

Vaughan explained that an SEA usually happens at the end of the draft Plan process but David had been helpful in providing a draft opinion to allow the application to Locality for Technical Support for AECOM to progress this week. The aim was to drip feed components of the updated policies etc to AECOM to undertake this piece of work during the coming months, whilst waiting for the housing elements to progress and this should speed up the whole process, rather than doing it all at the end and adding delays.

David explained that with regard to the HRA screening a draft plan would be required in order to do this. The first Plan did not need an HRA, which will be undertaken by Wiltshire Council, as the area does not have a lot of European sites or sensitive sites compared to other areas and only allocated a site for 18 houses. It was possible that an HRA would be required for the review Plan however if larger site/s had housing allocations.

j) **Policy Review**

Vaughan explained that following the Appeal hearing for the site to the rear of Townsend Farm, the Planning Inspectorate had noted that there was no specific buffer protection in place in any of the policy frameworks. Therefore, there was an opportunity in the Plan review to consider advancing a new green buffer/green wedge policy to identify the areas of the rural environment between Melksham and its neighbouring settlements to ensure there is no coalescence or erosion of the green environment, which is part of local distinctiveness.

David agreed this would be a good idea, other Plans had done similar in order to prevent coalescence and would be considered a Landscape Gap policy. Members discussed examples of where the question of areas to be protected had arisen before; such as between Bowerhill and the canal, between Melksham and Beanacre, between Melksham and Shaw & Whitley; between Shaw and Whitley, between Melksham and Bowerhill, and between Melksham and Berryfield.

10. **To review Programme Dates**

Vaughan explained the group was on programme with all of the topics and explained that the meeting today had been picked as a logical date in the programme as a lot was happening with the evidence gathering exercises, which were coming to an end, or where Technical Support had been granted and various assessments were being undertaken and reports produced.

In the next 3 months the policies would start to be shaped, with the site assessment work running for a bit longer. Therefore, the housing allocation will be later in the programme and there will need to be further discussion with Wiltshire Council regarding the Local Plan to understand housing numbers and strategic sites.

The MWPC Clerk clarified that with regard to the Landscape Gap assessment work that this would be outside the current approved quote from Place; and therefore, required a resolution to take forward a request for additional funding from the parish and town council.

Vaughan explained such a policy would need to be based on a robust landscape assessment which would stand up to challenge by a landscape advocate for a developer. It would need to be defined on robust landscape grounds and assessed by a Chartered Landscape Architect. The work would take approximately 3-4 days' work. If this was based on the standard consultant daily rate of £500 (as this is the maximum rate that Locality accepted for such work, so a good baseline indicative figure) it would cost about £2,000-£3,000; this would provide an effective robust evidence base for a policy; to enable it to stand up against future challenge or scrutiny.

Councillor Pafford proposed this, which was seconded by Councillor Hubbard.

It was noted the costs of undertaking this work would have to be split between both councils, with the MTC Clerk expressing a concern the Town Council had already spent the budget set aside for the Neighbourhood Plan Review.

Resolved: To instruct a Chartered Landscape architect to undertake work in order to formulate a landscape gap policy, pending both Council's funding approval.

11. **To approve latest invoices and note current financial report.**

An invoice from Place for £5,540.46 (£6,648 including VAT) had been received and related to work undertaken on the Housing site selection and other work and included travel expenses. Apart from the travel expenses the rest of the invoice would come from the £10,000 Locality grant funding.

The MTC Clerk understood further Place invoices had been received earlier in the day, but would investigate.

The MWPC Clerk explained there had been 3 full page adverts in the Melksham News, which the Town Council should have received the invoices, which would come out of grant funding.

Vaughan stated the last invoice took over a month to be paid and as only a small company they were unable to carry such debt and therefore asked if payments could be paid within the 30 days payment period.

The MTC Clerk explained she would investigate why the payment had been late but hoped going forward this would not be the case, as the Town Council now had the capability to pay by BACS.

12. **To receive update on Appeal APP/Y3940/W/21/3285428 for 20/07334/OUT - Semington Road, Melksham, SN12 6EF and next steps undertaken**

David explained the approval of the plans was not what everyone had expected, including Wiltshire Council, with the appeal been won, as the developer had

changed the allocation from market value housing to 100% affordable housing at Appeal stage. The Inspector had given great weight to the need for affordable housing in Wiltshire and therefore this swayed his opinion.

David explained that when looking at Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which gives areas with a Neighbourhood Plan protection for 2 years from speculative, not Plan led, development, the Inspector had said the Melksham Plan had met all four of the criteria, where there is a newly made neighbourhood plan and the adverse impacts are likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the housing proposal.

David believed the original proposal, which was policy compliant with 30% affordable housing would not have been allowed at Appeal and from reading the Inspector's report did not think he had discussed the adverse impacts of having 50 affordable houses in one place as normally the policy is to spread affordable housing within a development.

Councillor Wood asked what lessons had been learnt from the outcome of the appeal.

David explained Wiltshire Council had refused the application and defended it at the hearing, as best they could. The decision was not based on the lack of 5-year housing supply and only need a 3-year land supply to afford Paragraph 14 protection.

Councillor Wood asked if another application for 50 affordable houses came along elsewhere would this be defendable.

David explained consideration would need to be given to the appeal decision and as a different site they would look at other impacts i.e. landscape, biodiversity etc and refuse on those reasons and defend those reasons at appeal.

Councillor Pafford asked if the developer were to come back with another application for market value housing on all or part of the site due to lack of viability what would be the response of Wiltshire Council.

David explained this could happen, and in all likelihood would be refused as the appeal was won as the application was changed to 100% affordable housing. Most developers would not put in an application for 100% affordable housing as it was not profitable. If a developer came forward with 60% or 70% affordable housing it would likely be refused given the fact the Neighbourhood Plan has recently been made. However, it could be appealed by the developer and Wiltshire Council would have to defend their decision.

David expressed frustration that officers' time was taken up in defending appeals, which are time consuming, as this meant their time was taken away from obtaining a 5-year land supply position.

Vaughan asked if there was any other course of action which could be taken in challenging the Inspector's decision, if considered to be unacceptable.

David explained a judicial review could be requested or Wiltshire Council could challenge the decision made. Wiltshire Council, as the Local Planning Authority, would have to request a judicial review but there are significant cost implications in doing this. It would also be hard for Wiltshire Council to put forward the argument that Wiltshire does not need affordable housing and whether a Judge would dismiss the Inspector's decision on this.

Councillor Baines expressed concern at having affordable housing in one location.

Councillor Hubbard felt in the end it may have to be accepted that the Appeal was lost, despite an understanding that 100% affordable housing was against planning policy and hoped there would be officer support at Wiltshire Council to reject any subsequent plans which are submitted by the developer for a change in the scheme as the development is no longer viable.

Vaughan expressed concern that the Inspector had not taken account the Core Strategy's balanced community policy in arriving at his view on the balance of the benefits outweighing the harm. He felt it was not about whether the Inspector's view on 'balance' was right when it came to the appeal, but about whether he took account of a policy and whether his decision is sound and compliant.

David explained he had expressed his opinion and that of the Steering Group at a higher level in Wiltshire Council and he had proposed they look into getting legal advice into a legal challenge/judicial review. The 50 affordable houses will be of different tenures, with some social housing as well as First Homes and shared homes.

The MWPC Clerk explained that the Parish Council had written to Parvis Khansari (Wiltshire Council's Corporate Director of Place), to seek assurance of how officers in the future were going to treat any speculative development applications in the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Area, bearing in mind it had met Paragraph 14 conditions, and secondly what would Wiltshire Council do if the applicant were to come back with a revised scheme using the viability argument.

Parvis Khansari had written back to say he had forwarded the Council's concerns to the Head of Planning to investigate.

The MWPC Clerk also explained that the Townsend Farm Residents Association had written to Michael Gove MP as head of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, as well as their local MP, to express frustration at the decision, given all the hard work undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Michelle Donelan MP had responded to say she was looking into arranging a meeting with the Housing Minister, to discuss the concerns. The Parish Council had written back to Michelle Donelan MP to say the Council would support such discussions and would like to be part of that meeting.

David explained he hoped the Government would look at this, as most neighbourhood plan groups would wonder whether it was worth continuing.

The MWPC Clerk noted the development did not make any contribution to the canal in the s106 unilateral agreement, which was in the original report as a condition and felt it would be interesting to understand who and why this had been taken out of the new Unilateral Agreement.

Councillor Baines explained the developer had only put forward the first half of their land holding and would probably come back with the other half of the site, which is Grade 2 agricultural land and what the reaction would be from Wiltshire Council as this would be for market value housing presumably to make the whole site viable.

Resolved: To write to Parvis Khansari, Corporate Director Place to ask if Wiltshire Council are happy that the Planning Inspector took heed of the Wiltshire Council policies regarding balanced and inclusive communities on this Appeal decision, and if the impact of 50 affordable housing dwellings in one place was considered appropriately.

13. Latest WALPA (Wiltshire Area Localism Planning Alliance) update

The Steering Group noted the various reports and update from WALPA.

14. To agree date and venue of Next Meeting of Steering Group

Vaughan suggested as there was plenty of work for the various task groups to undertake that the next Steering Group meeting be held at the end of September in order the evidence collated could be presented.

Resolved: The next Steering Group meeting to be held on 28 September at 6.30pm (Venue TBC)

Meeting closed at 8.35pm   Signed …………………………..
                                           Chair, 28 September 2022

Teresa Strange

From:	Vaughan Thompson <vaughan@placestudio.com>
Sent:	13 September 2022 14:41
To:	Teresa Strange; Linda Roberts
Cc:	Katie Lea
Subject:	Melksham Green Gaps

Linda and Teresa

Jessie has now confirmed that green gap analysis can be a "bolt-on" facilitation support service from Locality (provided by AECOM) added to the Design Guide/Code brief they are appointed to do. She has confirmed verbally that there is no new process. However, the support would be provided by their landscape architecture team. The process and programme for this are unclear.

As long as it can provide the evidence in time for the Reg 14 draft in the new year, there should not be an issue. But are you able to follow that up with Locality/AECOM?

On the basis of previous advice that AECOM would only provide this service commercially, I had briefed and lined Charles Potterton up for this. I will now stand him down.

But this new pathway saves JMNP2 the funding and simplifies the support providers.

As this is linked to environment policies, Katie will be the Place Studio contact for seeing this through.

Regards
Vaughan

Place Studio

Bristol and Exeter House
Lower Approach Road
Temple Meads
Bristol
BS1 6QA

T: 0117 930 4175
M: 07824 435104

Teresa Strange

From:	Teresa Strange
Sent:	07 September 2022 09:06
To:	Watson, Jessie
Cc:	Linda Roberts (linda.roberts@melksham-tc.gov.uk); Patsy Clover (Patsy.Clover@melksham-tc.gov.uk); Lorraine McRandle
Subject:	Melksham NHP Green Gap Analysis Brief

Hi Jessie
Please find below the brief for the Green/Landscape Gap work as discussed.

Melksham Green Gap Landscape Analysis Brief

Background
The current NHP was made one year ago. Its policies are up to date. But the swift review, which is primarily driven by identifying allocations, provides an opportunity to add other policy or updated policy evidence.

Melksham is also likely to be identified as a location for significant strategic growth through the Local Plan allocations. This could be for c2500 homes. This will not be confirmed until the Reg 19 Local Plan is published in Oct/Nov (or later).

Melksham and Bowerhill form the main urban area and focus of potential strategic growth. Analysis undertaken by the JMNP Steering Group (AECOM Points of the Compass Review) and responses to the previous Local Plan consultation has indicated that a strategic location for this growth to the east of Melksham may have less implications for green gaps. However, to the north, west and south Melksham is close but distinct from rural settlements within Melksham Without Parish. Maintaining this distinction is important.

The villages of Shaw and Whitley, within Melksham Without Parish, are separated by an important green gap. However, both villages are considered together as a "large village" in the Wiltshire Core Strategy. It is likely they will jointly be expected to accommodate a share of Wiltshire's rural housing allocations.

Speculative Development
Melksham and Melksham Without is subject to ongoing speculative development proposals that threaten to harm local settlement distinctiveness. The inspector's report into a recent appeal loss on land between Melksham and Berryfield highlighted a lack of an identified green gap / buffer policy. This has stimulated interest in providing one through the JMNP review.

Progressing a Green Gap Policy
At its recent the Steering Group resolved to progress a NHP green gap policy and accepted that its evidence base needed professional landscape input.

The NHP Steering Group therefore need green gap policy analysis methodology and fee proposal to undertake this work. Below we have set out some information that can help scope out the requirements.

The Methodology
There is no fixed approach to analysis of green gaps. We do not want to impose a method. Our main criteria is to ensure that the policy and designations stand up to challenge at examination on the JNMP and then be robust in the development management process after the plan has been made.

As guide we have looked at research that has been done on Green Gap assessment and evidence undertaken by LUC. We attached a copy of the LUC document for a strategic green gap study.

https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/planning/Planning_Policy/S2Examination/Evidence/EB7.2.5%20Green%20Gap%20Study%202020.pdf

The Scope
On the attached annotated image, I've identified an initial scope of where the green gaps are likely to be. But of course, we have not undertaken detailed analysis or dialogue with the Steering Group on this yet, so it may alter.   NB The land between Bowerhill and Seend and Bowerhill and Semington combines parishes. These areas may require a different approach or be contained within Melksham NDP area.

Timescale
Melksham NHP Steering Group wish to have evidence to support a new green gap policy validated by December 2022.   It would therefore wish to receive landscape analysis by the end of November 2022.

AGENDA ITEM 07(c)i) Brief to AECOM for green gaps work

AGENDA ITEM 07(c)i) Brief to AECOM for green gaps work   25
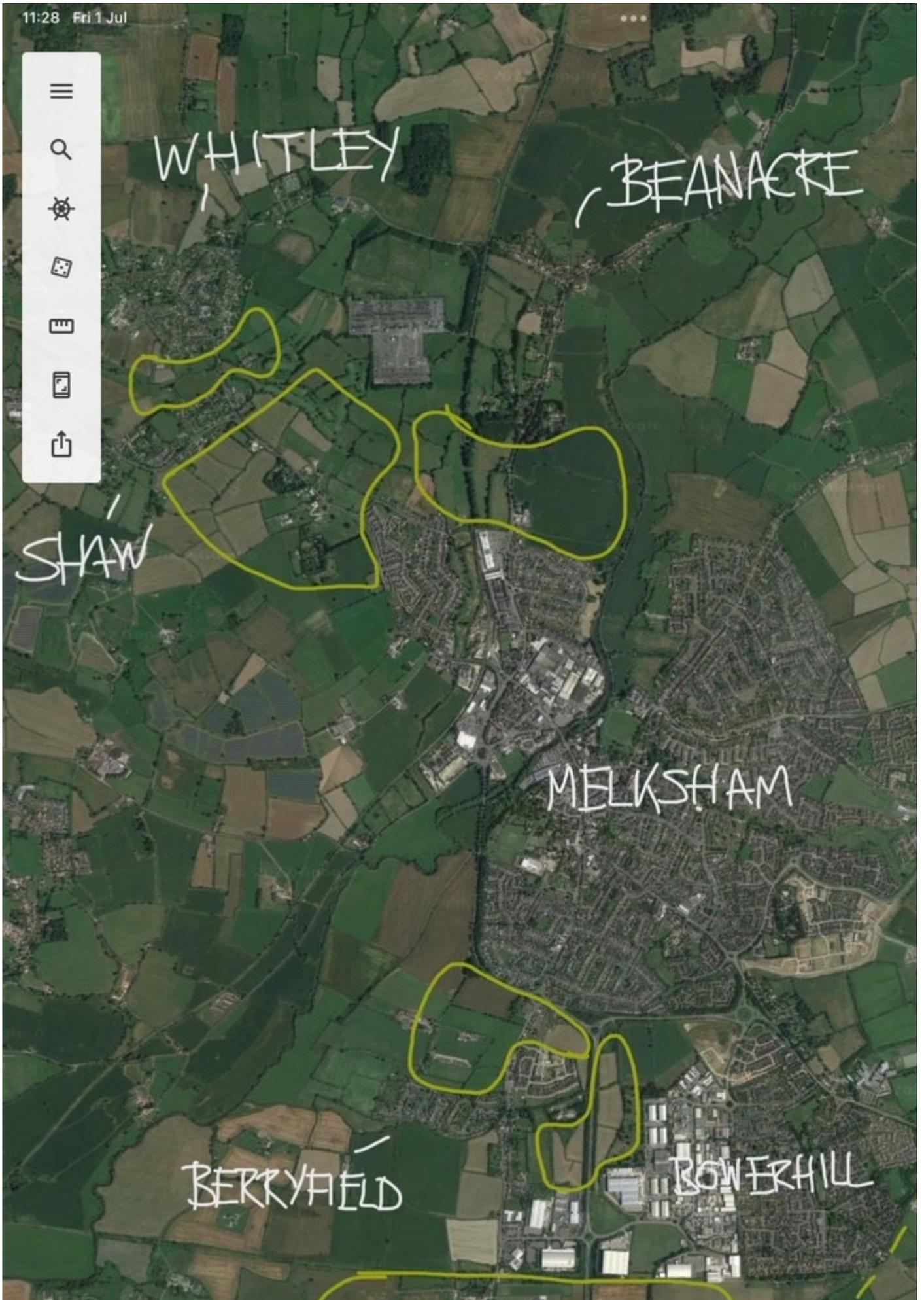
With kind regards, Teresa

Teresa Strange
Clerk
PLEASE NOTE THE NEW ADDRESS:
Melksham Without Parish Council
First Floor
Melksham Community Campus
Market Place
Melksham
Wiltshire
SN12 6ES
01225 705700

4

Department for Transport

Large Local Majors & Major Road Network Schemes - Pre Programme Entry Monitoring Return 2022/23

PLEASE DO NOT USE THIS FORM FOR SCHEMES THAT HAVE PROGRAMME ENTRY OR FULL APPROVAL

Part 1 SCHEME INFORMATION

Lead Local Authority: Wiltshire Council

Scheme Name: A350 Melksham Bypass

Scheme Description: The A350 Melksham Bypass would improve this important north-south route by diverting traffic away from the existing sub-standard route through Melksham and Beanacre, improving connections to the south coast and to the principal towns in the west Wiltshire corridor. It is one of the busiest major roads in the county, with typical daily traffic volumes up to 35,000 vehicles per day and heavy goods vehicles accounting for around 8% of all vehicles.

Part 2 STATUS OF SCHEME

OBC in development

NOTES
(1) The total cost of the scheme including local authority and any third party contribuitions
(2) The estimated DfT contribution over the duration of the scheme.

	Total Scheme Cost (Note 1) £	DfT Contribution (Note 2) £
Current Estimate of Total Scheme Cost	£238,019,996	£201,360,500

Part 3 PROGRESS AGAINST MILESTONES   **PLEASE DO NOT USE THIS FORM FOR SCHEMES THAT HAVE PROGRAMME ENTRY OR FULL APPROVAL**

Milestone Please update the progress of any **"mandatory"** milestones indicated below. In addition, please also provide information relating to key delivery milestones. For example, dates for planning permission, statutory consents, procurement etc.	Achieved? (Yes or No) Please use the drop down menu	Estimated Date at time of July 2019 Bid (dd-mm-yy)	Current Estimated Date (dd-mm-yy)	Actual Date Achieved (dd-mm-yy)	Comments (including reasons for slippage)
Submission of Strategic Outline Business Case to DfT **(Mandatory)**	Yes	01-Jul-2019		01-Jul-2019	
Submission of Outline Business Case to DfT **(Mandatory)**	No	01-Dec-2021	31-Mar-2023		OBC submission delayed to March 2023 to enable further public consultation, preparation of Carbon Management Plan and consideration of National Highways M4 to Dorset Coast Connectivity study.
Planning Application	No		03-Oct-2024		
Planning Decision	No	01-Mar-2022	10-Mar-2025		
Publish CPO and SRO	No		30-May-2025		
Statutory orders confirmed	No		20-Aug-2026		
Tender issue	No	01-Jun-2023	24-Jul-2024		
Submission of Full Business Case to DfT **(Mandatory)**	No	01-Sep-2023	27-Aug-2026		
Start of Works (**Mandatory**)	No	01-Mar-2024	07-Nov-2026		
Completion of Works (**Mandatory**)	No	01-Jun-2028	23-May-2028		
Scheme Brought into Public Use e.g. Opening Date (**Mandatory**)	No	01-Jun-2028	23-Nov-2028		

Part 4 CURRENT TOTAL ESTIMATED OUTTURN COSTS

Annual profiles	Total scheme cost £	DfT Funding (Estimated Bid) £	Local Authorities' Intended Contribution £	Third Party Funding £
Pre-2020/21	£106,084		£106,084	
2020-21	£1,370,850	£1,330,000	£40,850	
2021-22	£895,062	£0	£895,062	
2022-23	£318,000	£0	£318,000	
2023-24	£6,211,251	£5,279,563	£931,688	
2024-25	£6,376,250	£5,419,813	£956,438	
2025-26	£6,516,250	£5,538,813	£977,438	
2026-27	£44,636,250	£37,940,813	£6,695,438	
2027-28	£87,335,000	£74,234,750	£13,100,250	
2028-29	£84,255,000	£71,616,750	£12,638,250	
2029-30				
Total scheme costs	£238,019,997	£201,360,501	£36,659,496	£0

Comments:

Public Consultation undertaken on long list of route options in Nov 2020-Jan 2021. Consultation on emerging route undertaken Jun 2021 - Aug 2021. OBC submission delayed to March 2023 to enable consideration of outcome of National Highways M4 to Dorset Coast Connectivity study. Annual profiles revised accordingly but no change in proposed DfT contribution. Third Party contributions to be determined as scheme develops.

Part 5 CONTACT INFORMATION

(Please provide details of the main contact in case DfT has any queries about the information in your return)

Name:	xxxxxxxxxxx
Position:	Head of Major highway Projects
Telephone number:	xxxxxxxxxxx
e-mail address	xxxxxxxxxxx

PLEASE RETURN THE FORM TO: S31MajorProjects@dft.gov.uk

Melksham Town Centre Masterplan Contents

PART 1

1. **Introduction**
   1.1 Purpose of this document
   1.2 Aims and objectives *(incorporate themes from briefing document)*
   1.3 Document structure
   1.4 Area of Study
      Defined Town Centre (JMNP Policy9)
      Edge of centre
      Connections

2. **Policy and evidence base**
   2.1 National High Streets and Town Centre Context
      (Completion, decline and pandemic. Rejuvenation & sustainable community hubs)
   2.2 Planning Policy and design guidance
      (include TNP1 vision and aims and Policy 9 and 20 minute neigbourhoods)
      Core Strategy and Wilts Local Plan 2038 (Emerging)
      Existing town centre analysis and strategy

3. **Engagement**
   3.1 Overview
      (summary of engagement process and findings)
      JMNP1
      JMNP2
      Town centre master plan

      Stakeholders (Including Wiltshire Council)
      Community

4. **Melksham town centre background**

   History & development
   Town centre today
   Key issues, challenges & opportunities (Summary)

5. **The town centre vision and objectives spatial framework**

   5.1 Masterplan vision
   5.2 Town centre ~~strategic~~ objectives

6. **The Town centre master plan framework**

   6.1 Development principles

   Economy & Vitality

      6.1.1   Economy and vitality today *(briefly cover vacant short term and long-term opportunity sites here)*

      6.1.2   Economy and vitality opportunities *(social value, a diverse range of uses, activation via meanwhile uses, a thriving economy, health and wellbeing, upskilling)*

Culture & Distinctiveness

      1.1.1   Culture and distinctiveness today (*highlight the historic uses and features)*
      1.1.2   Culture and distinctiveness opportunities *(celebrate the historic environment and cultural assets, art trail, the proposals for the park)*

Heritage & Townscape

      1.1.1   Heritage & Townscape today
      1.1.2   Heritage & Townscape opportunities *(shop fronts, materials, colour palette, roofline, building heights)*
      1.1.3   Heritage & Townscape framework / priority actions

Sustainability & Climate Change

      1.1.1   Sustainability and climate change today
      1.1.2   Sustainability and climate change opportunities *(20 minute community, greening, sustainable buildings, SuDS, renewable and low carbon strategy)*
      1.1.3   Town centre sustainability and climate change priority actions

Connections & Accessibility

      6.1.3   Connection and access today *(Strategic context, multi-modal transport issues, junction issues, walkability, etc)*
      6.1.4   Connection and access opportunities *(connected walkable loops, accessibility, riverside walk, greener / healthy friendly streets, active travel provision (links to the station, cycle provision / mobility hubs), traffic reduction strategy. Integrate Priority for People elements*
      6.1.5   Town centre connection and access framework / priority actions

Public Realm Quality

      1.1.4   Public realm and placemaking today *(highlight underused spaces etc)*
      1.1.5   Public realm and placemaking opportunities *(greening the town centre, network of green spaces; car parking strategy, new pedestrian crossings, junction improvements, new landmarks, views, wayfinding signage, lighting strategy)*
      1.1.6   Public realm framework / priority actions

7.   The town centre Framework Masterplan

7.1 High level consolidated town centre master plan framework plan

8.   The town centre regeneration opportunity sites

1.2 Opportunity sites
   (land use opportunities for new / enhanced uses to generate vitality)
      1.2.1   Land-uses and sites today (survey)
      1.2.2   Short term town centre opportunity sites and potential regeneration
           (i) town centre
           (ii) edge of centre
           (quick win opportunities for delivery within 1-5 years)
      1.2.3   Long term town centre opportunity sites and potential regeneration

      (i)   town centre

      (ii)   edge of centre

(longer term master planning/regeneration opportunities for further consideration and potential delivery beyond current JMNP period)

2. Delivery

2.1 Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan
    Policies
    Allocated/Opportunity Sites
    Priority Projects
2.2 Wiltshire Council
2.3 Local Partnership
2.4 Further Work

Appendix   Checklist

2.5 General questions to ask when considering a town centre development proposal

Melksham Car Parking Study
Brief

Background

The Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (JMNP) was made in July 2021.   The review of the JMNP in 2022 has enabled the progression of a commitment to produce a town centre master plan. This is being undertaken harnessing Locality Technical Suppert by Locality's consultant AECOM.

Melksham town centre contains a range public, private and shopper off street car parks as well as formal and informal on-street car parking. The new camp as has provided a new off street facility within the town centre area.

The JMNP review Steering Group wish the Town Centre Master Plan to provide a framework for the sustainable vitality of the town centre. This framework should address how key areas of JMNP policy should be delivered where they are relevant to the town centre.

JMNP Policy 9 (seeks to protect the character and vitality of Melksham Town Centre. Specifically clause (iii) states development proposals within the town centre …..will be supported provided: access to public transport, cycle routes and car parking is considered and addressed;

Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel requires all developments to be planned in line with the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy. Improvements

These policy principles should be applied to the master planning framework for access and movement for the town centre.

The Town Centre Master Plan should therefore consider how well the town centre's parking provision currently supports its sustainable vitality and where improvement or changes to car parking and car parks may enhance this during the neighbourhood plan's lifetime.

Objectives

Audit
Off street and on street car parking capacity in the town centre, the total number of spaces in each car parking area by type
Adequacy, quality and location of existing parking provision
Understand current use recording the occupancy levels throughout the day and week.

Forecast
Future likely user parking requirements in the short (5 years) and long term (10+ years) taking account of population growth; change in retail habits and the use of electric and non-car modes of travel
If there is, or is likely to be, a deficit or surplus in public car park provision; and

Recommend
Options to resolve the issues identified whether quality or quantity of provision and/or to enhance the wider vitality and sustainability of Melksham Town Centre.

Integrate
Results and recommendations within the overall master plan framework for Melksham Town Centre

Methodology

Technical Analysis
Auditing and assessment should be undertaken using a recognised and technically robust methodology by a suitably qualified professional

Integration with Town Centre Master Plan
The parking study should be undertaken as an integral component of evidence gathering and recommendations within the process of the Melksham Town Centre Master Plan.

Engagement
The study must be undertaken with the knowledge and agreement of car park providers and engage with providers to ensure evidence robust and is verified. Draft recommendations should be the subject of coordinated stakeholder and community engagement, appropriately integrated with engagement for the JMNP review.

WORKING REFERENCE NOYES

CAR PARKING STUDIES- GENERAL
One of the main projects delivered by People and Places Insight Limited is the Benchmarking System. Benchmarking provides a comprehensive portrait of the life of towns, cities and shopping centres and involves gathering and analysing data on Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) within designated areas. Each of the KPI's has been specifically selected by Centre Managers and Research Professionals to ensure that the data collected and collated has the maximum relevance and impact. The People and Places research team conducted the Standard Benchmarking Car Parking Audit in Marlborough in 2014. The process involved defining the off street and on street car parking offering in the town centre, recording the total number of spaces in each car parking area before recording the occupancy levels on a Market Day and on a Non-Market Day. With the Standard Benchmarking Car Park Review, each car parking area is visited once between 11am-2pm to record the occupancy levels. The final report produced by People and Places included a summary of occupancy levels on the Market and Non-Market Days in an off street/ on street/ overall breakdown. The data for Marlborough was compared to other towns of a similar size and typology in the Benchmarking System.

Aims and Objectives
1.2.1 The aim of the study is to provide Test Valley Borough Council with an evidence base to help inform future decisions on car park provision. This can then be used to understand how the ambitions of the two town strategies can best be met.
1.2.2 The objectives of the study are to: -
• Assess the adequacy, quality and location of existing parking provision within Andover and Romsey;

• Forecast future parking requirements in the short (5 years); medium (10 years) and long term (10+ years);
• Provide sensitivity testing to these forecasts taking account of population growth; change in retail habits and the use of non-car modes of travel;
• Establish if there is, or is likely to be, a deficit or surplus in public car park provision; and
• Recommend changes to resolve the issues identified whether quality or quantity of provision.

The purpose of the study was to;
• Reassess the adequacy, suitability and location of the on-street and off-street parking provision to meet future demand within the town centre
• To identify and consider the likely effects on current and future parking provision within the town centre arising from current and proposed developments.
• To assess how improved demand management measures might best utilise existing and planned resources.
• To consider the balance of long and short stay parking
• To provide short, medium and long term measures to produce a sustainable town centre parking strategy.

The need for the Parking Study
A comprehensive parking survey was carried out by Harris Ethical on behalf of Dursley Town Council in October 2014, with some sites revalidated in January 2015 to ensure that they reflected the actual behaviours observed.
This series of surveys was set up in response to:
☐ The need for further intelligence to support and validate Dursley Town Council's (DTC) emerging strategies and policy vision for the town centre and the surrounding area, driven by its current Neighbourhood Planning process.
☐ The need for a sound evidence base around need and public opinion to inform Stroud District Council's potential changes to parking arrangements, including the potential perceived 'loss' of car park assets in the town (i.e. the expiry of previous temporary longer stay parking arrangements in the town centre).
☐ The way in which parking needs to fit into the wider transport and placemaking strategy embodied in the Neighbourhood Plan, to ensure that there is enough balance of parking provision between short (i.e. under 3 hours) and longer stay parking (i.e. for businesses and employers) in the town.
☐ The need to be able to justify new schemes and initiatives as part of the Local Transport Review process which is currently under way, led by Gloucestershire County Council.
The results have been presented factually in a slide deck to aid interpretation and presentation, and were discussed at meeting between DTC and Stroud DC representatives on the 15th January 2015.

https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parking-melksham

Melksham Design Code Contents

1. **Introduction**
   1.1 Purpose of this document
   1.2 Preparing the design code
   1.3 Planning Policy and design guidance *(include TNP1 vision and aims)*
   1.4 Area of Study *(Map of area including existing allocations and planning applications)*

2. **Neighbourhood Area Context Analysis** (we will use a lot of the evidence base for TNP1 for this section).
   2.1 Access and movement
   (Roads, railway station, canal project (??), active travel corridor, traffic issues, bus routes, PRoWs, general desire lines)
   2.2 History and heritage
   (Listed buildings, ancient monuments, registered parks, and gardens, etc.)
   2.3 Landscape designations and green infrastructure
   (ancient woodland, river courses, important views, green spaces, gap between villages designated local green spaces)
   2.4 Flood risk and topography
   (Flood risk zones, lidar lines)
   2.5 Community spirit and distinctiveness
   (community groups, initiatives, distinctiveness of different settlements)
   2.6 Character areas (to be defined – see Figure 15 on the NP1 – include growth sites here, i.e.. areas with or without planning permission)
   (Description and urban design analysis for each area)

3. **General Design Guidance and Codes**
   3.1 Introduction (how to use the codes)

   DC.01 Local identity and character

   - Character and distinctiveness
     (consistent features that capture Melksham – public realm features, materials, layout and grain patterns)
   - Social and community infrastructure
     (linked to the community spirit analysis, relating to any new community infrastructure)
   - Heritage, views and landmarks
     (Importance of retaining and enhancing setting of heritage assets, views towards them and to the landscape, gaps etc)
   - Development affecting heritage assets
     (setting of landscape and built assets and development principles)
   - Settlement edges
     (Soft edges to countryside, landscape separateness, no blank facades facing countryside)
   - Patterns of growth within the landscape
     (development principles relating to Shaw and Whitley – and the green gaps)

   DC.02 Access and movement *(incorporate Priority for People work)*

- Prioritise walking and cycling
  (Links through the countryside, between neighbourhoods, through the town)
- People friendly streets
  (active travel and people orientated spaces and streets)
- Car parking
  (Parking typologies, electric charging points)
- Legibility and wayfinding
  (Wayfinding features such as signage, art trails, distinctive trees, landmarks, etc)

DC.03 Green and blue infrastructure
- Create a green network
  (Strategic green spaces, riverside, green gap creating separateness, PRoWs, wildlife corridors, etc)
- Green spaces
  (Local green spaces, parks, recreation grounds, overlooking etc)
- Landscape and trees
  (Retain mature trees, enhance landscape setting)
- Biodiversity and wildlife
  (woodland, hedgerows, nature friendly interventions)
- Water management
  (SuDS, permeable paving, slow release)

DC.04 Sustainability and energy efficiency

- Sustainable buildings / carbon neutral development
  (Diagram showing ways to increase sustainability and energy efficiency in buildings, how to design them to fit the surroundings)
- Minimising construction waste
- Recycling materials and buildings

DC.05 Built form

- Enclosure
  (Level of openness defined by building heights to street width, trees, etc)
- Building lines and boundary treatments
  (consistent/informal building lines, boundary treatments – iron)
- Roofline and roofscape
  (Variation of roof heights, roof angle and roof types)
- Building heights and density
  (Building heights generally 1-3 storeys, influence of topography, housing density varies)
- Architectural features
  (windows, porches, chimneys, etc)
- Building and public realm materials and colour palette
  (Include local materials, town centre public realm, etc)
- Extensions, infill and alterations
  (Extensions sympathetic to the main building, adapt and reuse buildings for sustainability)

4. **Character area design guidelines and codes**

4.1 Introduction

4.2 For each character area:
Apply the general guidance to each specific area using the analysis from Chapter 2. Any additional codes that aren't covered by the general guidance e.g. town centre shop fronts

5. Development proposal checklist

5.1 General questions to ask when considering a development proposal

6. Next Steps

6.1 Delivery

Lorraine McRandle

From:	M4 to Dorset Coast Connectivity Study
	<M4toDorsetCoastConnectivityStudy@nationalhighways.co.uk>
Sent:	12 September 2022 09:31
To:	Teresa Strange
Cc:	Lorraine McRandle
Subject:	RE: Preferred strategic routes

Good afternoon,

Thank you for contacting us with your query about our M4 to Dorset Coast Study.

The study team have completed several briefings and workshops with stakeholders throughout the region, providing context and outlining our approach to the study. This includes detail on a shortlist of corridors and potential interventions, that further technical and modelling work will take place on, to highlight potential investment solutions.

The study is due to complete in late 2022 and the report published soon after completion. The initial evidence on existing and future route performance was not intended for public circulation and is what has helped inform discussion, agree the routes, options, and interventions to be considered.

The next newsletter is planned for distribution in October, and I shall ensure you get a copy to keep you updated.

Please let us know if you have further queries.

Many thanks

Felicity Joyce.
Assistant Planning Manager
Network Planning Division | Customer, Strategy and Communications
National Highways | West Midlands ROC | c/o The Cube | 199 Wharfside Street | Birmingham | B1 1RN
Mob: 07701372176
Web: https://nationalhighways.co.uk

From: Teresa Strange <clerk@melkshamwithout.co.uk>
Sent: 01 September 2022 14:51
To: M4 to Dorset Coast Connectivity Study <M4todorsetcoastconnectivitystudy@nationalhighways.co.uk>
Cc: Lorraine McRandle <office@melkshamwithout.co.uk>
Subject: Preferred strategic routes

Dear National Highways
Are you able to provide us with an update on your M4 to Dorset Coast Connectivity Study please.
Your document attached anticipated a "preferred strategic route" to be identified in Summer 2022 and we wondered what progress had been made, and/or where to look for this update.
As a large parish on the route of the A350 we are anticipating the report with interest.
With many thanks,

Teresa Strange
Clerk
PLEASE NOTE THE NEW ADDRESS FROM MONDAY 1ST AUGUST:
Melksham Without Parish Council
First Floor
Melksham Community Campus
Market Place
Melksham
Wiltshire
SN12 6ES
01225 705700

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Lorraine McRandle

From:	Mark Harris
Sent:	06 September 2022 11:03
To:	Richard Wood; Alan Baines; John Glover; David Pafford; Terrence Chivers; Mary Pile
Cc:	Teresa Strange; Lorraine McRandle; Marianne Rossi
Subject:	Update on the A350 Melksham Bypass Project
Attachments:	Q1 - A350 Melksham Bypass.pdf; M4 to Dorset Coast Newsletter Web Final.pdf

Dear Planning Committee members and MWPC Officers,

Further to the subject being raised (by me) at last night's Planning Committee meeting this is a reply from the Department for Transport responding to a Freedom of Information request by a Bowerhill resident:-

*"National Highways' M4-Dorset Coast study is considering strategic road connectivity from the M4 (between the M5 and the A34) and the Dorset Coast. It is assessing whether an alternative corridor would provide a better solution to connectivity than the A36/ A46 corridor which is the current Strategic Road Network route. There are a number of potential alternative corridors that are being assessed, including the A350. If shown to perform better than the existing A36/ A46 corridor, the study may recommend the possible adoption of one or more alternative strategic corridors and where future investment may be needed on them. **The study is ongoing and is now expected to report in early 2023**. Further information is provided in the attached newsletter from earlier in 2022".*

The newsletter referred to is the one which says "the study is due to complete in late 2022" - see attached.

Also attached is Wiltshire Council's costing document which confirms they will not be submitting their Outline Business Case until March 2023.

"OBC submission delayed to March 2023 to enable further public consultation, preparation of Carbon Management Plan **and consideration of National Highways M4 to Dorset Coast Connectivity study**."

The total cost of the scheme, which was £135 million, is now £238 million (an increase of 76%), with a completion date of 2028.

Cllr. Mark Harris
MJNHP Bypass Task Group

Teresa Strange
_____

From:	Putt, Ryan <ryan.putt@aecom.com>
Sent:	12 September 2022 13:08
To:	Teresa Strange
Cc:	Vaughan Thompson (vaughan@placestudio.com); Baker, Emily
Subject:	Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Scoping Report
Attachments:	Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan_SEA Scoping Report_v1.0_120922.pdf

Follow Up Flag:	Follow up
Flag Status:	Flagged

Hi Teresa,

Hope you are well. We have now completed the SEA Scoping Report for the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan. Please find attached, as discussed. Thanks again for sharing the SEA screening decision, and for pointing us in the direction of the made JMNP (and supporting documents). These were essential sources of reference during the preparation of the Scoping Report, and you'll see that we've lifted and incorporated several pieces of information to contribute to the baseline sections for each chapter.

As a reminder, the Scoping Report presents a baseline and context review for the SEA, a series of key sustainability issues, and the SEA Framework against which we intend to appraise the Neighbourhood Plan (including reasonable alternatives). The idea of the Scoping Report is to provide the three statutory bodies for SEA (Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England) with an opportunity to comment on the proposed scope of the SEA. This is a statutory requirement.

Once you have confirmed you are happy with the document, we will release the Scoping Report for the statutory period of five weeks on your behalf.

I trust this all makes sense.

We look forward to any comments you may have. Please note, given this is not the main document for the SEA, you may just wish to give this a skim read rather than undertake a detailed review to check you are happy with it. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

Ryan

Ryan Putt BSc (Hons), MSc, PIEMA
He/Him

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_____

From: Putt, Ryan
Sent: 07 September 2022 15:22
To: Teresa Strange <clerk@melkshamwithout.co.uk>

AECOM

Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

Scoping Report

Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

September 2022

Delivering a better world

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
Emily Baker Graduate Environmental Planner	Ryan Putt Senior Environmental Planner	Alastair Peattie Associate Director	Nick Chisholm-Batten Technical Director

Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
V1.0	12th September 2022	Initial version for neighbourhood group comment		Teresa Strange	Parish Clerk

Prepared for:

Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Prepared by:

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Table of Contents

Figure 1.1: Neighbourhood area boundary

1. Introduction

Background

1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan, hereafter referred to as the JMNP2.

1.2 In July 2021, the JMNP1 was 'made' for the period 2020-2026. However, the JMNP Steering Group are undertaking an early review and refresh of the 'made' JMNP1 in light of the latest national policy requirements (with respect to the updated National Planning Policy Framework which was published in July 2021) and emerging local policy requirements within Wiltshire's Local Plan Review process which is ongoing at present (including but not limited to housing numbers and the climate emergency).

1.3 The JMNP2 is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011[1] and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012[2], and in the context of the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015-2026[3]. Due regard is also given to the Wiltshire Local Plan Review[4]. The key information relating to the JMNP2 is presented in Table 1.1 below and the neighbourhood area is depicted in Figure 1.1 preceding this page.

Table 1.1 Key information relating to the JMNP2

Name of Responsible Authority	Wiltshire County Council
Title of Plan	Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 (JMNP2)
Subject	Neighbourhood planning
Purpose	The JMNP2 is being prepared as a neighbourhood plan under the Localism Act 2011 and Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The JMNP2 is being prepared in the context of the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2012-2026. Due regard is also given to Wiltshire's emerging Local Plan Review. The JMNP2 will be used to guide and shape development within the neighbourhood area.
Timescale	To 2036
Area covered by the plan	The neighbourhood area covers the civil parishes of Melksham and Melksham Without, located in Wiltshire, as shown in Figure 1.1 above.
Summary of content	The JMNP2 will set out a vision, strategy, and range of policies for the neighbourhood area.
Plan contact point	Teresa Strange, Clerk Email: clerk@melkshamwithout.co.uk

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[1] UK Government (2011) 'Localism Act 2011' can be accessed here.
[2] UK Government (2012) 'The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012' can be accessed here.
[3] Wiltshire Council (2022) 'Wiltshire Core Strategy' can be accessed here.
[4] Wiltshire Council (2022) 'Local Plan Review' can be accessed here.

Planning policy context

1.4   The Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015-2026 was adopted in 2015 and forms part of the development plan for the administrative area of Wiltshire. Within Core Policy 1, Melksham is identified as a 'market town'; this type of settlement "*has the ability to support sustainable patterns of living in Wiltshire through their current levels of facilities, services and employment opportunities*". Market towns have the potential for significant development that will increase homes and jobs, allowing for the maintenance and enhancement of existing services and facilities. There are other large and small villages within the neighbourhood area, and development in these areas is expected to be more limited to reflect the role and function of these settlements.

1.5   Wiltshire Council are currently undertaking Local Plan Review[5]. Regulation 18 consultation on the emerging spatial strategy was completed between January and March 2021, with the outcomes of this consultation informing the preparation of the draft Local Plan. With respect to housing numbers, the emerging Local Plan Review (within the 'Planning for Melksham' section of the Regulation 18 consultation document) provides an indicative housing target of 2,585 dwellings for the Melksham area during the plan period (up until 2036). The housing requirements are to be delivered through the following:

- existing commitments and completions (i.e., sites which have permission already, and are either currently under construction or are likely to commence in due course),

- strategic scale site allocations to come forward through the emerging Local Plan Review (i.e., likely large greenfield sites which will be subject to detail assessment), and

- a proportion of homes to be found through neighbourhood plan allocations.

1.6   Whilst the housing numbers are potentially subject to change as the emerging Local Plan Review progresses, Wiltshire Council have provided an indicative target of 150-250 homes to be delivered as allocations through the JMNP2. It is anticipated that the remaining housing targets will be met through existing completions and commitments and strategic allocations (as discussed).

1.7   Neighbourhood plans will form part of the development plan for Wiltshire, alongside, but not as a replacement for the Local Plan. Neighbourhood plans are required to be in general conformity with the Local Plan and can develop policies and proposals to address local place-based issues. In this way it is intended for the Local Plan to provide a clear overall strategic direction for development in Wiltshire, whilst enabling finer detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process where appropriate.

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[5] Wiltshire Council (2021): 'Local Plan Review Consultation', can be accessed here

SEA for the JMNP2

SEA screening for the JMNP2

1.8 In August 2022, Wiltshire Council advised that in their view an SEA process was likely to be required for the JMNP2. Which was later confirmed by the statutory consultees for SEA (Historic England, Natural England, and the Environment Agency) in their SEA Screening responses.

1.9 A Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA where it is likely to have significant environmental effects. The SEA Screening decision concludes:

"The draft JMNP2 "is exploring the potential to identity further site allocations with capacity to make a meaningful contribution to the identified community area housing requirement…it is likely that the neighbourhood plan review will consider allocation of land for between 150 to 250 homes.

"A schedule showing 89 potential development sites is attached. It is not known which sites will be allocated or for how many dwellings. The JMNP2 may exceed the figures stated. So, a precautionary approach is taken to the likelihood of significance of effects. There is the potential for significant effects on landscapes, biodiversity, flood risk, on designated and undesignated heritage assets and their settings and on various other areas of environmental importance.

"For this reason, it is considered likely that site allocations alone will have the potential to have significant environmental effects."

1.10 Considering this screening outcome, an SEA process is being undertaken to meet the specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).

SEA explained

1.11 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues.

1.12 The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts and maximising the potential for positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA for the JMNP2 seeks to maximise the emerging plan's contribution to sustainable development.

1.13 Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:

   i.   When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues;

   ii. A report (the 'Environmental Report') is published for consultation alongside the draft plan (i.e. the draft JMNP2) that presents outcomes from the environmental assessment (i.e. discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.

SEA scoping explained

1.14 Developing the draft scope for the SEA as presented in this report has involved the following steps:

- Exploring the policy context for the JMNP2 and SEA to summarise the key messages arising.

- Establishing the baseline for the SEA (i.e. the current and future situation in the area in the absence of the JMNP2) to help identify the plan's likely significant effects.

- Identifying particular problems or opportunities ('issues') that should be a particular focus of the SEA; and

- Considering this information to develop an SEA Framework comprising SEA objectives and assessment questions, which can then be used as a guiding framework for the subsequent assessment.

1.15 The scope is explored and presented under a series of key environmental themes as follows:

- Air quality
- Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Climate change (including flood risk)
- Community wellbeing

- Historic environment
- Land, soil, and water resources
- Landscape
- Transportation

1.16 The selected environmental themes incorporate the 'SEA topics' suggested by Annex I (f) of the SEA Directive.[6] These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of plan effects. The discussion of the scoping information for each theme is presented in **Chapters 2 to 9**, along with a summary of the key issues and the proposed SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions. Each proposal within the emerging JMNP2 will be assessed consistently using this Framework.

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[6] The SEA Directive (Directive 200142//EC) is 'of a procedural nature' (para 9 of the Directive preamble) and does not set out to prescribe particular issues that should and should not be a focus, beyond requiring a focus on 'the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors'

2. Air Quality

Focus of theme

2.1   This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the air quality SEA theme. The theme focuses on air pollution sources, air quality hotspots, and air quality management within and surrounding the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

2.2   **Table 2.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 2.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the air quality SEA theme

Document title	Year of publication
Environment Act	2021
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
The Clean Air Strategy	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations	2017
Environment Act	1995
Wiltshire Council 2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report	2021
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire Council Air Quality Strategy 2019-2024	2019
Wiltshire Council Air Quality Action Plan	2015
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015

2.3   The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which seek to reduce or mitigate air quality impacts during development whilst simultaneously taking advantage of opportunities to improve air quality. Measures include, but are not limited to; sustainable transport solutions, limiting the need to travel, compliance with pollutant limits or objectives, and the enhancement of green infrastructure. Smaller-scale development should consider the potential for cumulative effects in relation to air quality. The NPPF also states that planning policies should contribute towards compliance with pollutant limit levels or national objectives; acknowledging air quality management areas, clean air zones and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Moreover, the NPPF indicates that new and existing developments

should be prevented from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution.

- The Clean Air Strategy outlines how the government will tackle all sources of air pollution. The strategy proposes goals to cut public exposure to particulate matter pollution and outlines required action to meet these goals. Furthermore, it seeks to recognise wider sources that cause poor air quality, such as diffuse sources and smaller contributors. The proposed measures include new legislation and local powers to act in areas with air pollution issues. The Air Quality Strategy for Wiltshire (2019-2024) seeks to reflect this strategy on a more localised scale.

- The 25 Year Environment Plan establishes how the government will expand net gain approaches to include air quality improvements, such as planting more trees in urban areas and changing fuel supplies. In particular, 'Goal 1 Clean air' and the policies contained within 'Chapter 4: Increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution and waste' directly relate to the air quality SEA theme.

- The UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide is focused on lowering nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) emissions to statutory limits as quickly as possible. The plan acknowledges that an improvement in air quality and a reduction in emissions is important and aims to position the UK at the forefront of vehicle innovation by making motoring cleaner.

- Local authorities are required to monitor air quality across the district, report regularly to Defra and act where nationally set levels and limits of pollutants are likely to be exceeded under Section 82 of the Environment Act (1995). Monitoring is undertaken to assess levels of nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, ozone, benzene, and particulates. Where exceedances exist, areas are declared as air quality management areas (AQMAs) and local authorities are required to produce an air quality action plan (AQAP) to improve air quality in the area. Under Schedule 11 in the Environment Act (2021), a local authority must identify any parts of its area in which it appears air quality standards or objectives are not likely to be achieved within the relevant period. Additionally, local authorities must also identify relevant sources of emissions that are considered partly or wholly responsible for failing to achieve air quality standards or objectives in the area. As such, the Wiltshire 2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) is the last available report for the neighbourhood area; fulfilling the requirements of the local air quality management (LAQM) as set out in Section 82 of the Environment Act (1995).

- The Air Quality Action Plan for Wiltshire sets out "the strategic and locally generated actions that will be implemented to improve air quality and work towards meeting the air quality objectives." This plan builds off the Air Quality Strategy for Wiltshire (2019-2024) and identifies 17 strategic actions that will help to achieve the goal of reducing levels of nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter in Wiltshire. A sample of those strategic actions include:

  - Establish community air quality action plan groups under the Area Boards.

- Provide air quality data and information to Area Boards to assist with the production of Community Air Quality Action Plans and Community Neighbourhood Plans.

- Integrate air quality into wider policies and strategies within the council and the adoption of Core Policy 55 in the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

- Integrate green infrastructure considerations into Wiltshire Council policy and strategy and to adopt the Wiltshire Council Green Infrastructure Strategy to support Core Policy 52 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

- Integrate wider climate change policies that share common goals on carbon and nitrogen dioxide reduction into Wiltshire strategies and policies.

- Develop in conjunction with Public Health Wiltshire a text alert system which will be targeted at people with respiratory health issues.

- The JMNP2 will also need to consider the relevant policies that are outlined in the Wiltshire Council Core strategy. In particular, this includes:

  - Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure.

  - Core Policy 55: Air Quality; and

  - Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport.

- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to improve air quality by promoting sustainable transport, active transport and general air quality improvements.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

2.4 According to the Wiltshire Council 2021 Air Quality ASR, there are no AQMAs within the neighbourhood area. However, new development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to indirectly impact on AQMAs within Wiltshire. These AQMAs are located within Salisbury (three in this settlement), Westbury, Calne, Marlborough and Bradford-on-Avon. Although it is expected that most residents in the neighbourhood area will travel to Melksham town centre to access facilities and services, indirect impacts on these AQMAs could be expected due to potential increases in traffic levels between the neighbourhood area and locations like Bradford-on-Avon, Westbury and Devizes.

2.5 Air quality monitoring in Wiltshire is undertaken for nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and fine particulate matter (PM_{10}), the main source for these pollutants is local traffic emissions caused by traffic volume, road layout, topography and high concentrations of pollutants. The annual national objective for both NO_2 and PM_{10} is 40 ug/m^3 maximum. Data from pollutant monitoring undertaken in 2021 demonstrates the average NO_2 and PM_{10} levels have been decreasing, which is concluded to be due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns and restrictions. There were three exceedances of the 24 hour mean for PM_{10} were reported, all in Devizes.

Future baseline

2.6   Future development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to increase traffic, congestion, and their associated emissions. In the absence of suitable planning and mitigation, this could lead to a deterioration in air quality. Therefore, mitigation measures should be incorporated into the design of new development areas to maintain (and where possible, improve) air quality. It is considered that the present shift towards the use of sustainable transportation, including active travel modes and electric vehicle use, has the potential to support longer term air quality improvements. Furthermore, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a shift towards employees working from home, which also contributes to emissions reduction. Planning for these factors during development will have a positive impact on air quality.

Key issues

2.7   Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues:

- According to data from 2021, there are no AQMAs in the neighbourhood area. However, it could be expected that development in the neighbourhood area could increase traffic flows to nearby locations like Bradford-on-Avon, Devizes and Westbury, which could impact on AQMAs.

- Designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area are potentially sensitive to air pollution issues. The effects of the neighbourhood plan in relation to these concerns will be explored in the 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' SEA theme in Chapter 3.

- The JMNP2 could present opportunities to improve accessibility and support more local and sustainable journeys / connections. These opportunities will be explored in the 'Community Wellbeing' and 'Transportation' SEA themes in Chapter 5 and Chapter 9.

- The effects of traffic and congestion will be explored in the 'Transportation and movement' SEA theme in Chapter 9.

Proposed SEA objective

2.8   Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Air quality	Deliver improvements in air quality in the neighbourhood area.

2.9   Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal…):

- Reduce emissions of pollutants from transport?

- Promote the use of low emission vehicles?

- Promote enhancements in sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, and public transport?

- Promote enhancements to green infrastructure networks to facilitate increased absorption and dissipation of NO_2, PM_{10} and other pollutants?

3. Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Focus of theme

3.1   This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the biodiversity and geodiversity SEA theme. The theme focuses on nature conservation designations, geological sites, and habitats and species in the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

3.2   **Table 3.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 3.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the biodiversity and geodiversity SEA theme.

Document title	Year of publication
Environment Act 2021	2021
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework	2012
The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (Natural Environment White Paper)	2011
Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services	2011
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act	2006
UK Biodiversity Action Plan	1994
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015
Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan	2008

3.3   The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The Environment Act makes provision for biodiversity gain to be a condition of planning permission in England, in addition to creating biodiversity gain site registers and biodiversity credits. It recognises there is a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and encourages the identification of suitable areas through biodiversity reports and local nature recovery strategies. Furthermore, habitat maps are expected to include recovery and enhancement areas which are currently, or could become, important for biodiversity.

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles set out in the NPPF, which indicate that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance

soils and sites of biodiversity and / or geological value. Plans should also identify, map, and safeguard components of wider ecological networks, promote positive action for priority habitats and species, and pursue opportunities to secure biodiversity net gains. The NPPF also states that if development causes substantial harm and cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or compensated, then planning permission should be refused.

- The NPPF also supports the establishment and enhancement of habitat networks and green infrastructure to allow for more resilience to current and future pressures for biodiversity.

- The 25 Year Environment Plan places importance on improvements to the natural environment, such as achieving clean air and water, reducing environmental hazard risk, and encouraging sustainable resource use. This will be accomplished through a variety of actions including implementing sustainable land management, engaging in nature recovery, and connecting people to the environment.

- The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is a response to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which calls for the development and enforcement of national strategies and associated action plans to identify, conserve and protect existing biological diversity, and to enhance it wherever possible. In particular, the BAP identifies priority species and habitats that are most threatened and require conservation action. The UK BAP is succeeded by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework, which aims to ensure that biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored, and wisely used, and ecosystem services are maintained. This helps to sustain a healthy planet that delivers essential benefits for everyone.

- The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) sets out the importance of a healthy, functioning natural environment to sustaining economic growth, prospering communities, and personal wellbeing. It adopts a landscape approach to protect and enhance biodiversity and aims to create a green economy, whereby the economic growth and the health of natural resources sustain each other.

- Reflecting the commitments within the NEWP, Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services aims to stop overall biodiversity loss, support healthy and well-functioning ecosystems, and establish coherent ecological networks.

- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act details nature protection in the UK, which includes wildlife, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and National Parks. It extends the UK Government's duty to biodiversity and establishes the role of Natural England, which is responsible for safeguarding England's natural environment, making sure it is protected and improved whilst ensuring people enjoy, understand, and access it.

- The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan contains habitat action plans for the variety of habitats found across the area. It sets out the following priorities for the area:

  – To prioritise action required to conserve Wiltshire's biodiversity.

  – To provide baseline information on our current knowledge.

– To coordinate and focus action for biodiversity by creating a cohesive local partnership.

– To raise awareness among all sectors in Wiltshire – conservation, public, private, local communities.

– To provide a framework for monitoring; and

– To identify current issues and set out targets to work towards.

• The JMNP2 will also need to consider the relevant policies that are outlined in the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy. In particular, this includes:

– Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity; and

– Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure.

• Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to enhance biodiversity and geodiversity by enhancing blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity itself.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

3.4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are protected to conserve their wildlife and / or geological value. Within the neighbourhood area there is one SSSI which partly overlaps with the neighbourhood area, with two additional SSSIs located within proximity to the boundary to the south of the neighbourhood area. The location of these designations is shown in **Figure 3.1** at the end of this chapter. Further information is provided below:

• Part of the Spye Park SSSI overlaps with the neighbourhood area to north-east within Upper Selves Wood and Lower Selves Wood. Covering a total area of 89.64 ha, it is designated for its extensive habitat mosaic and geology that creates a rich habitat for epiphytic lichens, breeding woodland birds and diverse insect communities. According to the latest condition survey, this SSSI was 100% in unfavourable-recovering condition[7].

• Seend Cleeve Quarry SSSI is within 1 km of the neighbourhood area boundary to the south. Covering a total 3.05 ha, it is designated for its geology, which is an example of the Oxfordian Stage, and provides information on the Jurassic System. According to the latest condition survey, this SSSI was 100% in unfavourable-declining condition[8].

• Seend Ironstone Quarry and Road Cutting SSSI is approximately 1.2 km south of the neighbourhood area. Covering a total of 2.3 ha, it is designated for its Lower Greensand geology and diverse fauna communities. According to the latest condition survey, this SSSI was 100% in favourable condition[9].

3.5 SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) are a GIS tool/dataset that map zones around each SSSI according to their sensitivities. They specify the types of development that have the potential to have adverse impacts at a given

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[7] Natural England (no date) 'Spye Park SSSI' can be accessed here.
[8] Natural England (no date) 'Seend Cleeve Quarry SSSI' can be accessed here.
[9] Natural England (no date) 'Seend Ironstone Quarry and Road Cutting SSSI' can be accessed here.

location, and thresholds of development which indicate a need to consult Natural England. In this respect, the north-east corner of the neighbourhood area (to the east of Hanging Wood, Frogditch Farm and Sellves Farm) is likely to overlap with IRZs typical of the kind of development the neighbourhood plan may potentially bring forward (residential development of 100 units or more, and any residential development of 50 or more houses outside existing settlements / urban areas). In this respect, consultation with Natural England may be required for any applications that come forward in these locations.

Locally important sites

3.6   The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report[10] identifies 14 local wildlife sites within the neighbourhood area, which includes areas of ancient woodland, as well as the River Avon and the Kennet and Avon Canal. Of note is Conigre Mead Nature Reserve, which was bought by local people and given as a nature reserve to Wiltshire Wildlife Trust in 1989. It is now a valuable habitat for a variety of wildlife, including wild meadow plant species, insects, birds and small mammals (woodmice and bats). These wildlife sites are shown in **Figure 3.2** overleaf.

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[10] Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2021) 'Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report' can be accessed here.
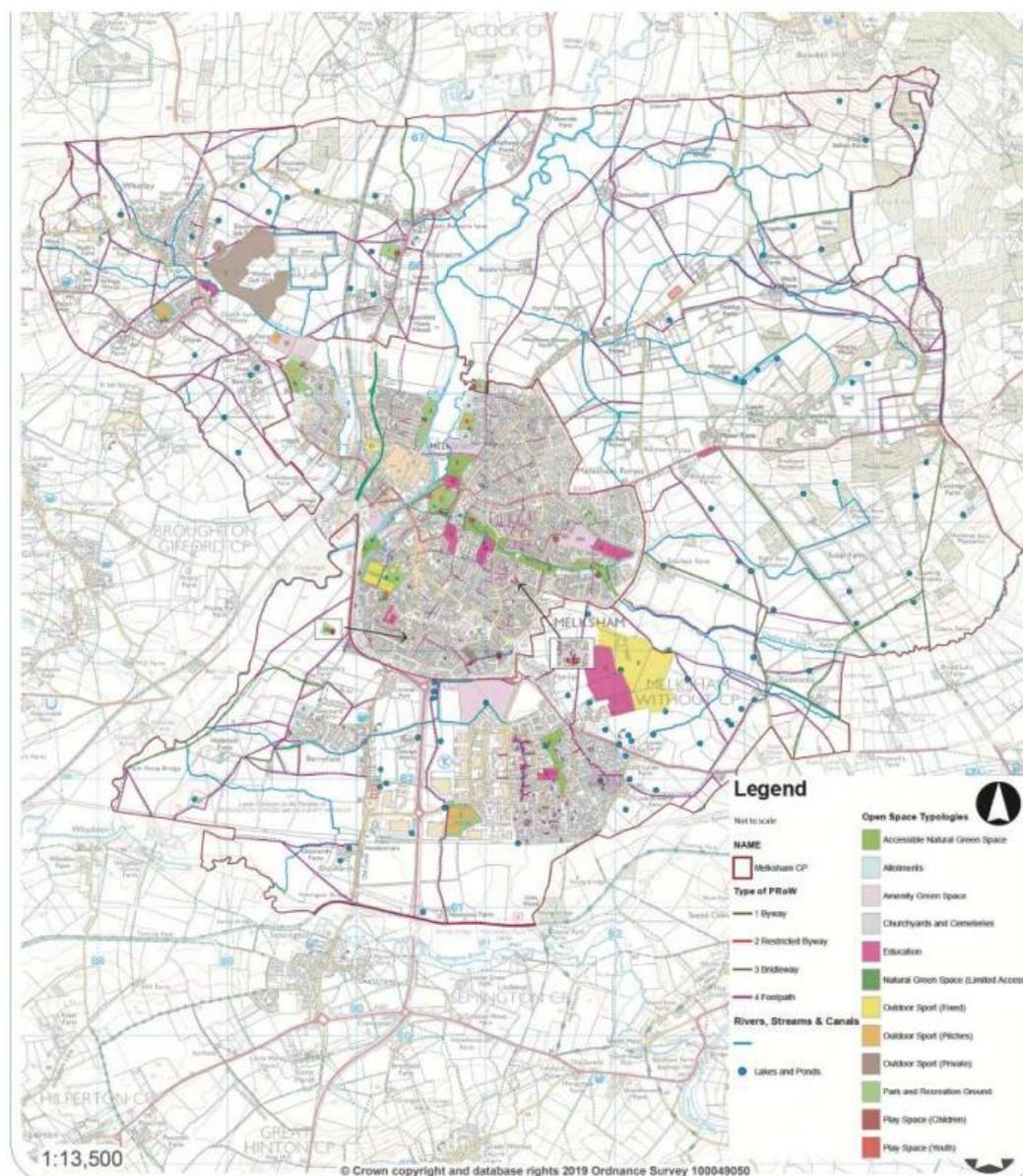
Figure 3.2: Green infrastructure assets and priorities (taken from the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report)

Priority habitats and species

3.7 There are a variety of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority habitats within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area. This includes ancient woodland, deciduous woodland, traditional orchards, wood pasture and parkland, lowland fens, and good quality semi-improved grassland. The location of the habitats is shown in **Figure 3.3** at the end of this chapter.

3.8 Ancient woodland takes hundreds of years to establish. It is considered important for its wildlife (often including rare and threatened species), and soils. Ancient woodland includes land that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. This means the following is included under its designation:

- Ancient semi-natural woodland mainly made up of trees and shrubs native to the site, usually arising from natural regeneration; and

- Plantations on ancient woodland sites - replanted with conifer and broadleaved trees that retain ancient woodland features, such as undisturbed soil, ground flora and fungi[11].

3.9 Within the neighbourhood area there are five areas of ancient woodland - Daniel's Wood to the north-west of Beanacre, Upper Selves Wood and Lower Selves Wood to the north-east, Hanging Wood north of the A3102 Sandridge Hill and Morass Wood south of Sandridge Tower.

3.10 The national habitat network is a set of maps that work to help identify areas for future habitat creation and restoration at a landscape scale[12]. In terms of the national habitat network, there are areas of Network Enhancement Zone 1 to the south of Shaw, to the north of Beanacre and in the north-east corner. Network Enhancement Zone 1 is deemed most suitable for habitat re-creation supporting the primary habitat. Additionally, there are areas of Network Enhancement Zone 2 running through Melksham and to the east of the neighbourhood area – Network Enhancement Zone 2 is most suitable for new habitats and green infrastructure. There is also a large area of Network Expansion Zone to the north – this is identified as a suitable location for connecting and linking up habitats across a landscape through new habitat creation.

3.11 The Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC)[13] will contain archives of protected and notable species within Wiltshire and Swindon, including those species protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981[14] and under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The BAP Priority Habitats and ecological designations within and surrounding the neighbourhood area are likely to support populations of protected species.

Future baseline

3.12 Habitats and species will potentially face increasing pressures from future development within the neighbourhood area, with the potential for negative impacts on the wider ecological network. This may include a loss of habitats and impacts on biodiversity networks, which may be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. This has the potential to lead to changes in the distribution and abundance of species and changes to the composition of habitats.

3.13 The neighbourhood area presents an opportunity to maximise benefits for biodiversity by including consideration of important habitats, species, and designated sites at an early stage of planning for future growth. To maintain and improve the condition of biodiversity in the future, it will be important to not only protect and enhance important habitats, but also the connections between them. It will be crucial to effectively coordinate the delivery of new development to ensure that opportunities to improve green infrastructure and ecological corridors are maximised within the neighbourhood area.

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[11] GOV.UK (2022) 'Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions' can be accessed here.
[12] Natural England (2020) 'National Habitat Network Maps' can be accessed here.
[13] The Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC) website can be accessed here.
[14] UK Government (1981) 'The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981' can be accessed here.

Key issues

3.14 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity:

- Nationally designated sites within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area include three SSSIs.

- Sections of the neighbourhood area overlap with SSSI IRZs for the types and scale of development which may come forward be brought forward, especially to the east of the neighbourhood area and the north-eastern sections. It is therefore likely that Natural England will need to be consulted if development is proposed in these areas.

- There are 14 identified locally important sites in the neighbourhood area, including Conigre Mead Nature Reserve.

- There are a variety of BAP Priority Habitats within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area.

Proposed SEA objective

3.15 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

3.16 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal…):

- Avoid or, if not possible, minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, including nationally designated sites, and provide net gains where possible?

- Support the integrity of the designated sites for biodiversity and geodiversity located within proximity to the neighbourhood area?

- Protect and enhance habitats, semi-natural habitats, species, and the ecological network connecting them?

- Support the national habitat network, particularly Network Enhancement Zone 1 and identified restorable habitat?

- Achieve biodiversity net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure services?

- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?

- Support and promote access to and interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?
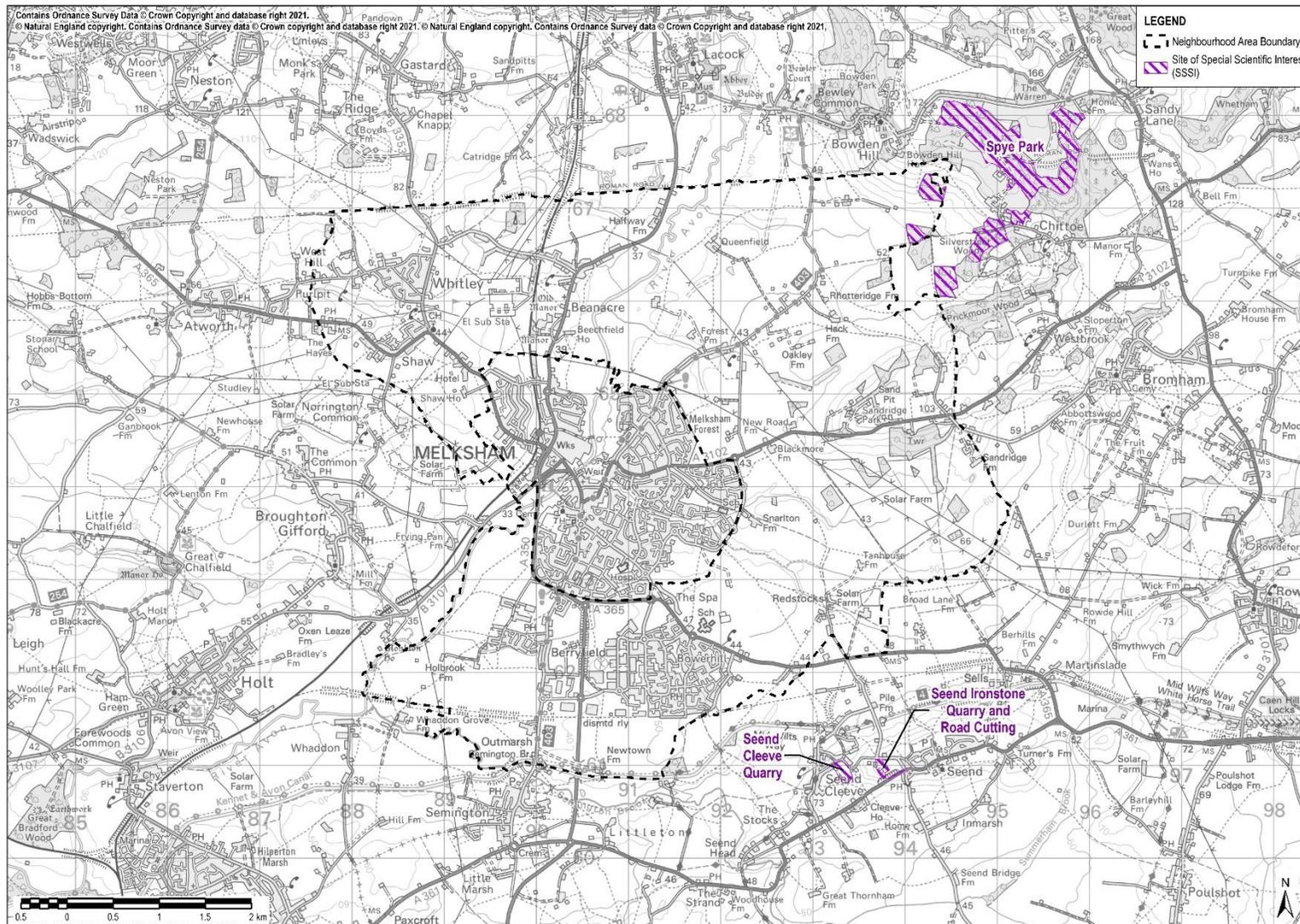
Figure 3.1: Biodiversity designations within the neighbourhood area
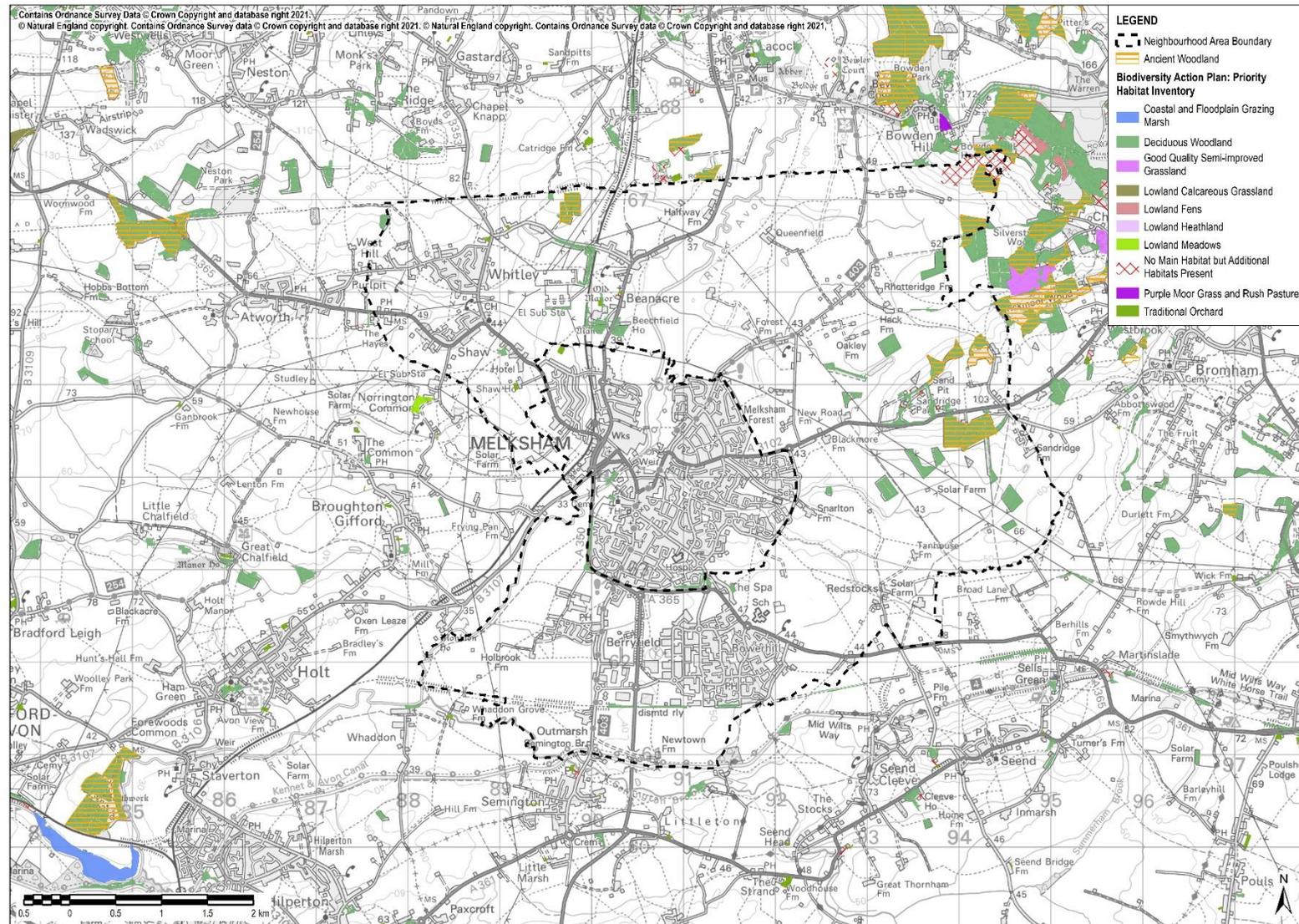
Figure 3.3: BAP Priority Habitats within the neighbourhood area

4. Climate Change

Focus of theme

4.1   This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the climate change SEA theme. The theme focuses on contributions to climate change, the effects of climate change, climate change adaptation, and flood risk in the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

4.2   **Table 4.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 4.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the climate change SEA theme

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener	2021
National Infrastructure Assessment	2021
The UK Sixth Carbon Budget	2020
The Clean Air Strategy 2019	2019
The National Adaptation Programme and the Third Strategy for Climate Adaptation Reporting	2018
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
The Clean Growth Strategy	2017
UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017	2017
Flood and Water Management Act 2010	2010
Climate Change Act 2008	2008
Anthesis Reports - Wiltshire Council (downloadable from here)	2022
Wiltshire Climate Strategy 2022-2027	2022
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
JBA Consulting - Wiltshire Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	2019
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015

4.3   The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles set out in the NPPF, including adopting a proactive planning approach to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies are expected to improve the

resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, avoid inappropriate development in the flood plain zone, and support the move to a low carbon economy. The NPPF recognises the potential for planning to shape places to better contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and deliver long-term resilience.

- The Clean Growth Strategy, Clean Air Strategy and the Net Zero Strategy are a collection of documents seeking to progress the government's commitment to becoming net zero by 2050 under the UK Climate Change Act 2008. The documents outline how the government will tackle air pollution sources whilst maintaining an affordable energy supply and increasing economic growth. This parallels with the 25 Year Environment Plan, which seeks to manage land resources sustainably, recover and reinstate nature, protect soils and habitats, increase resource efficiency, improve water quality, and connect people with the environment. Of note in the 25 Year Environment Plan are the following: 'Chapter 1: Using and managing land sustainably', 'Chapter 6: Protecting and improving the global environment', 'Goal 4: A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought' and 'Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change'.

- The National Infrastructure Assessment is published every five years and analyses the UK's long-term economic infrastructure needs to create a strategic vision and recommendations. The baseline report states that climate change will increase pressures on all sectors, including economic infrastructure.

- The National Adaptation Programme outlines the government's response to the second Climate Change Risk Assessment, demonstrating the actions the government is currently taking and actions it will be taking in the future. It outlines risks that fit within the priority areas identified by the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017:

  – Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses, and infrastructure.

  – Risks to health, well-being, and productivity from high temperatures.

  – Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation, and industry.

  – Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems, soils, and biodiversity.

  – Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and

  – New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants, and animals.

- The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 provides for better and more comprehensive management of flood risk for people, homes, and businesses, in addition to aiding in safeguarding community groups from unaffordable rises in surface water drainage charges and protecting consumer water supplies. It also highlights alternatives to traditional engineering to flood risk management.

- The UK Climate Change Act 2008 establishes a framework to develop an economically viable emissions reduction path. The Climate Change Act

2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order of 2019 put in place the legally binding target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The Climate Change Act includes the following:

- – The UK Government must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a minimum of 100% of 1990 levels by 2050.

- – The document requires the government to produce legally binding carbon budgets – a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five-year period.

- – The Act requires the government to assess and prepare for the risks and opportunities linked to climate change for the UK.

- The Sixth Carbon Budget is the legal limit of UK net greenhouse gas emissions and requires the country to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 relative to 1990 levels. This puts the country on track to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 at the latest.

- Wiltshire Council declared a climate emergency in February 2019[15]; since this declaration, the council has sought to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. A Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group was set up for gather evidence and suggest recommendations on achieving net zero. An update on the current situation in July 2021[16] reinstated the following priorities:

- – Growing the economy.

- – Strong communities.

- – Protecting the vulnerable; and

- – Working with partners.

- Wiltshire Council have commissioned an independent consultant to provide a technical study of the area's climate ambitions in order to clearly see a way forward and to visualise progress. The Anthesis reports set out a plan for climate action across six areas:

  - – Buildings

    - ▪ Improving energy efficiency.

    - ▪ Reducing gas heating systems; and

    - ▪ Low carbon and energy efficient cooking, lighting and appliances.

  - – Transport

    - ▪ Travelling shorter distances.

    - ▪ Driving less.

    - ▪ Switching to electric vehicles; and

    - ▪ Improving freight emissions

  - – Waste

    - ▪ Reducing the quantity of waste; and

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[15] Wiltshire Council (2022) 'Climate emergency' can be accessed here.
[16] Wiltshire Council (2021) 'Update on Council's response to the climate emergency' can be accessed here.

- Increasing the recycling rate.
  - Industry
    - Shifting away from fossil fuels; and
    - More efficient processes
  - Natural environment
    - Increased tree coverage and tree planting.
    - Land use management; and
    - Livestock management.
  - Energy supply
    - Increase solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity; and
    - Increase the capacity of other renewable technologies.

  The reports also undertake an emissions analysis and recommend how changes to the carbon footprint can be achieved through a variety of activities, like decarbonisation efforts.

- The Wiltshire Climate Strategy builds on the current evidence base to outline how Wiltshire can reduce its impact on climate change and become climate neutral by 2030. The strategy is split into eight different sections:
  - Transport.
  - Homes and the Built Environment.
  - Natural environment, food and farming.
  - Energy.
  - Green economy.
  - Resources and waste.
  - Carbon neutral council; and
  - Strategies and targets timeline.

  The strategy ensures the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient future is accessible and manageable for all, using the most up-to-date evidence to deliver benefits to the area.

- The Wiltshire Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) forms part of a comprehensive and robust evidence base for the Local Plan Review, which will set out a vision and framework for development in Wiltshire up to 2036. The SFRA will also be used to assess planning applications, and flood risk mapping information will be made available for developers for carrying out flood risk assessments.

- The Wiltshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy has an overarching vision of 'working together to manage local flood risk in Wiltshire.' Several strategic measures are identified to address the following five objectives:
  - Improve knowledge regarding flood risk.
  - Improve protection from flooding.
  - Improve resilience to flooding.

- – Improve the environment; and

- – Improve communications and flooding issues.

- • The JMNP2 will also need to consider the relevant policies that are outlined in the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy. In particular, this includes:

  - – Core Policy 41: Sustainable construction and Low Carbon Energy.

  - – Core Policy 42: Standalone Renewable Energy Installations.

  - – Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure.

  - – Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport.

  - – Core Policy 67: Flood Risk; and

  - – Core Policy 68: Water Resources.

- • Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to combat climate change by:

  - – Tackling flood risk and promoting sustainable water management; and

  - – Delivering sustainable design and construction methods in the built environment.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Contribution to climate change

4.4   The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order of 2019 requires carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions from the built environment to be monitored and recorded at the local authority level. The CO_2 emissions shown in **Figure 4.1** and **Figure 4.2** below are derived from data supplied by the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy[17].

4.5   As demonstrated by **Figure 4.1** overleaf, the largest contributing sector with regards to CO_2 emissions in Wiltshire was the industry and commercial sector until 2011, where the transportation sector contributed more and has continued to do so. The transport sector has been decreasing in terms of CO_2 emissions since 2017 but still remains the biggest emissions contributor in Wiltshire.

4.6   The introduction and uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) will contribute positively towards the reduction of road transport related emissions. In line with assumptions made by the Department for Transport's 'Road to Zero' report (2018)[18], it is assumed that ULEV uptake will increase rapidly in the coming decade. Therefore, all vehicles could be ultra-low emission (powered either by hydrogen or electricity) by 2030, thus the CO_2 emissions from the transport sector have the potential to decrease.

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[17] Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2020) 'UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005-2008' can be accessed here. The data tables used to generate Figures 4.1 and 4.2 can be downloaded from this page.
[18] Department for Transport (2018) 'The Road to Zero' can be accessed here.
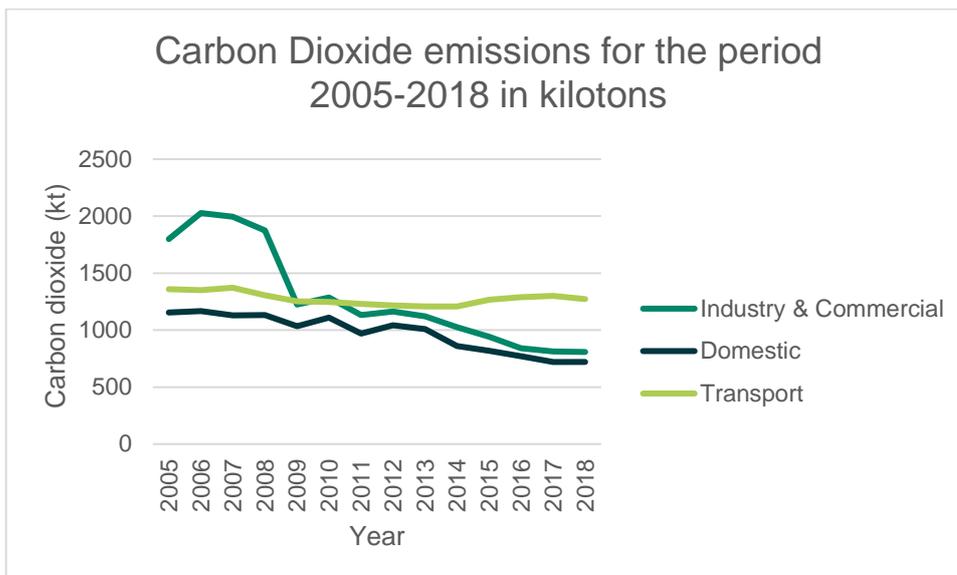
Figure 4.1: CO2 emissions in kilotons per year for each sector in Wiltshire (2005-2018)

4.7   **Figure 4.2** below indicates that CO_2 emissions per capita have been higher in Wiltshire than the average for South West England and the whole of England between 2005-2018. Wiltshire has experienced the greatest decrease in per capita emissions over the examined period; a decrease of 4.1 tons per capita. This is in comparison to an average of 3.2 tons per capita in South West England and 3.5 tons per capita for England.
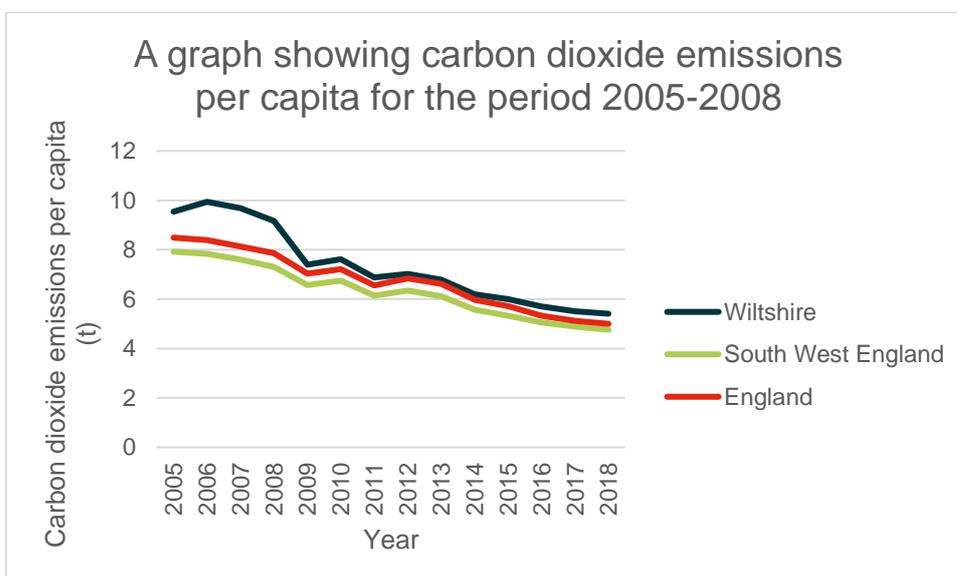

Figure 4.2: CO2 emissions per capita (in tons) for Wiltshire, the South West England region and the whole of England (2005-2018)

Potential effects of climate change

4.8   The UK Climate Projections (UKCP18) programme is a climate analysis tool that provides the most up-to-date assessment on potential future climatic changes in the UK based on climate model simulations[19]. Projections can be

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[19] Met Office (no date) 'UK Climate Projections (UKCP)' can be accessed here.

downscaled to a regional level across the UK, allowing for specific evaluations of a selected area.

4.9 The UKCP18 projections conclude the effects of climate change for the South West, under the high emissions "worst case" scenario RCP8.5[20], are likely to be as follows (as compared to 1981-2000):

- 2021-2040:
  - An average 1.18 ºC increase in mean winter temperatures;
  - An average 2.11 ºC increase in mean summer temperatures;
  - An average 0.21 mm increase in mean winter precipitation rate; and
  - An average 0.35 mm decrease in mean summer precipitation rate.
- 2061-2080:
  - An average 2.95 ºC increase in mean winter temperatures;
  - An average 5.07 ºC increase in mean summer temperatures;
  - An average 0.86 mm increase in mean winter precipitation rate; and
  - An average 0.86 mm decrease in mean summer precipitation rate.

4.10 If these changes were to occur, the neighbourhood area would likely face a range of risks, including:

- Increases in cases of heat related illnesses and deaths during the summer period as well as illnesses and deaths related to exposure to sunlight;
- An increase in the risk of injuries and deaths caused by storm events, due to both the increase in quantity and magnitude;
- Changes to water resources, in terms of quality and quantity;
- An increased risk of flooding, including changes in vulnerability to 1 in 100-year floods, and a need to upgrade flood defences;
- Soil erosion due to flash flooding;
- Loss of species that are at the edge of their distribution, particularly their southern edge, and a spread of species at the northern edge of their distribution;
- Increased drought events, both in quantity and magnitude; and
- Heat related impacts to local infrastructure, e.g., road surfaces melting.

Flood risks

4.11 **Figure 4.3**[21] overleaf indicates the areas within Flood Zones 2 and 3 within the neighbourhood area. The figure indicates that Whitley, Shaw, Melksham Town, Bowerhill and Beanacre are distinct communities within the neighbourhood area with differing flood risks due to the presence of the River Avon, its floodplains and its tributaries. A section of the A350 Western Way is also within

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[20] The RCP 8.5 emissions scenario assumes there is a fast population growth (doubling the planet's population to reach 12 billion), the lowest rate of technological development, slow GDP growth, a massive increase in world poverty and high energy use and emissions. It is seen to be the 'worst case scenario' in which no climate change mitigation or adaptation technique are engaged with.
[21] GOV.UK (2021) 'Get flood risk information for planning in England' can be accessed here.

Flood Zone 2 and 3 within Melksham and is in proximity to these flood zones to the north.
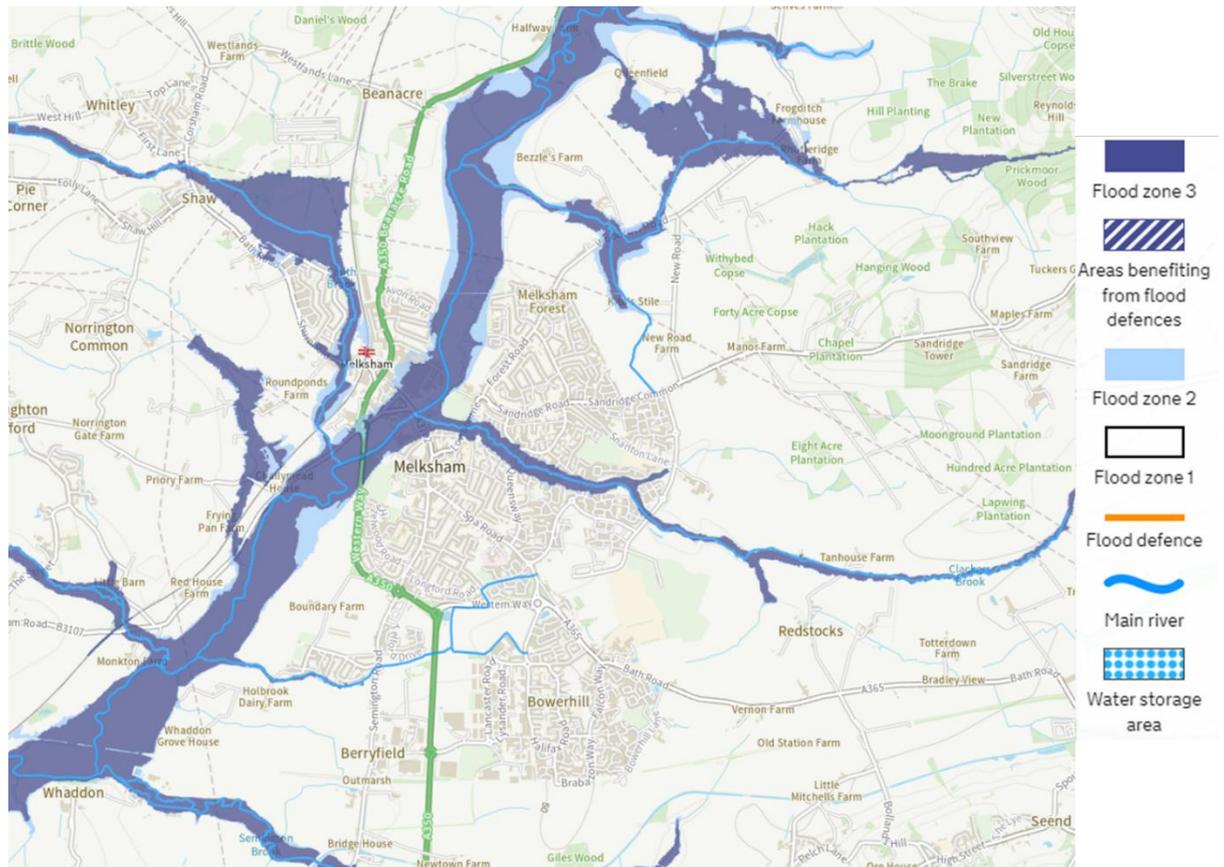
Figure 4.3: Fluvial flood risks within the neighbourhood area

4.12 **Figure 4.4**[22] overleaf demonstrates that similar areas are at risk of surface water flooding. In particular, Melksham, Shaw and Whitley are at medium and high risk of surface water flooding. This may be due to drains in streets and paved areas becoming clogged or reaching capacity during heavy rainfall events. Additionally, the area around Woodrow Road in the north of the neighbourhood area is also at high and medium risk of surface water flooding.

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[22] GOV.UK (2019) 'Learn more about flood risk' can be accessed here.

Extent of flooding from surface water

● High ● Medium ● Low ○ Very low

Figure 4.4: Surface water flood risks within the neighbourhood area

Future baseline

4.13 Climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in the neighbourhood area. In turn it is likely the neighbourhood area will experience an amplified level of risk associated with climate change and a subsequent increase in need for resilience and adaptation measures. New development has the potential to increase flood risk through changing surface and ground water flows, overloading existing inputs to the drainage and wastewater networks, and / or increasing the number of residents exposed to areas of existing flood risk.

4.14 In terms of climate change contribution, greenhouse gas emissions generated in the neighbourhood area may continue to decrease with the wider adoption of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production, and new technologies. However, increases in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area would likely contribute to increases in the absolute levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and these increases are considered likely with or without the JMNP2.

Key issues

4.15 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to climate change and flood risk:

- Wiltshire Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and is committed to making the authority area carbon neutral by 2030.

- The transport sector continues to be a key challenge in terms of reducing emissions. The JMNP2 provides opportunities to guide development towards the most accessible locations in the neighbourhood area and require local infrastructure (including walking and cycling infrastructure) improvements where appropriate. This could include the implementation of EV charging infrastructure.

- Opportunities to influence per capita emissions could be sought through the JMNP2 process, particularly by planning for integrated and connected development, which reduces the need to travel and supports opportunities to travel by more sustainable modes.

- The neighbourhood area is at risk of varying levels of surface water flooding and has areas of land in Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3 – following the watercourses that are present. The settlements of Melksham Town, Shaw and Whitley are particularly susceptible to flooding. Surface water run-off from development can exacerbate the risk of flooding by increasing the run-off from land to water courses.

- Opportunities to enhance the resilience of the neighbourhood area and its residents to the effects of climate change should be sought out in the JMNP2. This can include adaptation strategies, green infrastructure enhancement, flood betterment measures, infrastructure development, and increased renewable energy sources.

Proposed SEA objective

4.16 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objectives:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.

4.17 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal…):

- Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel?

- Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and EV infrastructure?

- Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria?

- Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources, or reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?

- Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change?

- Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area?

- Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing runoff where possible?

- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?

5. Community Wellbeing

Focus of theme

5.1 This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the community wellbeing SEA theme. The theme focuses on population and age structure, deprivation levels, housing mix and affordability, community assets and infrastructure, and influences on health and wellbeing for residents in the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

5.2 **Table 5.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 5.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the community wellbeing SEA theme.

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On	2020
Healthy and Safe Communities Planning practice guidance	2019
Planning for Sport Guidance	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy	2019
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015

5.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles outlined in the NPPF, which seek to retain and enhance access to community services and facilities. The NPPF recognises the benefits of having a range of local provision to support community needs. In addition, the NPPF recognises the benefits of creating cohesive communities in safe environments where the fear of crime (and crime itself) does not undermine resident quality of life.

- The NPPF recognises the role of development plans in helping to deliver access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity, therefore contributing to the health and wellbeing of communities. The health benefits of access to nature, green spaces and green infrastructure are further reiterated in the 25 Year Environment Plan. Additional guidance is available through the Healthy and Safe Communities Planning practice guidance.

- The 2020 Health Equity in England Report identifies a health gap between less and more deprived areas, which has grown in the last decade. This means an increased amount of people can expect to spend more of their lives in poor health with a stalled, or even declining, life expectancy.

- The Planning for Sport Guidance seeks to help the planning system provide formal and informal opportunities for everyone to take part in sport and be physically active, setting out twelve principles.

- Wiltshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy is a shared strategy which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population, reduce inequalities, and promote the integration of services. The strategy has been developed based upon the evidence of need identified within The Wiltshire Health and Wellbeing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which provides a summary of the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the people in Wiltshire.

- The JMNP2 will also need to consider the relevant policies that are outlined in the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy. In particular, this includes:

  - Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy.

  - Core Policy 3: Infrastructure Requirements.

  - Core Policy 34: Additional Employment Land.

  - Core Policy 35: Existing Employment Land.

  - Core Policy 36: Economic Regeneration.

  - Core Policy 38: Retail and Leisure.

  - Core Policy 39: Tourism Development.

  - Core Policy 43: Providing Affordable Homes.

  - Core Policy 44: Rural Exception Sites.

  - Core Policy 45: Meeting Wiltshire's Housing Needs.

  - Core Policy 46: Meeting the Needs of Wiltshire's Vulnerable and Older People.

  - Core Policy 47: Meeting the Needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

  - Core Policy 48: Supporting Rural Life.

  - Core Policy 49: Protection of Rural Services and Community Facilities.

  - Core Policy 51: Landscape.

  - Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure.

  - Core Policy 55: Air Quality.

  - Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport.

  - Core Policy 66: Strategic Transport Network; and

  - Core Policy 68: Water Resources.

- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to enhance community wellbeing by:

  - Enhancing blue/green infrastructure and biodiversity; and

- Promoting sustainable transport, active travel and improving air quality.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Population and age structure

5.4   The JMPN2 area includes two parishes – Melksham Town and Melksham Without. A significant proportion of the population is located within Melksham Town and settlements surrounding Melksham Town, including Whitley, Shaw, Bowerhill and Beanacre.

5.5   According to the City Population website, which uses the 2011 Census data, the data for Melksham[23] indicates the area had a total of 15,229 residents in 2011; this is estimated to have increased to 16,416 in 2020. The estimated population for Melksham Town in 2020, categorised by age group, is shown by **Figure 5.1** below.

Age Groups (E 2020)	
0-17 years	3,511
18-64 years	9,249
65+ years	3,656
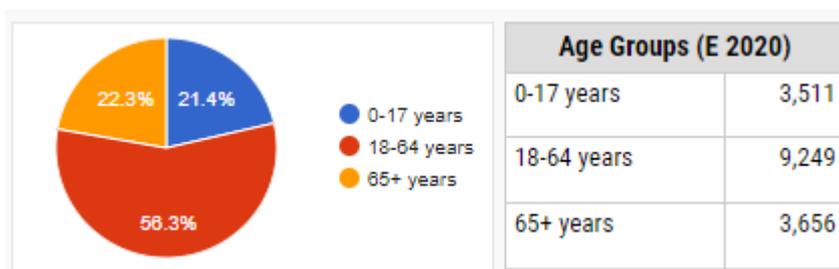
Figure 5.1: Age groups in Melksham[24]

5.6   The data for Melksham Without[25] indicates the area had a total 6,678 residents in 2011; this is estimated to have increased to 7,701 in 2020. The estimated population for Melksham Without in 2020, categorised by age group, is shown by **Figure 5.2** below.

Age Groups (E 2020)	
0-17 years	1,623
18-64 years	4,362
65+ years	1,716
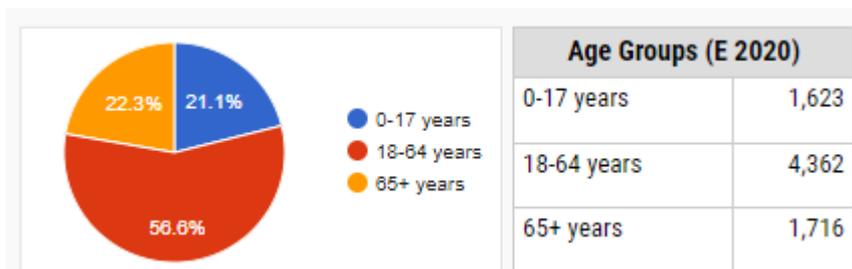
Figure 5.2: Age groups in Melksham Without[26]

[23] City Population (2021) 'Melksham' can be accessed here.
[24] Ibid.
[25] City Population (2021) 'Melksham Without' can be accessed here.
[26] Ibid.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

5.7   The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD) is an overall relative measure of deprivation and is the combination of seven different domains as described below:

- **Income:** the proportion of the population experiencing a deprivation relating to low income. There are a further two subsets of this measure:

  - **Income deprivation affecting children:** the proposition of children aged 0-15 living in income deprived families; and

  - **Income deprivation affecting older people:** the proportion of all adults aged 60 and above that experience income deprivation.

- **Employment:** the proportion of the working-age population involuntarily excluded from the labour market, including those who want to work but cannot.

- **Education, skills, and training:** the lack of attainment and skills in the population.

- **Health deprivation and disability:** the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health.

- **Crime:** the risk of personal and material victimisation at the local level.

- **Barriers to housing and services:** the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services, split into 'geographical barriers' linked to physical proximity and 'wider barriers' linked to access to housing.

- **Living environment:** the quality of the local environment, categorised into 'indoors living environment' to measure the quality of housing and 'outdoors living environment' to measure indicators like air quality and road traffic accidents.

5.8   Lower super output areas (LSOAs)[27] are designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. They are standardised geographies intended to be as consistent as possible, with each LSOA containing approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. In relation to the IMD 2019, LSOAs are ranked out of the 32,844 in England and Wales, with 1 being the most deprived.

5.9   In this respect, the neighbourhood area overlaps with 14 LSOAs. **Table 5.2** below indicates which deprivation domain is more prevalent across the LSOAs overlapping the neighbourhood area. Reflecting on this information, clearly 'barriers to housing and services' and 'education, skills and training' are the main deprivation issues in the area.

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[27] The Indices of Deprivation Explorer can be accessed here.

Table 5.2: IMD rankings for the neighbourhood area

LSOA	Most deprived deprivation domain
Wiltshire 020A	Barriers to Housing and Services – 3,403 (amongst 20% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 020B	Education, Skills and Training – 767 (amongst 10% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 020C	Education, Skills and Training – 7,513 (amongst 30% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 020D	Education, Skills and Training – 7,000 (amongst 30% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 020E	Education, Skills and Training – 13,324 (amongst 50% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 021B	Barriers to Housing and Services - 12,484 (amongst 40% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 021D	Barriers to Housing and Services – 5,037 (amongst 20% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 021E	Barriers to Housing and Services – 5,694 (amongst 20% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 021F	Barriers to Housing and Services – 15,679 (amongst 50% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 022A	Education, Skills and Training – 2,272 (amongst 10% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 022B	Education, Skills and Training – 5,550 (amongst 20% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 022C	Crime – 11,638 (amongst 40% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 022D	Employment – 11,123 (amongst 40% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 022E	Education, Skills and Training – 12,525 (amongst 40% most deprived neighbourhoods)

Housing tenure

5.10 As reported by Zoopla[28], the average house price in Wiltshire is £317,935 – with flats selling for an average of £158,168, terraced houses for an average of £253,863, semi-detached houses for an average of £296,446 and detached houses for an average of £486,235. Furthermore, according to Zoopla[29], the average house price in Melksham is £285,745 – with flats selling for an average of £126,948, terraced houses for an average £239,151, semi-detached houses for an average of £256,131 and detached houses for an average of £428,834. This suggests that the neighbourhood area has lower than average house prices in comparison to the regional trends. However, the affordability of

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[28] Zoopla (2022) 'House prices in Wiltshire' can be accessed here.
[29] Zoopla (2022) 'House prices in Melksham' can be accessed here.

housing for local residents is a key issue as identified by the IMD data, with 'barriers to housing and services' linked to the financial affordability of housing.

5.11 **Figure 5.2** below indicates housing tenure in the neighbourhood area. According to 2011 Census data, approximately 72.4% of the neighbourhood area households are owned outright or with a mortgage or loan, with an additional 0.5% under shared ownership. 14.4% of the neighbourhood area households are socially rented, 11.8% are privately rented and 0.9% of households live rent free.

- Owned
- Shared ownership (part owned and part rented)
- Social rented
- Private rented
- Living rent free
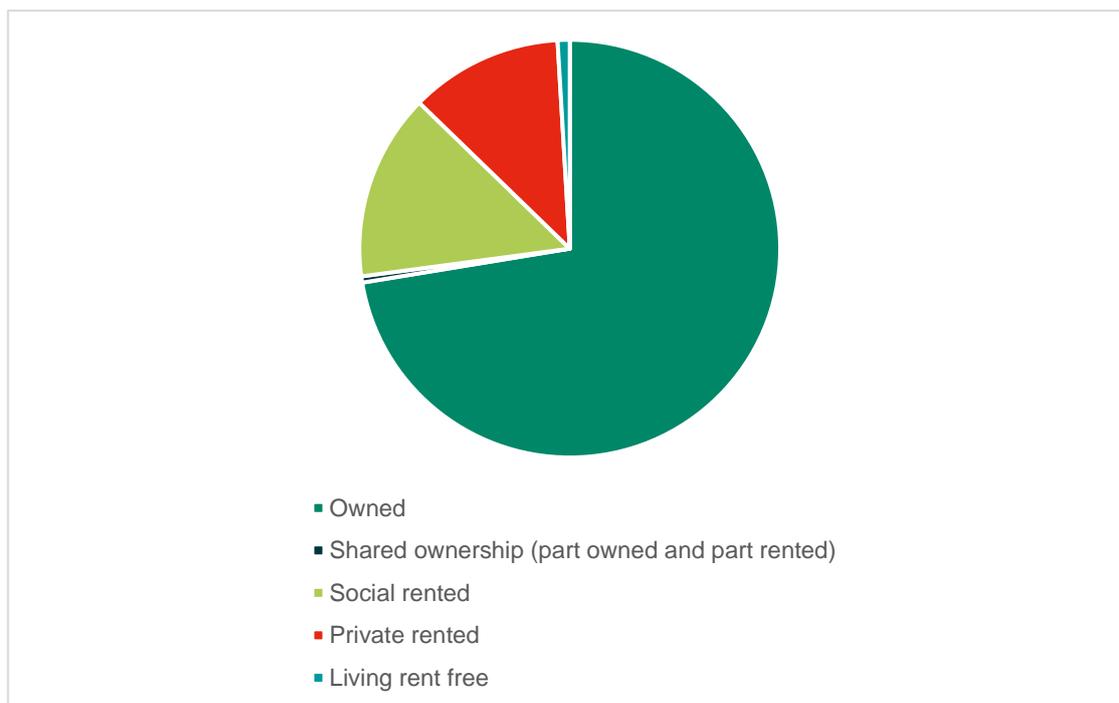
Figure 5.2: Tenure by household composition for the neighbourhood area (based on 2011 Census data)

Community assets and infrastructure

5.12 An overview of the services and facilities within the neighbourhood area is provided below[30],[31]:

- Melksham Town parish area:
  - Community centres like Melksham Town Hall and the Bangladeshi Centre.
  - Supermarkets – ASDA Melksham Superstore and Waitrose and Partners Melksham.
  - The Melksham Library.
  - The Post Office.
  - Multiple restaurants, including Casa Restaurant and Bar, Refa Tandoori and the West End Inn.
  - Multiple places of worship, including St. Michael's and All Angels' Church and the Queensway Chapel.

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[30] The review of the services, facilities and amenities was conducted via a high-level Google Maps search – focusing on each settlement in the neighbourhood area in turn and making a note of the different features present.
[31] Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020) 'Community Facilities Evidence Base Report' can be accessed here.

- King George V Park.
- Various primary schools and nurseries, like Forest and Sandridge C of E Primary School and River Mead Nursery.
- Melksham Train Station.
- Allotments.
- Multiple health facilities, including a community hospital, a GP and dental practices.
- Hotels, including the Kings Arms Hotel.
- Small, local businesses.
- Leisure and sports facilities like the pool, a gym and the Spencer Sports and Social Club; and
- Facilities for youth groups, such as the Scout Hut and Guide Centre.

- Melksham Without parish area:
  - Multiple village halls, including Bowerhill Village Hall, The Beeches Village Hall and Berryfield Village Hall.
  - Places of worship, including Whitley Methodist Church.
  - A gym.
  - Independent businesses.
  - Shops like Tesco Express.
  - Primary schools like Bowerhill Primary School.
  - Whitley Golf Club.
  - Melksham Town Football Club
  - Nurseries like Rocking Horse Nursery.
  - Boomerang Play Centre.
  - The Melksham Oak Community School.
  - Travelodge Melksham
  - A gymnastics school.
  - Bowerhill Sports Field.
  - Beanacre Community Park and Play Area.
  - Pubs, including the Pear Tree Inn, The Pilot and the Golden Fleece; and
  - The Melksham Squadron Air Training Corps (2385).

Green infrastructure networks

5.13 Access to gardens, parks, woodlands, and rivers have played a huge part in helping people through the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost nine in ten adults surveyed by Natural England reported that being in nature makes them feel

happy, and nearly three quarters of adults were concerned about biodiversity loss in England[32].

5.14 Within the neighbourhood area, green spaces include[33]:

- Allotments.
- Whitley Gold Club.
- King George V Park.
- Bowerhill Sports Field.
- Accessible natural green space like Conigre Mead Nature Area and Clackers Brook Corridor.
- Blenheim Park.
- Riverside Walk.
- Forresters Park.
- Churchyards, including Melksham Cemetery, St Andrew's Churchyard and Christ Church Shaw Cemetery.
- Various parks and recreation grounds, like Primrose Play Area, Beanacre Community Park, Skylark Play Area and Shaw Play Area.

5.15 The JMNP2 is looking to designate new local green spaces, and evidence is being prepared to support the justification of these designations. Once finalised, this evidence will be a useful source of reference during the next stages of the SEA process.

5.16 Additionally, a priority of the JMNP1 was to support the restoration of the Wilts and Berks canal, as well as engage with the safeguarding of the future route of the canal. According to the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust website[34], the Melksham Link was not originally incorporated into the early canal restoration but is now being planned and two proposals should have been submitted by the time of writing this SEA Scoping Report. The proposed route uses the River Avon that runs through Melksham Town.

Future baseline

5.17 As the population of the neighbourhood area increases and ages, there is likely to be increasing pressure on services within the neighbourhood area. This highlights the need to support the retention of existing facilities in the area, including open green space, which has been increasingly used and valued through the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors are more likely to be appropriately considered and addressed through planned development rather than unplanned development.

5.18 The suitability and affordability of housing for local requirements depends on the implementation of appropriate housing policies throughout the neighbourhood area. Unplanned development may have wider implications in terms of transport and access to infrastructure, or the natural environment.

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[32] Natural England (2020) People and Nature survey can be accessed here.
[33] Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2021) 'Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report' can be accessed here.
[34] Wilts and Berks Canal Trust (2022) 'Melksham Link: 2006 – Present' can be accessed here.

5.19 The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the way people work and shop. For many people, working from home is likely to continue to form part of a more flexible approach. The effects of increased levels of home working are further discussed under the 'Transportation' SEA theme in **Chapter 9**.

Key issues

5.20 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to community wellbeing:

- There is a large proportion of residents aged 18-64 in the neighbourhood area. The services, facilities, and amenities within the neighbourhood area serve this working population well, and also support the younger and older demographics well. In this way the neighbourhood area supports community vitality and the quality of life of all residents.

- Based on the 2019 IMD data, the neighbourhood area is most deprived in terms of 'barriers to housing and services' and 'education, skills and training', with LSOAs often being within the top 20% most deprived deciles for these sub-domains.

- As the requirements of the working population continue to change, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is likely to be a requirement for adaptable dwellings which can accommodate more flexible working practices.

Proposed SEA objective

5.21 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, reducing deprivation, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.

5.22 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing?

- Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?

- Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?

- Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs, particularly the needs of an ageing population?

- Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people?

- Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities?

- Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements?

- Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction?

- Minimise fuel poverty?

- Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents?

6. Historic Environment

Focus of theme

6.1 This chapter presents the policy context and the baseline summary in relation to the historic environment SEA theme. The theme focuses on designated and non-designated assets, the setting, special qualities, and significance of heritage assets, locally important heritage features, and the historic character of the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

6.2 **Table 6.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 6.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the historic environment SEA theme.

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
National Model Design Code	2021
The National Design Guide	2019
Historic England: Heritage and Climate Change	2022
Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal Designation and Management	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning: The Setting of Heritage Assets	2017
Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	2016
Historic England Advice Note 3: The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans	2015
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015

6.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The key principles for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment are as follows:

  – The historic environment is a shared resource;

  – Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment;

  – Understanding the significance of places is vital;

- Important places should be managed to sustain their values;

- Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent, and consistent; and

- Documenting and learning from decisions is essential[35].

- The significance of a place is the crucial element that supports the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Significance is the collective term for the sum of all the heritage values attached to a place, no matter what form the place takes. This means a singular building, an archaeological site, or a larger historic area, such as a whole village or landscape, can be important.

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles set out in the NPPF, which seek to conserve and enhance historic environment assets in a way that compliments and works with their significance. The NPPF pursues planning policies and decisions that are understanding to local character and history without preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation and change. The NPPF supports the use of area-based character assessments, design guides and codes, and masterplans to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places.

- The NPPF indicates proposed plans should ensure the design of streets, parking areas and other transport elements reflect current national guidance including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. Design codes can set out a necessary level of detail in sensitive locations. In the case of the historic environment, they can indicate specific ways to maintain local character.

- The 25 Year Environment Plan and the National Design Guide recognise and reiterate the role of the historic environment in supporting healthy and thriving ecosystems, landscapes, and cultural values. Of note in the 25 Year Environment Plan is 'Goal 6: Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment'.

- Historic England's Heritage and Climate Change strategy document details the impacts climate change could have on heritage in the future, and highlights the role of heritage in climate action. The vision of the document is to ensure the role of heritage in the global fight to limit climate change and its impact on people and places by 2040 – working to mitigate, manage risk and adapt.

- Historic England's Advice Notes provide further guidance on the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Of relevance for the JMNP2 is the emphasis on the importance of:

- Understanding the different types of special architectural and historic interest that underpin designations and the consideration of how settings and / or views contribute to the significance of heritage assets.

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[35] Historic England (2008) 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment' can be accessed here.

–   Recognising the value of implementing controls through neighbourhood development plans, conservation area appraisals and management plans; and

–   Appropriate evidence gathering, including the clear identification of any issues that threaten an area, asset character, or appearance that merit the introduction of management measures.

•   The JMNP2 will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. This includes:

–   Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping.

–   Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment.

•   Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to safeguard the historic environment by delivering sustainable development and construction methods in the built environment.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Listed buildings

6.4   Listed buildings are nationally designated heritage assets that are protected through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990[36]. To assess the historic environment, the National Heritage List for England, provided by Historic England[37], has been utilised.   According to this search engine, there are 225 listed buildings within the neighbourhood area: one Grade I, five Grade II* and 219 Grade II. The location of these assets is shown in **Figure 6.1** at the end of the chapter.

6.5   The Grade I listed building is Beanacre Old Manor – Historic England (HE) list number 1021755. The Grade II* listed buildings are as follows:

-   Church of St Michael – HE list number 1021707.

-   Turner memorial in the churchyard about 45 metres south of Lady Chapel of the Church of St Michael – HE list number 1021708.

-   Woolmore Farmhouse – HE list number 1021762.

-   Christ Church – HE list number 1194686; and

-   Beanacre Manor with Dairy – HE list number 1364152.

6.6   There are a large number of listed buildings within Melksham, concentrated along King Street, Spa Road, Bank Street, Church Street, Church Walk, Cannon Square and the area around St Michael and All Angels' Church. Within Melksham Without, the listed buildings are mostly concentrated along Beanacre Road (A350) and the Old Road south of Beanacre, and in Whitley – along West Hill, Bath Road, First Lane, Folly Lane, Top Lane and Corsham Road.

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[36] UK Government (1990) 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act' can be accessed here.
[37] Historic England (no date) 'National Heritage List for England – Search the List – Advanced Search' can be accessed here. Select which heritage categories you'd like to view and enter 'Wiltshire' into the 'District/Unitary Authority/Borough' box and then 'Melksham' and 'Melksham Without' into the 'Parish (Civil / Non-civil)' box in turn and press the search button at the bottom of the page.

Conservation areas

6.7   Conservation areas are designated because of their special architectural and historic interest. Conservation area appraisals are a tool to demonstrate the area's special interest, explaining the reasons for designation and providing a greater understanding and articulation of its character - mentioned within the 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' advice note by Historic England.

6.8   Within the neighbourhood area there is one conservation area – Melksham conservation area, which can be viewed on the Wiltshire online mapping system[38]. There is no appraisal or plan available for this conservation area

Registered parks and gardens

6.9   Historic England's 'Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England', established in 1983, currently identifies over 1,600 sites assessed to be of significance.

6.10   The Grade II Spye Park[39] is immediately north-east of the neighbourhood area, located within Bromham parish. It is the remains of an early 18th century garden by Stephen Switzer, within a late 18th century pleasure grounds and landscape park. There is evidence of further late 19th century landscaping. There are two large lawns that offer wide views into the surrounding countryside, and three areas of park with a variety of tree species.

Locally important heritage features

6.11   It is noted that not all of the neighbourhood area's historic environment features are subject to statutory designations and non-designated features contribute a large part of what people interact with on a day-to-day basis. Although not designated, many buildings and areas are of historic interest and are important to local communities. It is noted the neighbourhood group are preparing a list of important heritage assets to contribute to the evidence base for the emerging JMNP2 which will inform the plan policy. This evidence, once completed, will be an essential source of reference during the next stages of the SEA process.

6.12   The Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record (HER) identifies important and distinctive structures or features that positively contribute to the local sense of place and distinctiveness of the county. Following a high-level review of the HER via the Heritage Gateway[40], there are 525 documented local records within the neighbourhood area – 99 in Melksham and 426 in Melksham Without, including enclosures, archaeological finds, ditches and banks, Bronze Age barrows and locally important infrastructure. During the subsequent stages of the SEA process, the Wiltshire and Swindon HER shall be explored in further detail to consider the potential impacts associated with the plan proposals on these assets.

Heritage at risk

6.13   Since 2008, Historic England has produced an annual Heritage at Risk Register, which highlights historic environment assets that are seen to be 'at

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[38] Wiltshire Council (2021) 'Wiltshire Core Strategy' can be accessed here.
[39] Historic England (2022) 'Spye Park' can be accessed here.
[40] Heritage Gateway (2021) 'More Detailed Search' can be accessed here. Open the link, change the tab from 'map' to 'admin location', type 'Melksham' into the administrative location search bar and press the search button at the bottom of the page. Then repeat the process for 'Melksham Without'.

risk'. According to the 2021 Heritage at Risk Register for the South West[41], there is one heritage asset within the neighbourhood area that is considered to be at risk – the Grade II listed Church of St Andrew (HE number: 1286098).

6.14 However, it is important to recognise that Heritage at Risk registers for areas outside of London do not contain information about the status of Grade II listed buildings. As such, it is currently not possible to determine whether any of the Grade II listed buildings within the neighbourhood area are at risk.

Future baseline

6.15 New development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of heritage assets, for example, through inappropriate design and / or layout. It should be noted, however, that existing historic environment designations offer a level of protection to heritage assets and their settings. Additionally, the planning system has in place tools to offer a degree of protection to heritage assets and their settings, reducing the potential impacts of development to some degree.

6.16 It is recognised that planning for development could provide opportunities for positive effects for the historic environment. This may include new management plans for assets 'at risk', an updated evidence base to compliment information and data associated with conservation areas, public realm and access improvements, or opportunities to better reveal the significance of an asset or increase enjoyment of the historic environment.

Key issues

6.17 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to historic environment:

- There is a variety of designated heritage assets within and surrounding the neighbourhood area, including listed buildings, a registered park and garden and Melksham Conservation Area. Development of the JMNP2 provides an opportunity to deliver a spatial strategy that avoids or minimises impacts for the historic environment.

- The JMNP2 provides an opportunity to develop the existing evidence base in relation to the historic environment. It also poses an opportunity to further heritage understanding in the neighbourhood area through exploring the heritage assets in the area.

- There is an identified heritage asset 'at risk' within the neighbourhood area. Any opportunity to restore or support appropriate management plans for the conservation of this asset should be explored.

- It will be important to ensure that future development avoids / minimises impacts upon the historic environment and maximises opportunities to improve the public realm and green infrastructure, to the indirect benefit of heritage settings.

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[41] Historic England (2021) 'Heritage at Risk Register 2021 – South West' can be accessed here.

Proposed SEA objective

6.18 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

6.19 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Conserve and enhance buildings, structures, and areas of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings?

- Support access to and the interpretation and understanding of the historic environment?

- Support the undertaking of archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?

- Protect the integrity and the historic setting of key finds of heritage interest as listed in the Wiltshire and Swindon HER?
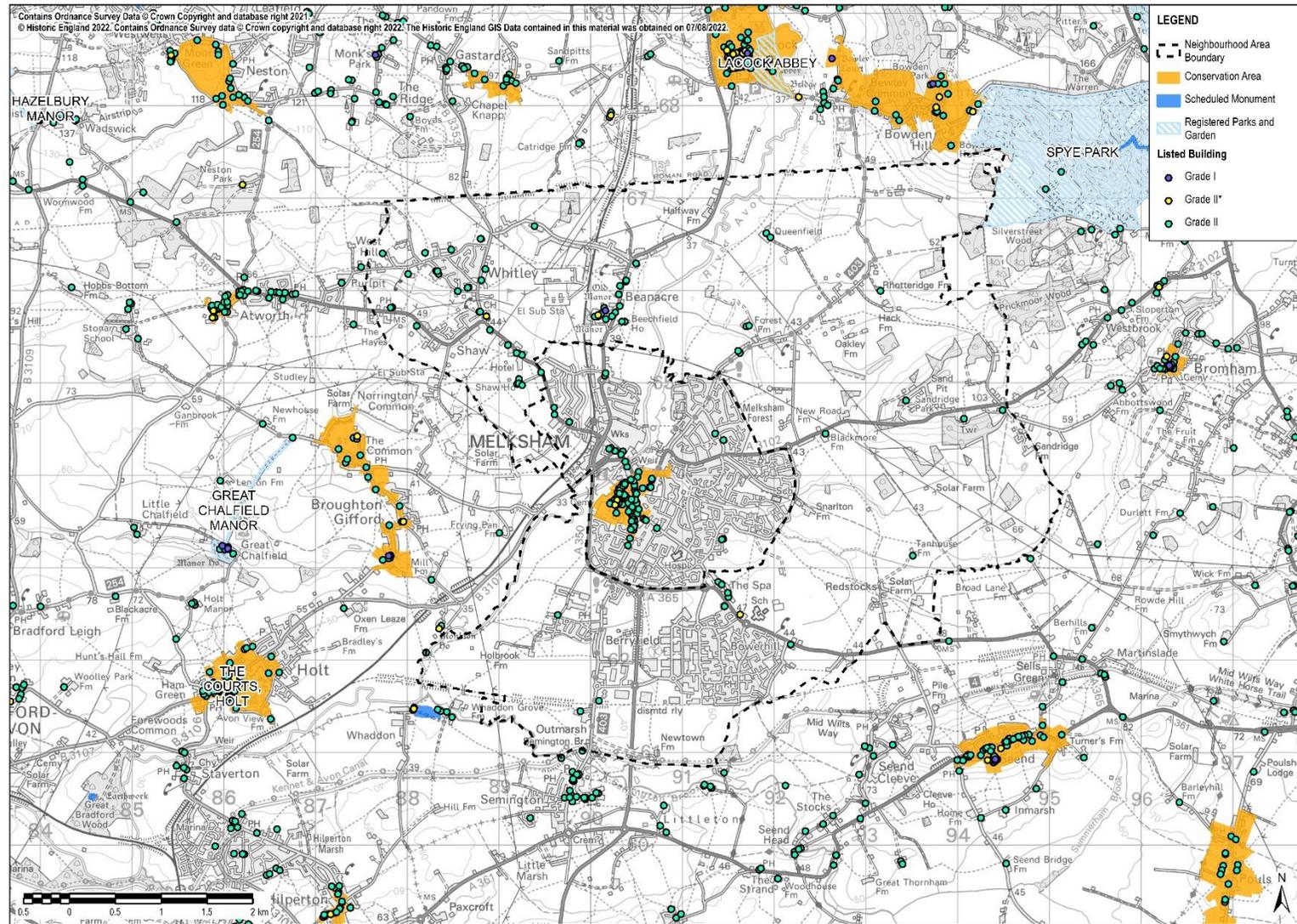
Figure 6.1: Historic environment assets in the neighbourhood area

7. Land, Soil, and Water Resources

Focus of theme

7.1   This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the land, soil, and water resources SEA theme. The theme focuses on quality of agricultural land, extent of mineral resources, and water resources and water quality. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

7.2   **Figure 7.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 7.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the land, soil, and water resources SEA theme.

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Waste Management Plan for England	2013
Future Water: The Government's water strategy for England	2011
Water for Life	2011
Safeguarding our Soils: A Strategy for England	2009
Wessex Water's Water Resource Management Plan	2019
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015
Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy 2006-2026	2009
Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy 2006-2026	2009

7.3   The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles outlined in the NPPF which pursue the protection of high-quality soil resources and the improvement of the water environment. It recognises the wider benefits of natural capital and the need to consider the long-term implications of climate change and ways in which to build resilience in this respect. The NPPF encourages efficient land use, utilising brownfield land opportunities and land remediation schemes where appropriate and delivering environmental gains.

- The 25 Year Environment Plan discusses measures to improve soil quality, restore and protect peatlands, use water more sustainably, reduce pollution, maximise resource efficiency and minimise environmental

impacts. Of note is 'Chapter 1: Using and managing land sustainably', 'Chapter 4: Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste', 'Goal 2: Clean and plentiful water', 'Goal 5: Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently' and 'Goal 8: Minimising waste'.

- Future Water: The Government's water strategy for England sets out how the water sector will look by 2030 for both people and wildlife. The vision also includes valuing and protecting water resources and delivering water to customers in a fair, affordable, and cost-reflective manner. Water for Life highlights the Government's vision for a more resilient water sector. It details the measures that will be deployed to tackle issues such as poorly performing ecosystems, and the combined impacts of climate change and population growth on stressed water resources.

- The Safeguarding our Soils: A Strategy for England policy paper seeks to ensure that all soils in England will be managed sustainably, and degradation threats minimised successfully by 2030. This policy paper also seeks to secure sustainable and resilient water resources in addition to the improvement in waterbody quality. The Waste Management Plan for England identifies measures being taken to move towards a zero-waste economy, which includes national waste plan which seeks to identify measures being taken to move towards a circular economy in which resources are kept in use for longer. To do this, there needs to be a maximisation in the value of resources used and a minimisation in the waste created.

- The neighbourhood area is serviced by Wessex Water. The Wessex Water Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) outlines the issues the water provider faces, like climate change and supply problems, and outlines what measures will be taken to overcome these, including the installation of smart meters.

- The JMNP2 will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. This includes:

  – Core Policy 56: Contaminated Land.

  – Core Policy 68: Water Resources.

- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to safeguard and enhance land, soil, and water resources through:

  – Tackling flood risk and promoting sustainable water management; and

  – Enhancing blue/green infrastructure and biodiversity.

- The JMNP2 will be required to be in line with the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy 2016-2026 which takes the overall approach to "*manage the availability, extraction and use of primary, secondary and recycled mineral resources whilst seeking to protect the interests of local communities and the wider environment through a series of strategic policies*".

- The JMNP2 will also be required to be in general conformity with the Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy 2016-2026 which "*sets out the strategic planning policy framework for waste management over the next 20 years*".

Current baseline

Soil resources

7.4 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) classifies land into six grades (plus 'non-agricultural land' and 'urban'), where Grades 1 to 3a are recognised as being the 'best and most versatile' (BMV) land and Grades 3b to 5 are of poorer quality. In this context, there is a need to avoid loss of higher quality BMV agricultural land.

7.5 As shown in the left-hand image in **Figure 7.1** below, the majority of the neighbourhood area is underlain with Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' agricultural land, with areas of Grade 4 'Poor' land around Beanacre and to the east of Melksham Town. There are areas of Grade 2 'Very Good' land on the eastern boundary and along the A350 to the north of Melksham Town, as well as an area of Grade 1 'Excellent' land around Berryfield to the south. Melksham Town is classified as 'land predominantly in urban use'[42].

7.6 **Figure 7.1** also shows the results of Natural England's 'Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment' for the South West region in the right-hand image. It indicates the majority of the undeveloped land within the neighbourhood area has a low likelihood of being BMV land, with areas of moderate likelihood located towards the north, north-east and north-west of the neighbourhood area, and areas of high likelihood around Berryfield to the south and along the A350 to the west. Melksham, Berryfield, Bowerhill, Beanacre and Whitely are classified as 'urban / industrial'[43].
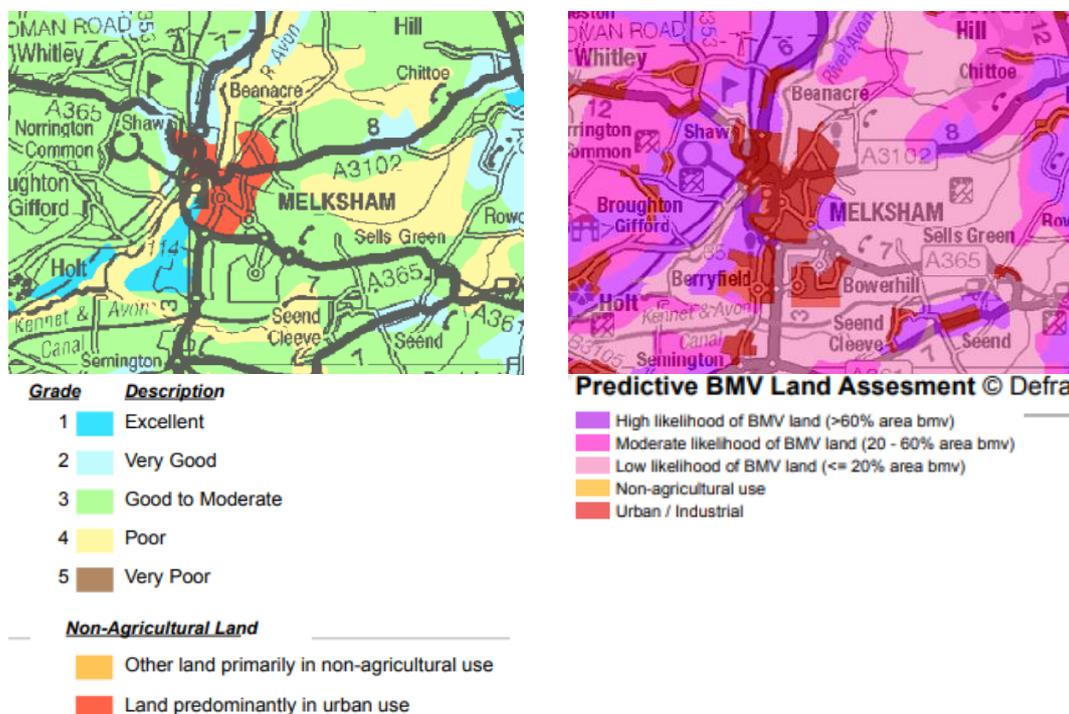

Figure 7.1: ALC and the likelihood of BMV land within the neighbourhood area

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[42] Natural England (2010) 'Agricultural Land Classification Map South West Region' can be accessed here.
[43] Natural England (2017) 'Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map South West Region' can be accessed here.

Mineral resources

7.7 Mineral resources are defined as natural concentrations of minerals or bodies of rock that have the potential to be of economic interest in the present or the future due to their inherent properties. As minerals are a non-renewable resource, minerals safeguarding is deployed as the process through which it is ensured that non-minerals development does not needlessly prevent the future extraction of mineral resources[44].

7.8 With regards to mineral resources, the western part of the neighbourhood area appears to be within a mineral resource zone[45]. However, the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals and Waste Development Framework Policies Map does not have the clearest resolution; as such, Wiltshire Council may need to be consulted for development in the neighbourhood area to ensure key areas for minerals are not negatively affected through development.

Water quality

7.9 The neighbourhood area is located within the Severn Basin District. Specifically, within the Avon Bristol and Somerset North Streams Management Catchment and the Avon Bristol Rural Operational Catchment. There are several waterbodies within the neighbourhood area (which can be viewed on the Catchment Data Explorer[46]):

- South BK – source to conf R Avon (Brist) Water Body[47] is a tributary of the River Avon. It was awarded a good ecological status in 2019 but failed the chemical status test for the presence of priority hazardous substances including mercury and its compounds and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE).

- Avon (Brist) conf R Marden to conf Semington Bk Water Body[48] is a section of the River Avon and a tributary located in Berryfield. It was awarded a moderate ecological status in 2019 but failed the chemical status test for the presence of priority hazardous substances including mercury and its compounds, perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS) and PBDEs.

- Forest Brook Water Body[49] is a tributary of the River Avon. It was awarded a poor ecological status in 2019 and failed the chemical status test for the presence of mercury and its compounds and PBDEs.

- Clackers Bk – source to conf R Avon (Brist) Water Body[50] was awarded a poor ecological status in 2019 and failed the chemical status test for the presence of mercury and its compounds and PBDEs.

7.10 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) represent areas at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution, identifying rules in relation to the use of fertilisers and manures as well as a requirement to prevent water pollution from farming areas[51]. According to the interactive map[52] the north-western part of the neighbourhood

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[44] UK Government (2014) 'Guidance: Minerals' can be accessed here.
[45] Wiltshire Council (2013) 'Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals and Waste Development Framework: Policies Map' can be accessed here.
[46] Environment Agency (2022) 'Catchment Data Explorer' can be accessed here.
[47] Environment Agency (2022) 'South BK – source to conf R Avon (Brist) Water Body' can be accessed here.
[48] Environment Agency (2022) 'Avon (Brist) conf R Marden to conf Semington Bk Water Body' can be accessed here.
[49] Environment Agency (2022) 'Forest Brook Water Body' can be accessed here.
[50] Environment Agency (2022) 'Clackers Bk – source to Conf R Avon (Brist) Water Body' can be accessed here.
[51] UK Government (2018) Nitrate vulnerable zones can be accessed here.
[52] UK Government (2021) Nitrate vulnerable zone designations and appeals 2021 to 2024 can be accessed here.

area (west of the A350 and Beanacre) is within the Surface Water S559 – S bk – source to conf R Avon (Brist) NVZ.

7.11 Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) have been defined by the Environment Agency in England and Wales to protect groundwater sources such as wells, boreholes, and springs that are used for public drinking water supply[53]. There is a small section of the neighbourhood area around Brittle Wood that is within Zone I – Inner Protection Zone and Zone II – Outer Protection Zone.

Future baseline

7.12 New development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to impact areas of BMV agricultural land. In this context there could potentially be opportunities to avoid developing Grade 3a agricultural land by directing development toward areas of Grade 3b land where this is available. Additionally, the regeneration of brownfield sites is encouraged, wherever possible.

7.13 Future development has the potential to affect water quality and availability through increased consumption and pollution, wastewater discharges, water runoff and modification. Wessex Water are likely to maintain adequate water services over the plan period; therefore, it will be important for new development to avoid negative impacts on water quality, and instead contribute to reducing consumption and improving efficiency.

Key issues

7.14 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to land, soil, and water resources:

- The provisional ALC and BMV data indicates the majority of the undeveloped land within the JMNP2 area has a low likelihood of being BMV land. Areas of high likelihood of BMV land are located around Berryfield and along the A350 to the west. Development should therefore minimise the loss of productive agricultural land, prioritising the redevelopment and regeneration of underutilised brownfield land wherever possible.

- There is a mineral resource zone within the western section of the neighbourhood area and as such Wiltshire Council may need to be consulted for development in this part of the neighbourhood area.

- The River Avon is the main waterbody in the JMNP2 area, with some of its tributaries running through the neighbourhood area. According to the Catchment Data Explorer, the River Avon has a varying ecological status, but has a failed chemical status in 2019. As the River Avon is the main waterbody it is more likely to be impacted by development, as Melksham Town is likely to be a focus area for growth during the plan period). It is acknowledged the tributaries of the River Avon may also be impacted by new development in some locations, particularly to the east of Melksham Town. Development should therefore avoid impacts to water quality for the River Avon and its tributaries and within the identified source protection zones and surface water safeguard zone.

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[53] UK Government (2017) 'Groundwater Protection' can be accessed here.

- Plan making should consider how local decisions affect water supply, such as water accessibility issues, and ensure that appropriate drainage infrastructure is in place to accommodate new development areas.

Proposed SEA objective

7.15 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objectives:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.

7.16 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Promote the use of previously developed land, including the regeneration of underutilised brownfield land?

- Identify and avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land?

- Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste?

- Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality?

- Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development?

- Protect waterbodies from pollution?

- Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/or water recycling?

- Protect SPZs and NVZs in the neighbourhood area?

8. Landscape

Focus of theme

8.1   This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the landscape SEA theme. The theme focuses on nationally protected landscapes, landscape character and quality, and visual amenity in the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

8.2   **Table 8.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 8.1: Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to the landscape SEA theme

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
National Model Design Code	2021
The National Design Guide	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan - Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement	2020
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan - Local Landscape Character Report	2020
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015

8.1   The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 should consider the principles outlined in the NPPF, which gives great weight to conserving and enhancing protected landscapes, landscape character, and scenic beauty. The scale and extent of development within these areas should be limited and development within their setting should be mindfully located and designed to avoid/minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

- The NPPF also recognises the role of green infrastructure in landscape settings, as well as the positive contribution that land remediation can have on despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated, and unstable land.

- The 25 Year Environment Plan and National Design Guide outline the same aims as one another, focusing on creating a cleaner, greener country that puts the environment first and celebrates the variety of natural landscapes and habitats present in the UK. Design is focused on creating beautiful,

enduring, and successful places, which respond to local character and provide a network of high quality and green open spaces. Of note is 'Chapter 2: Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes' and 'Goal 6: Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment'.

- The National Model Design Code states that all design codes should include a landscape and open space strategy that incorporates the existing natural features and new structural elements. It recognises that landscapes can be major drivers in the design process.

- The JMNP2 will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. This includes:

  – Core Policy 51: Landscape.

  – Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping; and

  – Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment.

- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to safeguard and enhance the landscape through enhancing blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Nationally protected landscapes

8.2   There are no nationally protected landscapes within the neighbourhood area. However, approximately 3.8km to the west of the neighbourhood area is the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), approximately 2.3km west is the Bristol and Bath Greenbelt, and approximately 4.6km to the east is the North Wessex Downs AONB. Although the proposals in the JMNP2 are unlikely to impact on the setting of these nationally important landscapes due to the distance between them and the JMNP2 area, it will be important for the plan to consider the special qualities of the surrounding landscape and how development could impact local landscape significance. Both AONB management plans should be referred to in order to ensure development works with the landscape effectively[54,55]. The location of the AONBs in relation to the neighbourhood area is demonstrated in **Figure 8.1** at the end of the chapter.

National character areas

8.3   National Character Areas (NCAs) are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries. This makes them valuable in creating decision-making frameworks for the natural environment.

8.4   The neighbourhood area overlaps with two NCAs – 117 Avon Vales[56] and 107 Cotswolds[57]. The Avon Vales NCA is characterised by the underlying and

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[54] Cotswolds AONB (2018) 'Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2018-2023' can be accessed here.
[55] North Wessex Downs AONB (2019) 'North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024' can be accessed here.
[56] Natural England (2014) 'NCA Profile: 117 Avon Vales (NE522)' can be accessed here.
[57] Natural England (2013) 'NCA Profile: 107 Cotswolds (NE420)' can be accessed here.

undulating clay vale with a mix of arable and pasture farming landscapes, transport corridors along roads and watercourses, large historic parks and mansions and numerous low ridges with local views over towns and villages. The Cotwolds NCA is characterised by its underlying geology of limestone scarp (influencing drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement), locally quarried limestone that gives a sense of unity across the landscape, large areas of common land , arable farming and a rich history that includes Neolithic barrows, iron-age forts and Roman roads and villas, medieval structures and WW2 airfields.

8.5   The NCA profiles will be useful sources of reference during the following stages of the SEA process due to their management principles and detailed landscape sensitivities.

Local landscape, townscape and villagescape character

8.6   Landscape, townscape and villagescape character play an important role in understanding the relationship between people and place and identifying recognisable and distinct patterns in the landscape which make one area different from another. Landscape and villagescape character assessments can both help identify the value of landscapes and villagescapes, in terms of visual and amenity value.

8.7   According to the Melksham Neighbourhood plan Local Landscape Character report[58], four local landscape character areas overlap with the neighbourhood area, shown in **Figure 8.1** below and described as follows:

- Limestone lowland around Whitley and Shaw; characterised by a level and gently undulating landscape, extensive views and a distinct pattern of irregular fields enclosed by fragmented hedgerows.

- Avon clay river floodplain runs from the north through Melksham and then to the southwest and the east; characterised by the River Avon, an intricate network of footpaths along an intimate river corridor and a sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

- Open clay vale is the dominant landscape type in the neighbourhood area; characterised by a general sense of openness, a flat low-lying landscape with mixed use farmland, and a scatted settlement pattern with a comprehensive footpath network.

- Wooded Greensand Hills is around Bowden Hill in the neighbourhood area; characterised by steeply rising western slopes that provide dramatic views, wooded parkland around Sandridge Park and a strong sense of tranquillity.

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[58] Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020) 'Local Landscape Character Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base Report' can be accessed here.
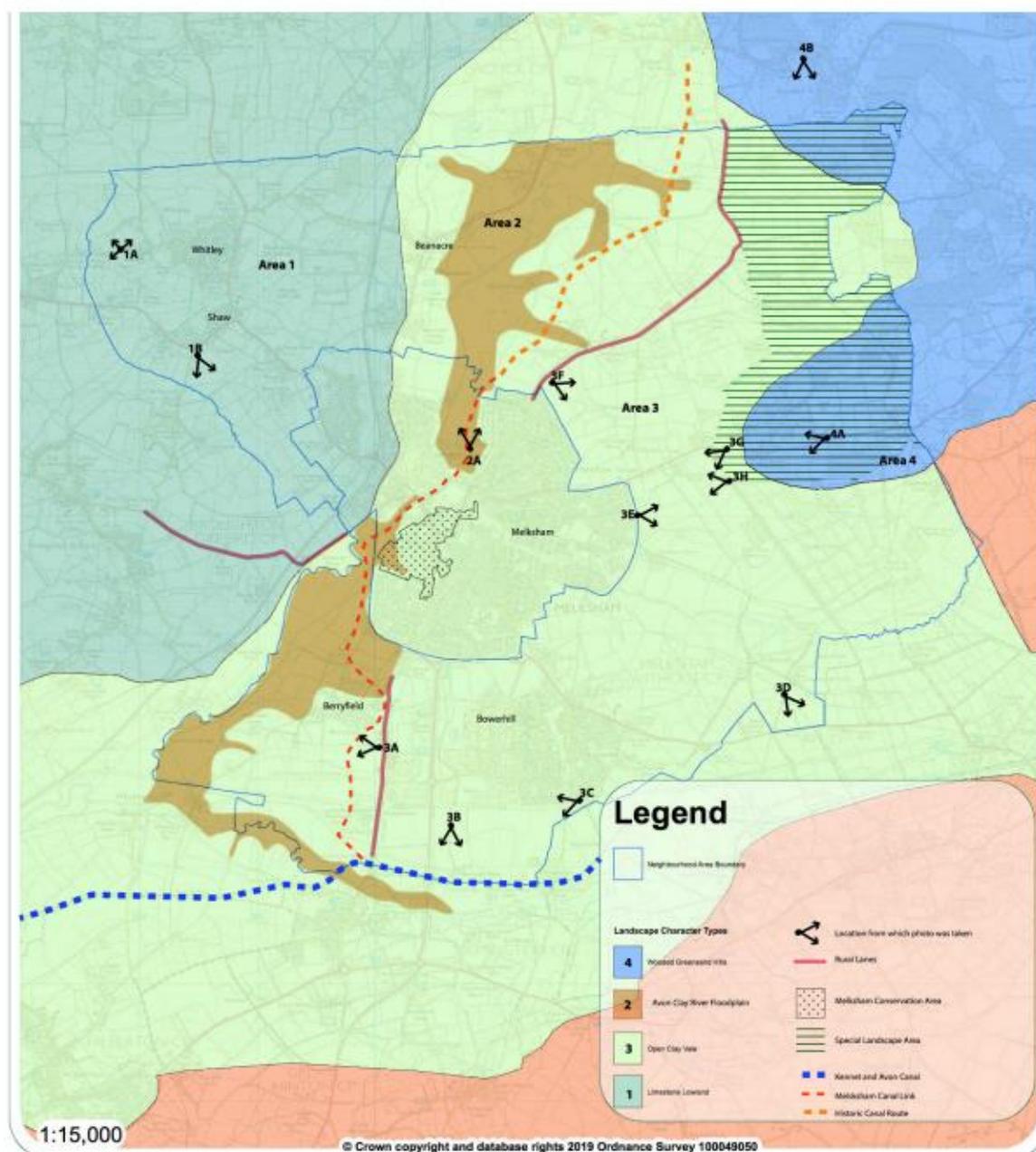
Figure 8.1: Local landscape character areas in the neighbourhood area

8.8   Additionally, according to the Local Landscape Character report[59], there is an area to the north-east of the neighbourhood area that is designated as a 'special landscape area' – an area of high landscape quality. This report will be an essential source of reference during the next stages of the SEA process, along with the Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement, which provides character area assessments for Melksham Town.

8.9   Additional evidence documents have recently been prepared, including a design codes package and a masterplanning package (with a focus on Melksham Town) – these documents will also be essential sources of evidence for the SEA to draw upon and will accompany the JMNP2 at Regulation 14 consultation.

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[59] Ibid.

8.10 It is recognised that the neighbourhood group are completing a landscape gap assessment (with a view to designating gaps within the JMNP2), and, once created, this evidence will be a useful source of reference during the next stages of the SEA and will accompany the JMNP2 at Regulation 14 consultation.

Visual amenity

8.11 It is useful to note that views of and across the neighbourhood area are also an important factor to consider in the planning process, as the scale, height, and mass of development can ultimately impact on important views. Changes like development and landscape change can see these important views and vistas degraded overtime.

Future baseline

8.12 New development has the potential to lead to small, incremental, but cumulative changes in the landscape character and quality within the neighbourhood area. This includes the loss or damage of features and areas with an important visual amenity value. The JMNP2 can help guide development so that it does not negatively impact upon the landscape and visual features which contribute to the distinctive character of the area.

8.13 It should be noted that the planning system has tools in place to offer a degree of protection to the landscape. Therefore, new development will not necessarily result in harm. Furthermore, locally distinctive landscape features, characteristics and special qualities can be protected, managed, and enhanced through appropriate planning policies. It is further recognised that new development that is appropriately designed and landscape led could support the area's intrinsic landscape character and quality. This could include regeneration that improves the setting of the villages, delivering green infrastructure improvements and / or new recreational opportunities and the identification and / or enhanced framing of key views.

Key issues

8.14 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to landscape:

- The JMNP2 overlaps with two NCAs; additionally, there are four different local landscape character areas within the JMNP2 area. These areas contribute to the character and quality of the landscape.

- New development has the potential to lead to incremental change in landscape and villagescape character, and visual amenity.

- The relationship between the settlements and the open countryside is an important part of the character and special qualities of the neighbourhood area. As part of the evidence base, the neighbourhood group are completing a landscape gap assessment that will likely demonstrate this importance. It will be important to maintain the identity of the distinct communities within the JMNP2 area, including (but not limited to) Melksham Town, Bowerhill, Whitley, Shaw and Beanacre.

- It will be important for the SEA process to consider the latest and emerging evidence base documents as these are developed and published.

Proposed SEA objective

8.15 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape and villagescape.

8.16 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Protect and enhance the local landscape, townscape and villagescape character, key sensitivities and features, and quality of place?

- Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character?

- Protect visual amenity and locally important views in the neighbourhood area?

- Support the integrity of the landscape in the neighbourhood area in accordance with current and emerging evidence base documents?
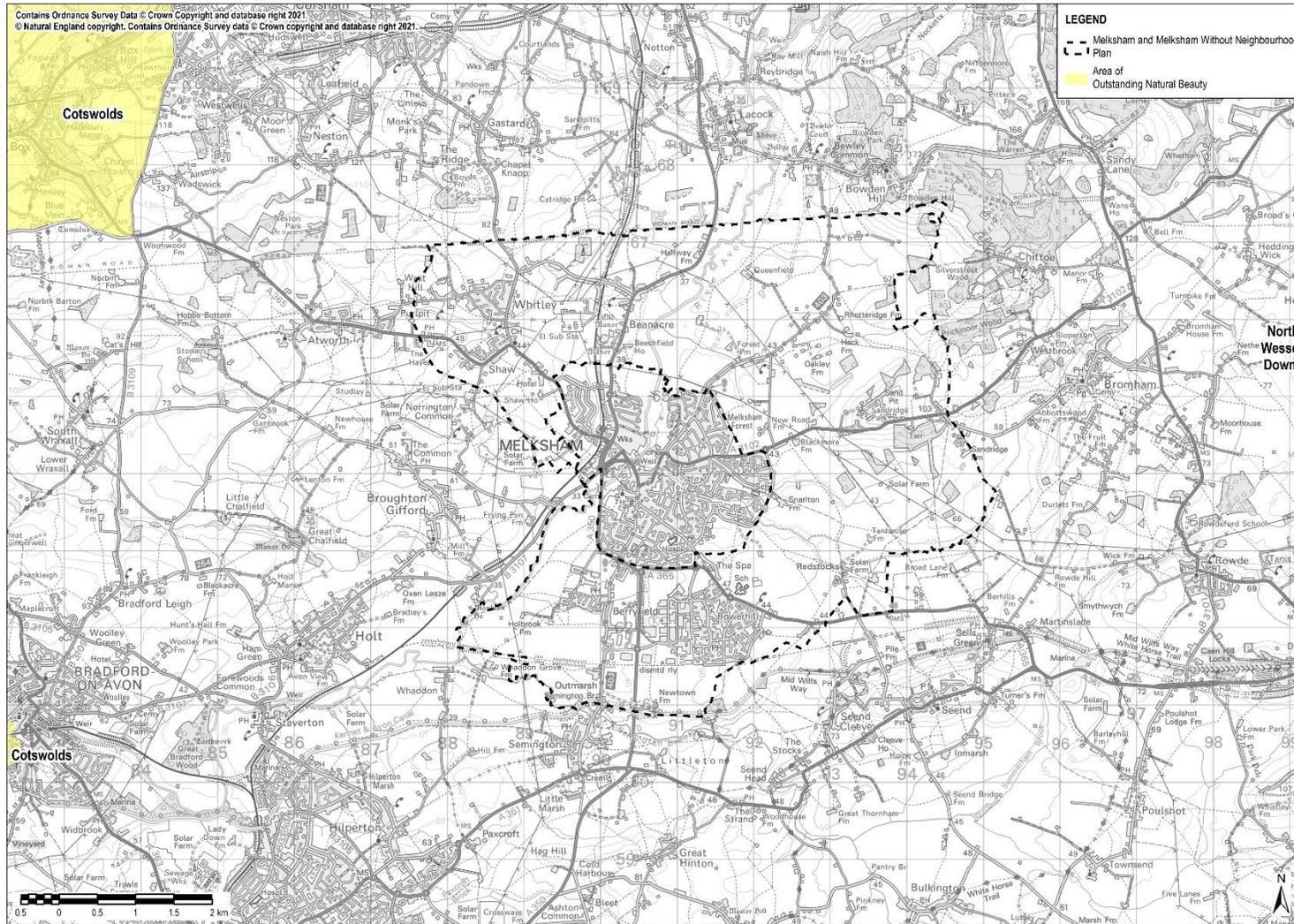
Figure 8.1: AONB locations in relation to the neighbourhood area

9. Transportation

Focus of theme

9.1   This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the transportation SEA theme. The theme focuses on transport infrastructure, transport use, traffic flows and congestion, accessibility, and active travel opportunities within and surrounding the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

9.2   **Table 9.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 9.1: Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to the transportation SEA theme

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain	2021
Transport Investment Strategy	2017
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015
Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 3 2011-2026	2011

9.3   The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles outlined in the NPPF, which influence plans and development proposals to ensure they consider transport issues from the earliest stages, address any known issues, and maximise opportunities to increase accessibility to sustainable transport. Larger developments are expected to limit the need to travel and offer a genuine choice of transport modes. However, it is recognised that sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural environments.

- Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain sets out how the UK Government will deliver emission reductions and associated benefits in the country; presenting the path to net-zero transport in the UK and the commitments and actions necessary to make progress on this path.

- The Transport Investment Strategy sets out investment priorities to improve the connectivity, effectiveness and reliability of transport network whilst simultaneously reducing impacts on the natural environment. Furthermore, the document places great emphasis on making cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of longer journeys.

- The Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 seeks the development of a transport system that supports economic growth, choice and opportunity across Wiltshire's communities whilst also being sensitive to the environment and considering climate emissions. The plan identifies the following five challenges in delivering a sustainable transport system for the area:

    – A largely rural county with many historic towns and villages.

    – Relatively high car ownership levels and small, isolated pockets of access deprivation.

    – The changing climate and the prospect of 'peak oil'.

    – Significantly lower funding for transport; and

    – Increasingly elderly population.

    To address these challenges, the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan sets out several strategic objects to help achieve the following five goals:

    – Support economic growth.

    – Reduce carbon emissions.

    – Contribute to better safety, security, and health.

    – Promote equality of opportunity; and

    – Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment.

- The JMNP2 will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. This includes:

    – Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport.

    – Core Policy 61: Transport and Development.

    – Core Policy 62: Development Impacts on the Transport Network.

    – Core Policy 63: Transport Strategies; and

    – Core Policy 66: Strategic Transport Network.

- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to promote sustainable transport and active travel.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Rail network

9.4   There is a rail station in the neighbourhood area – Melksham train station is operated by Great Western Railway and offers services to Swindon and Westbury[60], which also stop at Chippenham and Trowbridge. Swindon rail station[61] and Westbury rail station[62] offer services to a variety of locations including London Paddington, Bristol Temple Meads, Cardiff Central, Weston-super-Mare, Portsmouth Harbour, Paignton and Weymouth. It is also useful to

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[60] GWR (2022) 'Melksham' can be accessed here.
[61] GWR (2022) 'Swindon' can be accessed here.
[62] GWR (2022) 'Westbury' can be accessed here.

note that there is a service from Chippenham rail station[63] to Bath Spa rail station, is likely regularly used by JMNP2 residents (as Bath is approximately 10km to the east of the neighbourhood area).

Bus network

9.5   According to the Melksham Without website[64] and the Bustimes website[65], there are multiple bus services within the neighbourhood area. FromeBus[66] operates services 14, 15 and X69 in the neighbourhood area. Services 14 and 15 operate solely within the neighbourhood area, and X69 runs between Melksham and Frome.

9.6   Faresaver[67] offers services 68, 69, 271, 272, 273, 555 and X34. Services 68 and 69 provide access to Corsham, Bradford-on-Avon and Trowbridge, services 271, 272 and 273 provide access to Bath and Devizes, and X34 allows access to Chippenham, Trowbridge and Frome. Service 555 is a school bus service to Corsham.

9.7   Swindon's Bus Company runs one service in the neighbourhood area – service X76[68] provides access to Malborough, Bath, Cherhill, Calne and Bathford.

9.8   The Bustimes website also notes there are two community bus schemes operating in the neighbourhood area – the Seend Shuttle[69] and the Urchfont Community Bus[70].

Road network and congestion

9.9   The main roads within the neighbourhood area are the A350, A3102 and A365 – the A350 allows for access to Chippenham and the M4 to the north and Westbury, Warminster and the A361 to the south. The A3102 allows access to Calne and the A342 to the east and the A365 allows access to the A361 to the south-east, which links Devizes to the A361 and A350.

9.10 The key routes that allow entry into Melksham Town are Bath Road (connecting Melksham Town to Whitley and Shaw), the A350 Beanacre Road, Forest Road, Sandridge Road and the B3107 Bradford Road. The Eastern Way and Western Way ring roads pass around the east and south of Melksham Town (connecting to Bowerhill and Berryfield).

9.11 Other important roads in the neighbourhood area include the B3353 that connects Melksham town to Corsham, and Forest Road, Woodrow Road, Westlands Lane and Semington Road, which lead to other settlements within the neighbourhood area.

9.12 The first JMNP[71] indicates high levels of traffic congestion is a common occurrence on the A350. As such, it has been identified as a key issue for the two parishes of Melksham and Melksham Without.

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[63] GWR (2022) 'Chippenham' can be accessed here.
[64] Melksham Without Parish Council (no date) 'Local Transport' can be accessed here.
[65] Bustimes (no date) 'Melksham' can be accessed here.
[66] FromeBus (no date) 'Timetables' can be accessed here.
[67] Faresaver (2022) 'Timetables' can be accessed here.
[68] Swindon's Bus Company (2022) 'X76 Marlborough to Bath' can be accessed here.
[69] Bustimes (no date) 'Seend Shuttle to Melksham' can be accessed here.
[70] Bustimes (no date) 'Urchfont Community Bus to Bath via Devizes' can be accessed here.
[71] Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020) 'Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026 Referendum Version' can be accessed here.

9.13 The first JMNP also indicated the potential to build a bypass for the A350 (and an underpass for pedestrians and cyclists to allow for safe crossing). This bypass would allow for the A350 to avoid running through Melksham Town, therefore avoiding a critical pinch point, and improve north to south connectivity throughout the Western Gateway. It is noted that the discussion around the bypass in the first JMNP received a number of public comments, but that the bypass is an issue outside of the neighbourhood plan scope.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

9.14 According to the digital map available on the Wiltshire Council website[72], there are a multitude of PRoWs within the neighbourhood area. This includes footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic.

9.15 Additionally, according to the LDWA website, there are a couple of long distance walking paths that cross over the neighbourhood area. This includes the Wilts and Berks Canal Towpath[73], the North Wiltshire Rivers Route[74] and the Kennet and Avon Canal Walk[75].

Future baseline

9.16 Given the multiple options for sustainable transport within the neighbourhood area and for travel outside of it (rail network and bus network), it is likely that an increase in vehicle usage through development will be minor. However, a minor increase could still have an impact on the traffic concerns related to the A350.

9.17 As discussed in previous chapters, considering the COVID-19 pandemic and changing working habits, the provision of infrastructure to facilitate working from home is likely to positively contribute towards transport management. Whilst negative effects of new development on the transport network are likely to be mitigated in part by new infrastructure, there will be a continuing need for development to be situated in accessible locations.

Key issues

9.18 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to transportation:

- There is a rail station in the neighbourhood area, offering links to various locations including London, Chippenham, Bristol, Bath and Portsmouth. In this sense, the JMNP2 is well connected. There is also a comprehensive bus network that runs within the neighbourhood area and externally to locations such as Trowbridge, Chippenham, and Frome.

- The JMNP2 is well served by the road network, however it is noted there are issues with congestion on the A350. There are plans for the Melksham Bypass that will avoid the A350 running through the Melksham Town centre and therefore avoiding a critical pinch point.

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[72] Wiltshire Council (2021) 'Wiltshire Council Rights of Way Explorer' can be accessed here.
[73] LDWA (2022) 'Wilts and Berks Canal Towpath' can be accessed here.
[74] LDWA (2022) 'North Wiltshire Rivers Route' can be accessed here.
[75] LDWA (2022) 'Kennet and Avon Canal Walk' can be accessed here.

- There is an extensive PRoW network in the neighbourhood area, and development should seek to connect with and where possible extend these PRoW and maximise opportunities for active travel.

- The recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to change travel patterns in the short, medium and (potentially) longer term.

Proposed SEA objective

9.19 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

9.20 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Support the objectives within the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan to encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes?

- Encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements?

- Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement?

- Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area?

- Reduce the impact of the transport sector on climate change?

- Improve road safety?

- Reduce the impact on residents from the road network?

10. Proposed SEA Framework and Methodology

10.1 The proposed SEA objectives, established through the identification of key issues and environmental objectives as part of the scoping exercise, are brought together to create one framework, the SEA Framework, and are presented in **Table 10.1** below.

Table 10.1: Proposed SEA Framework

SEA theme	SEA objective
Air quality	Deliver improvements in air quality in the neighbourhood area.
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, reducing deprivation, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape and villagescape.
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

10.2 The SEA Framework provides a methodology and consistent approach for the appraisal of the emerging JMNP2. The proposed SEA Framework will be used to appraise the options and proposals emerging for the draft plan, and findings will be fed back to the neighbourhood group to inform plan development.

11. Next Steps

Subsequent stages for the SEA process

11.1 The next stage will involve exploring reasonable alternatives for the JMNP2. The findings of this work will be fed back to the neighbourhood group so that they might be taken into consideration when finalising the neighbourhood plan. The draft version of the JMNP2 will then be subject to appraisal, and the SEA Environmental Report will be prepared for consultation alongside it.

Consultation on the Scoping Report

11.2 Public involvement through consultation is a key element of the SEA process. At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public.

11.3 The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. This scoping report has been released to these three statutory consultees.

11.4 Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this scoping report, particularly the evidence base for the SEA, the identified key issues, and the proposed SEA Framework.

11.5 The consultation period runs from TBC to TBC. Comments on the scoping report should be sent to:

Emily Baker, AECOM

Email address: emily.baker@aecom.com

11.6 All comments received on the scoping report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SEA where appropriate.

Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Update for the Area Board Meeting: Wednesday 21ˢᵗ September 2022

To provide update further to local consultations and evidence gathering exercises that have taken place over the summer months as part of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan review.

Housing: Assessment and Information to inform approach to housing (together with the Local Plan)

The steering group undertook a Call for Sites exercise in the Spring, advertising widely locally, with several page adverts in the Melksham News, a social media presence, we also contacted everyone who has ever been in contact in previous consultations or visited an event. In addition, land owners who have their land registered as available with Wiltshire Council have all been contacted. This produced a list of some 90 sites that land owners have put forward to be considered for housing allocation in the next version of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan. National independent company AECOM are now sifting and assessing the individual sites, with a report to follow in the late Autumn which will then lead to the site allocation work by the Housing Task Group who will be shortlisting sites before engaging with land owners. There will be the opportunity for some informal community engagement on the shortlist of sites. The next version of the Plan will include housing site allocations for small and medium sites, whereas the Local Plan being produced by Wiltshire Council will be allocating large, strategic sites.

Running alongside this work, a Housing Needs Assessment has also been undertaken by AECOM for the Neighbourhood Plan area of Melksham Town and Melksham Without; this incorporates the local Housing Needs Survey that was undertaken by ourselves and advertised at the last Area Board meeting in June. This looks at the type and tenure of the housing mix requirements in the area, and is the evidence for housing mix policy in the reviewed Plan; ensuring that future housing meets the needs of local people. Thankyou to the 136 local residents who responded to the Local Housing Needs survey in May and June; we are looking at publishing the results shortly.

Protecting Values Local Green Space

There is the opportunity through the Plan to give a Local Green Space planning designation to protect spaces that are important to the local community. Thank you to those of you that put forward local green spaces that were important due to their

historic significance, their beauty, their recreational value, their richness in wildlife or their tranquillity. This designation can only apply to small, local spaces and not large tracts of land. The volunteer task group is now working through the 50+ sites that the public put forward to ensure that they meet the necessary criteria and eligibility to produce a shortlist, we will then make contact with the local landowners. You can view the sites put forward on the Neighbourhood Plan website.

Green Gaps Designation

As you may be aware, there has been a recent Appeal Hearing upheld for a site on Semington Road, behind Townsend Farm, for 50 affordable dwellings. One of the things highlighted by the Planning Inspector was the lack of a policy on green gaps, to prevent the coalescence of villages to the town and other villages, and this is being addressed in the review of the Neighbourhood Plan. We are working to secure the appropriate technical support to aid this piece of work, hopefully with AECOM to tie in with other pieces of work, with the aim of consulting the community on this during the assessment period over the next few months.

Further Addressing Climate Change

A separate task group is working on the broad topic of Climate Issues, including analysis of other Neighbourhood Plans that have recently been examined and adopted to see if there are further policies that can be included in the next version of the Plan, as this is a rapidly changing topic. Policy updates have been drafted with background information to be revised next. The group working on this brief are closely aligned with the Town Council's Environment & Climate Working Group.

Planning for the future vitality of the town centre

AECOM have also been appointed to look at the Town Centre Master Plan work, and will be taking a holistic, independent approach at the Town Centre, looking at its Economy and Vitality, its Culture and Distinctiveness, its Connections and Accessibility, the quality of its Public Realm, and its Heritage and Townscape; all set against the pressing agenda of Sustainability and Climate Change. There is also the possibility of some Town Centre Regeneration Site opportunities with vacant sites in the town centre, including those recently vacated as part of the Campus project; they may provide identified/allocated housing to meet local needs. This is a fantastic opportunity for some revised town centre policies in the revised Plan, and for a Master Plan to sit alongside the Neighbourhood Plan as a practical separate stand-alone document. AECOM have been fully briefed by the Neighbourhood Plan team and are working with the Town Council and Wiltshire Council on the publicly owned assets aspects.

Protecting our Local Heritage

Whilst not giving as much protection as the Local Green Spaces, there is still the opportunity to list in the Neighbourhood Plan heritage assets that don't have Listed status but still have an important historical value to the local community. Again, thankyou to those of you who responded to this survey. A small group of volunteers is looking at the evidence for these sites, it's a short list but valuable nevertheless, and the next step is to contact landowners. You can view the list of those sites put forward on the Neighbourhood Plan website.

Strengthening locally distinctive Design Policy

For new housing, and other development, it's not just about where it is, and whether its two or three bedrooms, or rented or for purchase; it's about what it looks like and this is where the Design Codes come in. AECOM have been appointed to do this work, and are looking at what "good design" looks like for the Melksham Plan area and all future planning applications will have to adhere to the Code when the Plan is adopted. From designing out anti-social behaviour, to brick colours, to solar panels, this is all covered in the Design Code. It covers local identity and character, access and movement incorporating the Priority for People work, green and blue infrastructure, sustainability and energy efficiency and the built form. There will be some community engagement on this piece of work as we seek your views.

Ensuring that Local Priorities are addressed as the proposed Bypass and Melksham Link Canal projects progress

The Neighbourhood Plan is all about planning policy, and to be referred and adhered to when planning applications are considered. There are a couple of proposed large infrastructure projects that are in the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan area and there are separate task groups looking into these projects to ensure that the Plan is reviewed in line with the latest updates on these projects. The Plan will have Priority Statements on these projects, but they will be light touch as the Neighbourhood Plan is not the place for decision making on these projects; and therefore cannot have policies relating to them. Volunteer task groups have met with the project teams on these separate projects to review the current statement with them.

Who is working on this project?

The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan is a joint project of Melksham Town and Melksham Without Parish Council but is community led, and the Steering Group and

Task Groups are made up from a wide range of volunteers from the community. Planning expertise is provided by Place Studio, who guide us through the process. The group has been successful in obtaining grant funding from the Government to contribute to the costs, and some technical support from AECOM who are also provided by Locality, directly funded by central Government.

How do I get involved?

Information on the progress on the review of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan can be viewed on the dedicated website https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/ and dedicated facebook page. You can sign up to the mailing list by contacting any officer at the Town or Parish Council or by clicking the link on the website. If you are not online, please contact either of the councils who can provide written updates. Look out for further consultation and engagement opportunities advertised in the Melksham News too.